

Introduction.

The Argentine Trotskyist movement appeared during the 1930's, by the 1950's it had won some influence in the workers and student movements, which by the 1960's and 1970's had increased further. Its first fifteen years of history, nevertheless, would mark it in an extraordinary way, and they illuminate many of its later vicissitudes.

In the first place by its origin itself. As in other Latin American (and European) countries it came from a split in the CP, although extremely small. In addition, the PCA was far from enjoying at that time (end of the 1920's) a great influence in the workers movement, industrially or politically. On one side, the anarchist and anarchosyndicalist currents still possessed hegemony in a working class still marked by the 'anti-political' traditions of their origins, under the influence of the European emmigration. To measure, even in a deformed way, the political influence of the CP, we note that in the 1928 elections it obtained 7,600 votes, against 66,000 for the SP - even though to the deformation itself of an electoral count one would have to add the fact that a large percentage of the workers are foreigners. Add to that the crushing presence of Radicalism, which is literally 'plebiscited' in those elections (838,000 votes). The PCA, which in its origins as the Internationalist Socialist Party had threatened to be an important competitor to the SP, saw itself further weakened by a haemorrhage of splits during the 1920's.

A minority, the Trotskyists found themselves from the start before a period of net political reaction: few in number, the members are also persecuted by the fascistizante government of Uriburu. The possibilities of developing an important faction within the CP (as in Chile & Brazil) disappeared. Paradoxically, the first peak in the re-emergence of the workers movement (1933-36) above all goes to strengthen the CP, which, starting from then, would have a determining influence on the destiny of the organised proletariat. At that moment, the initial nucleus of the Opposition had literally disappeared without trace. Its relief came in the form of much younger and inexperienced militants, although including an ex-anarchist trade unionist expelled by the CP. The weakness of the Trotskyists didn't stop the PCA from adding itself enthusiastically to the campaign against 'Hitler-Trotskyism' launched by the Comintern and CPSU, a witch-hunt that aggravates the already reactionary fate of the period, symbolised by the fascist Minister of the Interior, Sanchez Sorondo, who proposes that the workers carry on showing their working clothes in their homes and in the street, to 'distinguish them'.

Young and without experience, numerically weak, marginal to a workers movement whose organisations get weaker, the Trotskyists of the time are an ideal theatre for the flowering of personal disputes and cliques. But similarly they make a remarkable effort to overcome their original handicap, in orientating themselves to clarify their programme of intervention. The polemic over the issue of 'national liberation' that develops in their ranks constitutes, in its nature, a real novelty in the left-wing movement of the period. We will see why.

The 1930's are characterised world-wide by the preparations for a second imperialist conflagration, above all after the rise of nazism to power in Germany, which materialised the worst defeat of the workers movement during the 20. Century. This axis of world politics tends to transform itself more each time into the axis of the political situation of each country. All the effort of the revolutionary internationalists, with Leon Trotsky at their head, centred on equipping the workers vanguard with a programme and an organisation with which to intervene in the approaching catastrophe. The elaboration of the Transitional Programme and the proclamation of the IV. International mean that the preservation of Bolshevism had been attained, against the imperialist bourgeoisie preparing a new war, and against the stalinist bureaucracy procuring a status-quo with world imperialism. A fundamental aspect of the revolutionary programme for the new situation, is that devoted to the attitude of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples in the face of the imperialist war: "the thunder of the cannon in Europe rings the hour of their liberation" - stated the Manifesto of the IV. International faced with the war, one of Trotsky's last writings.

It is this question, which is being debated (for 99% of them, unconsciously) among the Argentine Trotskyists during the 1930's, when in Argentina too the war starts to dominate the political situation. Nevertheless, in that polemic, it

appears that the film of the ideological struggle of Russian socialism previous to the October Revolution is to be reversed.

In tsarist Russia, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were in agreement on the character of the immediate tasks of the revolution, corresponding to a bourgeois revolution. The divergence came when discussing which class would have to lead it: the liberal bourgeoisie, answered the Mensheviks, the workers and peasants installing a democratic dictatorship, answered the Bolsheviks. Trotsky intervened rejecting the Menshevik position, which placed the working class behind a bourgeoisie which had fully demonstrated its incapacity to accomplish its own democratic revolution; and he corrected the Bolshevik position, pointing out that the democratic rebellion of the peasants would have to carry to power the only revolutionary class of the towns: the proletariat. Once in power it would not be able to limit itself to carrying out democratic measures, but would see itself immediately obliged to attack bourgeois private property, thus giving a start to the socialist revolution. This famous formulation of the 'Permanent Revolution' (which doesn't stop at democratic limits), was a formidable anticipation of the dynamic of the Russian revolution, and since then has been incorporated into the theoretical arsenal of Marxism. Its universal programmatic scope consists in it analysing the class mechanics of all revolutions, posing at their start the resolution of all the unresolved (by the bourgeoisie) democratic tasks.

Well now, among the Argentine Trotskyists a formal agreement existed on the 'permanent' character of the revolution, that is, that it would mean the taking of power by the proletariat (otherwise they wouldn't have been Trotskyists). But this agreement lacked importance, as what was in discussion was nothing less than the point of departure on which the Russian Marxists hadn't had disagreements: what are the character of the immediate tasks of the revolution? Are there unsolved democratic tasks in Argentina? No, the tasks are purely socialist, replied a sector who practically identified Argentina with the imperialist metropolis. Yes, the tasks are agrarian, democratic and anti-imperialist, the other sector replied until they were weary but without going much further. Without including, as we will see, a whole series of hybrid and ambiguous positions, which, by means of eclecticism, they sought to elude an emphatic answer to the question.

It concerns a notable political involution, the more lamentable as practically all the energy of the Trotskyists dispersed itself in this debate until 1945. In reality, the political backwardness of the Trotskyists reflects a more general situation: while the Russian Marxists constituted recognised currents and leaders of the workers movement, the Argentine Trotskyists reflect the scant political differentiation of the proletariat. The currents that enjoy a certain influence, either on the way to disappearance (anarchism), or constituting crystallised counter-revolutionary variants (social democracy and stalinism). The disastrous politics of these currents, and the political confusion of the Trotskyists, was a decisive factor in determining that the indifference would perpetuate itself with the rise of Peronism, which would mean that the workers movement politically placed itself behind the bourgeoisie during three decades. It goes without saying that this also would have a fundamental political influence on the subsequent political evolution of Argentine Trotskyism.

The influence on the Trotskyists of the political backwardness of the workers movement and of the weight of the counter-revolutionary sectors within the 'left' can be seen in many ways: there would be those who opposed the 'national liberation' slogan because the stalinists posed it, that as a part of the turn towards Popular Frontism, it is converted into a previous and separated stage from the proletarian revolution; in fact, in a permanent capitulation to the bourgeoisie. The political confusion of certain Trotskyists, reflected itself in rejection of only the form (the slogan) of this policy, instead of rejecting its reactionary content.

The question of the slogans to pose in Argentina in the face of the imperialist war is closely connected with this debate. One must note that, on this plane, the Argentine workers movement did not lack revolutionary traditions. The opposition to the leadership of the SP, who posed the Argentine participation in the first world war, was in the origins of the split which gave birth to the PCA. In these pages we will see the difficulties of Trotskyism in saving

and superseding the tradition of the Argentine Internationalist Socialists, abandoned by the CP, which first posed a pro-nazi neutrality (while the Hitler-Stalin pact lasted), in order to later transform itself into an agent of allied bellicosity.

The Trotskyist movement - the Left Opposition, the IV. International - is besides an international movement. The programmatic debates of Argentine Trotskyism concern the whole International: the FI leadership would have a decisive role in the discussion and evolution of the Argentine groups.

Finally, and once its limitations are made clear, it is necessary to indicate that the ideological struggle inside Argentine Trotskyism, is the richest of the Latin American Trotskyist movement during the 1930's, which it would influence appreciably.

In Argentina, the Trotskyists arrive at the political turning point of the 4. June '43 (which will prepare the great turn of October 1945 - the birth of Peronism) in a different way than the bureaucratised CP and the paralysed SP. How, is what we are going to see, anticipating that we have consciously abused the use of quotes - let the actors speak - knowing that the studies of Latin American Trotskyism are almost non-existent, and therefore it is convenient to take nothing for granted.

The reflection of Guillermo Lora is completely valid for Argentina: "One of the weaknesses of Latin American Trotskyism consists in it having lost its own tradition, it doesn't know its history, which obliges it many times to repeat old errors" ('Historia del POR', Ed. Isla, La Paz, 1978, P 55).

The origins of Trotskyism in Argentina.

Only in a limited sense can one speak of a history of the Argentine Trotskyist movement itself - the political current represented by Trotskyism defines itself as international by nature and demands to be judged on that scale regarding its programme, its analysis and its activity. But this internationalism is not an abstraction, opposed to the national particularities on which a political movement takes form. Rather, as Trotsky himself put it: "the most important and the most difficult in politics is, in my opinion, on one hand to define the general laws which determine the life or death struggle of all the countries of the modern world; on the other to discover the special combination of those laws which express themselves in each country" (1).

The history of the first years of Argentine Trotskyism (and in some way, all its history) is marked by the struggle to establish that correlation mentioned by Trotsky, and its translation into a precise policy. Our axis is situated then, resolutely, on the terrain of the struggle of ideas - all the more because in the period concerned the groups and persons concerned are very far from exercising an important influence in the mass movement. It is a fact that clarity in the formulation of its ideas constitute a precondition for the rooting in the masses of a revolutionary vanguard which (as the IV. Internationalist) arises with a very minority character. And even more so to conserve this rooting once gained. The history of the struggle for ideas (the programme) is maybe not important for those who are interested in political movements only in the measure that they have received their 'historical consecration'. On the contrary, it is from this viewpoint that the first years of the Argentine Trotskyist movement presents interest, which the influence it had in other organisations of the FI in Latin America demonstrates.

First South American group of the Left Opposition.

In such terms, the organ of the North American Left Opposition referred to the first oppositionist group established in Argentina (2). This was composed of three workers, the three foreigners: Roberto and M Guinney (English) and Camilo Lopez (Spanish ?) who counted on an abundant experience in the revolutionary and workers movement (3). The group didn't come from the 'official' CP, but from the last split it encountered before its total bureaucratisation: The Communist Party of the Argentine Region (later "of the Argentine Republic" and finally 'Concentración Obrera') led by José Penelón. It seems to be the indefiniteness of the latter in the face of the rise of the International Left Opposition, his attempt to preserve the purely 'national' character of the split, that motivated the Guinneys and Lopez (who had key posts in the PCRA, R Guinney was

the administrator of 'Adelante', its weekly), defenders since 1928 of Trotsky's positions, to leave in 1929 in order to found the 'Opposition Communist Committee'.

Roberto Guinney had been corresponding since 1927 with James P Cannon, delegate of the Yankee CP to the congress of the CI, from which he succeeded in secretly getting the criticism of Trotsky - exiled in Alma Ata - of the draft programme.

It concerns then, the first South American group of the Opposition to make its public appearance, but not much more. It's enough to compare its meagre numbers with the Chilean Communist Left (split of the CP of Chile majority headed by its leader Hidalgo), or with the split from the Brazilian Communist Youth (which during the 1930's would be at a parity of forces with the 'official') to understand that the title of 'the first' has a relative value. The Argentine CP itself was marked by its relative weakness compared to its equals in the neighbouring states, which didn't impede it (and maybe helped it) from later becoming the axis of the stalinist apparatus in South America: in 1929 the South American conference of the CP's uses Buenos Aires for its seat, and the Ghioldi's and Codovilla's will be the main actors of the 'Bolshevisation' (stalinisation) of the South American parties. A symptom of its weakness, the PCA suffered four splits during the 1920's: at least in three of them we find names later connected with Argentine Trotskyism. Mateo Fossa, Hector Raurich and Angelica Mendoza participate in the 'left' faction of the 'Sparkists' (from the name of their paper 'La Chispa' - The Spark) which, faced with a leading apparatus that is intent on prematurely consolidating itself, gave birth in 1925 to the short-lived Communist Workers Party (4). The later split of the 'frontists' (proposers of a united front with, or dissolution into, the SP) counted as a leader, together with Alberto Falcos and Silvano Santander, Luis Koiffman, founder and leader of the internationalist socialists and of the CP, subsequently a Trotskyist in the 1930's (5). Finally, the 'Penelonest' split (with which, according to the official CP history "the cycle of internal differences ended"), counts in its ranks the first left oppositionists, who, nevertheless, will not succeed in regrouping the above mentioned.

A difficult birth then, will become even more tougher as a result of the political conditions which soon came to dominate in the country. Throughout the 1930's only some of those opposed to the official line of the CP and the CI will go, and in a dispersed order, to the Trotskyist movement, which will, besides, find itself almost permanently divided.

But we mustn't run ahead. In March 1930, the small initial nucleus published the first issue of the paper 'La Verdad' (of which only two appeared), in which the famous 'Testament of Lenin' figures. Soon "a little group, mainly of the Israelite tongue become known to us (...) After this group gave out a paper in Yiddish called 'Communist Tribune', it dissolved itself".

"Then the Uriburist dictatorship arrived. Some of our few members were imprisoned, while our social and financial situation got worse by the day" (6).

In spite of that, and with a very reduced activity, the group succeeded in preserving itself during the reactionary Uriburist period, and they are eight members who rebaptise themselves the Argentine Communist Left (ICA) in 1932, opening at the same time a small office. As the rest of the International Left Opposition they supported the reform of the CP and the CI. They, in turn, called them 'police' in the columns of their organ 'La Internacional', while the party voted unanimously for resolutions condemning 'Trotskyism'. The ICA publish a 'Boletín de Oposición', where the positions of the Opposition are clearly expounded (critique of socialism in one country, condemnation of the Anglo-Russian Committee, against the bloc of four classes in China, against the theory of social-fascism, demanding democratic-centralism against stalinist bureaucratism, etc.) and it was able to elaborate some criticism of the CP activity: splitting trade unions via the Class Unity Committee outside the existing unions and centres (CGT and FORA), the ignoring of the agrarian question, expressed in the lack of theses and programme on the question... The critique of the PCA got no further, for example the reactionary and sectarian position it had faced with the military coup against the government of Irigoyen - characterised as 'Radical-Fascist' and "more dangerous than Uriburu because of the ramifications - of the UCR - in the mass movement" (7).

The group entered the period known as the 'infamous decade' then, with a meagre political and organisational baggage. An ideal situation then, before

the gaining of a significant number of members, for the movement led by Trotsky at an international level, for the flowering of quarreling persons and cliques, just at the time when it is faced with the construction of a new International after stalinism's 4. August, which the coming to power of Hitler signified.

Two groups for a new party.

During 1932, two young Argentines return from Spain, after completing their studies there: the already mentioned Hector Raurich, and an ex-member of the SP, Antonio Gallo. In Spain they had been in contact with Andres Nin and the Spanish Communist Left. Won over to the Opposition, they write to the ICA announcing their arrival. Nevertheless, upon arriving in Argentina, they put themselves in contact with some dispersed dissidents of the CP, and with a group of intellectuals who propose to give out a magazine (among them Elias Castelnuovo). The project gets modified in the course of production and the magazine eventually produced ('Actualidad') ends up as an official voice of the CP. It is after the failure of its participation in the project, that the already constituted 'Gallo-Raurich group' puts itself into contact with the ICA, through the deported Spanish militant J Ramos Lopez.

"In view of the meagre forces in which we of the ICA counted, we attempt to find out about the thoughts and ideas of those two comrades arrived from Spain and who don't seem to have been 'converted' by the 'offers' of the official party (...) For them we had committed a grave sin: that of having surfaced and gone public, a little group of workers with small forces and with a preparation - according to them - insufficient. To cleanse ourselves of this sin, they proposed to us, like Jordan the entrance into a 'synagogue' which turned out to be a great theoretical magazine which they thought to publish. Later we would found the real opposition in Argentina. To all this, without showing any vanity from our side, we answered them that we had organised the Left Communist Opposition in Argentina four years ago now. Convinced of the pedantry and opportunism of the Gallo-Raurich group, apart from some exceptions, we could not accept such stupid impositions and we had to withdraw ourselves..."(8).

The ICA thus explains the first split in Argentine Trotskyism. The precocious Gallo (he is then twenty years old) published at the beginning of 1933 a small pamphlet entitled 'On the September movement. A marxist interpretation'. His group (from which Raurich had already withdrawn as an active member, carrying out apparently a role of 'ideological inspirator') organises itself the same year and starting from August publishes the paper 'Nueva Etapa', organ of the Communist League.

On the other hand, the ICA succeeds in fusing with a group expelled from the CP headed by the known union militant Pedro Milessi (in those years using the pseudonym Pedro Maciel or Eduardo Islas). Milessi was then secretary general of the municipal workers union - his expulsion from the CP, and that of the dozen militants who followed him, is for 'Trotskyism' - a charge he first denies.

But at the beginning of 1933 the Milessi grouping is in the ICA and in numerical superiority. This is important, because in the first general meeting of the group Milessi is elected secretary general, placing a majority of his followers in the leading organs. The old members of the ICA protest vividly: they maintain that the 'Maciel group' has not yet published the reasons of its conversion to the opposition in 'La Verdad', that it has taken advantage of its numerical superiority to approve ICA participation in the Anti-war Congress organised by the stalinists in Uruguay (for which Milessi himself is designated), etc. But the 'old' ICA finds itself further weakened: 24. February its leader R Guinney died, at 64 years, victim of an infection. Two other members withdraw to the interior of the country to save their lives; Camilo Lopez, elected to the CC of the 'new' ICA falls gravely ill. The protests of the few who remain, result in their expulsion, according to them (M Guinney and 'Juana') or their suspension (the treasurer Ostrovsky). Exhausted, in a last document in December 1933, they bitterly relate their failure and then drop out of politics (9). At the same time, the ICA under the Milessi leadership takes the new name 'Internationalist Communist League' - Bolshevik-Leninist, Argentine Section' (in conformity with the decisions of the international plenum of the Left Opposition in August 1933), and start to publish the paper 'Tribuna Leninista'.

Two groups then, each with a dozen members, will dispute bitterly the representativity of the new World Party of the Socialist Revolution which is to be

built.

'Tribuna Leninista' (which appears regularly enough during 1933 & 34) seems to be more active in the unions: it maintains that 90% of its members are workers. In its first issue it recognises that "in our country, the level of political training of the oppositional communists is not very great" (10). Its essential preoccupation is the elaboration of slogans for the union movement, where the influence of the international publications of the Opposition is noted, above all that of the Spanish (which experiences at that time the introduction of the situation that will lead to the civil-war). "The Workers Alliance against fascism becomes an unavoidable necessity, as well as the creation of workers militias being a question of life or death for all the workers organisations" (11). On another occasion, when the CGT publishes a manifesto supporting the government of General Justo, it calls upon the unions to stop paying their dues while the leadership still remains (12). The theoretical and political elaboration (the only way of showing whether this effort was empirical or merely the copying of slogans elaborated for other countries and other situations) remained in Milessi's hands, who in a picturesque section entitled 'De punta y Hacha', commented on the news in the national or international press.

'Nueva Etapa' (whose group is composed mainly of students or 'intellectuals') seeks, on the other hand, to give its ideas the form of in depth articles or theses. Its axis is the slogan of a "common front of the workers and the proletarian parties and organisations against fascism". But, at the same time it questions the causes of the failure of the fascist attempt of Uriburu, who had been replaced in government by General Justo, who governed with the pseudo-democratic methods of the 'patriotic fraud'.

"...a characteristic feature of Argentine society: its backwardness in all fields. From the general law, fascism, of all things is excluded (...) in this semi-colonial country, retarded, without industries, there are no historic, cultural, social traditions. There are none but the liberal traditions of the May Revolution, or the so-called 'generation of 90', inconveniently for the fascist aims". All of which did not impede that the "political conflict at present in the country is not in an immediate way between the proletarian revolution and the bourgeoisie. The threat of the proletariat doesn't acquire a sharp character (...) the antithesis present in the country is between bourgeois democracy and fascism. Those who do not see this do not see anything, and if they want to see something else, one must reject it categorically (...) The weight itself of the Justo government is a little less than nil. It is sustained on the crossroads of opposed political forces (...) This equilibrium between the fascists and the radicals cannot last. It is the prelude to a real dictatorship or the transition period of a civil-war and the fascist dictatorship". But: "Fascism isn't a mass movement. Radicalism can count on the immense majority of the population; which of the two methods will offer, in the immediate future, in the eyes of imperialism and the agricultural bourgeoisie, the best perspectives of stability? A democratic result or perspective isn't excluded, but very probable" (13).

The article we quote belongs to one of the most capable militants of the period, the Rosario student David A Siburú, who was a CP student leader, that later broke with the CP, and with a sector of its student members went over to Trotskyism ('Nueva Etapa' was edited in Rosario). In the analysis of the political contradictions in Argentina, he tends to copy those prevalent at that time in the European imperialist metropolis (bourgeois democracy or fascism). It is not taken into account that the metropolis that keep Argentina in their orbit (USA & England) belong to the so-called 'democratic imperialism'. In general the characterisation of the country as a semi-colony, serves to present the Argentine bourgeoisie, as a mere appendage of imperialism, without any real role of its own: "(imperialism) does not concede to the Argentine state even the minimal forces of supervision over its business (...) A government that would not be the instrument of finance capital in the present circumstances is, in general, impossible" (14). Thus, Argentine politics would be a repetition, ex post facto, of that existing in the imperialist countries.

The mistake made is that of seeing fascism as being engendered antagonistically by bourgeois democracy, and not by the proletarian revolution. If the working class isn't the threat, fascism has no place, as an alternative to bourgeois democratic methods. One notices here an absence of programme, then

it falls into impressionism by considering the skirmishes between the reduced gangs of oligarchic nationalism and the radicals as a clash between the political superstructures of fascism and democracy. In reality, they are an aspect of the police-state that accompanied the restoration of the bovine oligarchy concentrated in the winter-quarters of 'Chilled Beef'.

With regard to principles, both groups placed themselves fully on those of the international movement for the IV. International. A large polemical space was given over to the mutual launching of personal invective. 'NE' accused the leaders of 'TL' of "thinking undialectically". Milessi replied characterising "Citizen Ontiveros" (A. Gallo) and his followers as 'intellectualoids'. The interpretation of democratic centralism is also the object of dispute. Some discussion takes place, although of a secondary nature, on the role of Radicalism in Argentine politics, and we mourn the fact that we do not possess the material (13a). At the end of 1934, E. Islas (Milessi) "secretary general of the LCI-BL" signs an Open Letter proposing unity: "It is argued on the other hand that that unification is not possible nor desirable, without a previous point of agreement on the national questions. In the first place, such questions do not exist, disconnected from the international problems; in second place, and even supposing a multiple of matters of a secondary type, their solution cannot be the fruit exclusively of philosophical or...doctrinary speculations, but must march in rhythm with the daily struggles as the determining factor, and as the fruit of a collective effort..." (14).

The LCI-BL had managed to gather 17 members and publish a trade union paper ('Resurgir Bolchevique') and a youth paper ('Luchas Juveniles'); the LCI ('NE') was rather more numerous, having managed to establish nuclei in La Plata, Cordoba and Rosario (where it had recruited the CP student leader Daniel A Siburú). And unity was attained...after the LCI-BL previously expelled Milessi, in an episode which remains obscure to us. Milessi will continue his links with Trotskyism and will reappear later as a leader.

An ephemeral unity.

The two groups fuse at the beginning of 1935. 'Nueva Etapa' and 'Tribuna Leninista' disappear, to be replaced by 'IV. Internacional'. It is probably the only occasion when one Trotskyist group existed in Argentina.

During the period that we consider, the real organisational (and political) weakness of the Trotskyists can be divided into, in general, factors including often ones of a personal nature, in others arising simply from 'regional' (geographical dispersion) causes. But in general, all the groups and persons consider themselves part of the same 'movement', they call it such, and often it lacks a precise contour. With that character, the 'movement' has always existed since the founding of the first group. The statement of JA Ramos about "the prolonged anti-Trotskyist campaign carried out throughout more than thirty years by the leading group of the PCA, all the more meritorious and provident inasmuch as during many years Trotskyist groups or tendencies didn't exist in the country" (15), does not seem to have been shared, as Ramos himself indicates, by the CP itself, from which an internal circular from 1935 stated "TROTSKYISM IS A FILTER OF PROVOCATORS (...)" about the links with Trotskyist elements such as Milos, as Pino, as Spector and as Pereyra, they seek to establish the largest possible number of contacts and bonds with comrades of the party. Why? In order to use our most inexperienced comrades, as channels to inform themselves of the internal matters of the party, and to try to get their counter-revolutionary poison into it via those channels. To maintain links with those people so avowedly counter-revolutionary and enemies of the party, is to lend oneself to their manoeuvres and it is inconceivable that comrades would do it consciously" (16).

Without maintaining an organic existence the Trotskyist groups would not have been able to offer a home to the various small splits from the PCA in the 1930's and 1940's. Ramos (who tries to erase any trace of his Trotskyist past) consciously falsifies reality, and where it is contemptuously stated that during the 1930's "its adherents (Trotskyism) do not exceed more than twenty or thirty people in the whole republic, and its means of propaganda barely consisted in an irregularly produced journal which replaced equally irregular papers of a modest type, with long silences in between", it contradicts previously stated facts in the same book (17).

The unification in the LCI means a momentary increase in the activity of the Trotskyists, as it does not just unite the members of the previous groups, but also others who had been outside both. Besides 'IV. Internacional' (whose first issue appears in April 1935), in Cordoba the militant Aquiles Garmendia (who would die a few years later) and the Bolivian Tristan Maroff (who had participated in the founding congress of the Bolivian FOR in that city) start to publish 'America Libre', a journal of which five issues appear between June and December. Luis Koiffman leads the publication, at the start of 1936, of a Trotskyist influenced journal called 'Vision'; at the end of that year the same comrade tries, without success, to create a 'broad' grouping aimed at intellectuals, called 'Agrupación de Propaganda Marxista'. Finally, Antonio Gallo, leader of the group, published in 1935 a pamphlet entitled 'Whither Argentina?' (sub-titled 'Peoples Front or struggle for socialism') directed as a polemic with the left-wing of the SP, which would soon split and form the Partido Socialista Obrero.

It is interesting to observe how in the pamphlet the central ideas confusingly take shape which will distinguish the majority current inside Argentine Trotskyism until 1943, and whose influence will extend itself much further: "Marianetti (leader of the socialist left, later of the PSO and the CP - author's note) admits that the only way to free the country from the domination of monopoly capital is through the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Then, what does the struggle for 'national liberation' mean? Maybe the proletariat as such does not represent the historic interests of the nation, in the same sense that it tends to liberate all the social classes by its action and to supersede them by its disappearance? But, for that it necessitates, precisely, not confusing oneself with the 'national' interests (which are those of the bourgeoisie, as it is the ruling class) which on the interior and exterior plane sharply contradict. So that such a slogan is plainly false (...) affirming our view that only the socialist revolution can be the stage which corresponds - to speak in those unpleasant card-index terms, that prevent the workers understanding what it concerns - to the colonial and semi-colonial countries".

Politically, the alternative continued being "democracy or fascism": "to carry out now a policy against radicalism, would be as erroneous as to ally oneself with it (...). In the present circumstances of defence in which the working class finds itself, to make of them (the Progressive Democrat Party - author's note) an immediate enemy, would be an error. One must maintain a tacit alliance, to support them inasmuch as it would be indispensable, and in determined conditions, against the declared reaction, pushing them forward by our action" (18).

Thus, before the alliance with the bourgeoisie and the theory of revolution by stages of the partisans of the Popular Front, the LCI proposed, not class independence in the struggle for national liberation, but the suppression, pure and simple of national liberation from the programme of the proletariat. In the event this led to abstentionism in the face of the democratic problems, and to leave the initiative in relation to them, to the parties of the 'democratic' bourgeoisie (those they sought to radicalise) - just at the moment that they, through their growing integration into the political system of the 'infamous decade', demonstrated fully their incapacity to confront them.

In 'IV. Internacional' No 3 (May '36) other consequences are drawn out of this theory (in a programmatic article entitled "What do the partisans of the IV. Internacional want?"): "... recognition of the international and therefore permanent character of the proletarian revolution; rejection of the theory of 'socialism in one country' as well as the policy of national communism which completes it (national liberation)...5) against social patriotism and national defence. For revolutionary defeatism in the face of the war and its preparations" (19). The comparison of Argentina with an imperialist metropolis is here total. A 'national communism' enveloped behind the slogan of 'national liberation', and condemned by Bolshevism, had existed in Germany during the revolution of 1923, but it concerned an imperialist country in this case. To announce oneself in principle against the 'national defence' of Argentina, which is nevertheless recognised as a semi-colony, places the Trotskyists in a position of pro-imperialist neutrality in the case of a political or military conflict between Argentina and imperialism. That would be precisely the case in the subsequent political period and the political perspective of the Trotskyists

showed up to be false from the start.

The failure of the LCI and 'entrism' in the PSO.

At the start of 1936, the LCI changed its name into Partido Obrero. It operated for six months with that name. It isn't clear whether it concerned a simple change of label or a reflection of a real increase in activity. In whatever case, the quick abandonment of the name seems to indicate the great difficulties in structuring a growing number of members into a solid Marxist organisation, capable of not collapsing in the face of the inevitable difficulties. The subsequent events would confirm this idea. In June the Partido Obrero transformed itself back into the LCI. Its activity starts to experience a systematic decline, with signs of disintegration. C Liacho, at that time a journalist on 'La Razón', had withdrawn from the LCI with differences and was accusing Gallo of "having plagiarised" in the above mentioned pamphlet. Liacho was, according to Liborio Justo, another of the 'disciples' of Raurich. At the end of 1936 he joined the SP to work in its left wing, which became the PSO soon after. Thus began the 'entrism'. All research into this period of Argentine Trotskyism will have to take into account this entrism experience, over which there is no lack of material. The LCI had no success in building a 'workers party', it found itself isolated from the workers movement, it had been marginalised during the important strikes of 1933/36. Mateo Fossa, who led the woodworkers strike of 1934, had had an important role in the construction strike of 1936, and presided over the founding congress of the CGT in that year, was not yet a Trotskyist militant, having only sympathy for their ideas (20). This national isolation is reinforced by isolation from the international movement, with which only weak links exist. The entrism was undoubtedly inspired by the 'French Turn', that led successively to the French and US Trotskyists entering the SP's with the aim of intervening in the evolution of the left wing and strengthening their possibilities of recruitment (the Spanish majority refused to carry it out). In those cases it was the object of specific resolutions by the leadership of the ICL (the international organisation of the followers of Trotsky) and led to serious polemics and even splits with some who opposed entrism 'in principle' (ie. the Oehler faction in the USA). This wasn't the case in Argentina.

The discussion on the advantages of entrism split the ranks of the Argentine LCI (A Gallo led the opposition) and its carrying out presented itself rather like a phenomenon of its break-up. After Liacho's entry and the formation of the PSO, the student sectors of La Plata (with 'Jorge Lagos', Reinaldo Frigerio) and Cordoba (with 'Costa' - Esteban Rey) of the LCI, joined it. The 'anti-entrists' of the LCI began to disintegrate - its last bulletin appeared in December 1937. Finally, they also try to enter the PSO (Gallo himself tried unsuccessfully to do so).

On the PSO nothing much is written. The most common version presents it as a mere appendage of stalinism. Indeed it did pose a Peoples Front with the participation of socialists and communists, and various of its leaders end up later in the CP: Benito Marianetti, Ernesto Giudici. But at the end of the 1930's many of its militants will return to the SP (21) and some, like Joaquin Coca who poses a type of 'anti-concord' (a conservative coalition which governed through the 'patriotic fraud') front between radicals and socialists, will evolve towards nationalism: Coca will militate in the Labour Party which supported the candidacy of Peron. The sermon of the Trotskyists achieved a certain repercussion. It seems hasty to characterise the PSO as a crystallised stalinist faction.

The Trotskyists organise themselves in a faction (or factions) within the PSO. That led by Liacho publishes a mimeographed paper 'Frente Proletario - Boletín del Marxismo Revolucionario' (five issues appear between August and December 1937). At the start of 1938 in Cordoba they hold a national conference, with members from that city, Buenos Aires and La Plata. In August that year (a little before the end of 'entrism') they publish a journal called 'Marxismo, Organo de la fraccion marxista revolucionaria del Partido Socialista Obrero'.

The entrists subsequently ended up controlling the PSO centre in Liniers (Buenos Aires Province), and they publish three issues of 'Izquierda, Organo de afiliados para afiliados', from February to August 1938. Membership of the

PSO permitted the Trotskyists to extract themselves relatively from their isolation, to put themselves more in contact with the problems of the workers movement: Mateo Fossa definitively inserts himself into the 'movement' to begin his membership (22). Fossa himself and some other militants succeeded in being candidates for deputies in the legislative elections: among them Homero Cristalli (later to be known as J Posadas) who had played a role organising the footwear industry union of Cordoba, and taking advantage of his relative notoriety as a footballer in the Estudiantes de La Plata team presents himself as a candidate in that city. Trotskyist policy towards the CP involved activity directed essentially against the strategic alliance with the bourgeoisie, materialised in the policy of the Peoples Front. Under the pen of Orestes Ghioldi the CP stated: "Among the sworn enemies of the democratic alliance are the Trotskyists. Their role does not originate in their insignificant number. Their role originates in their activity of sabotage, they supply arguments against the Peoples Front, they try to gain tribunes, they introduce themselves into the other workers parties to further their resolute anti-communist action (...) Covering themselves in the demagogic slogan of the proletarian revolution in the present situation and conditions, they try to isolate the CP, split the workers movement, sabotage any attempt at unity (...) One must struggle with the greatest intensity against the ideological influence of Trotskyism" (23).

Let us look at the programmatic fundamentals of the Trotskyists critique of the Peoples Front. The faction led by Liacho stated, in the first issue of 'Frente Proletario' (an article entitled 'Our Proposals'): "The demand of the socialist (democratic-socialist) and permanent character of the proletarian revolution in the country. The demand of proletarian internationalism. The anti-imperialist struggle is, in the end, a struggle against the national bourgeoisie".

The theoretical confusion is total. A revolution is proclaimed that would be democratic and socialist at the same time, or maybe it would possess two class characters, diverse and opposed, at the same time. In reality, it concerns an attempt to overcome, via an eclectic formula, the problem of the character of the tasks of the revolution. Furthermore, even up to the words losing any meaning: if the anti-imperialist struggle is, in the end, against the national bourgeoisie, it cannot even be seen why it should be called such.

A little later, in No 4: "The Russian Revolution demonstrates that those who claim the possibility of solving the democratic problems - national liberation, peasant and petty bourgeois questions - within the bourgeois regime, are traitors to the proletariat, and that they are dangerous confusionists who disconnect the struggle for national liberation and democratic liberties from the socialist revolution". In the only issue of 'Marxismo' it stated: "In the struggle against imperialism, the party should support the following slogan: in the Argentine Republic, in agreement with the objective conditions, economic and political, there is no struggle against imperialism disconnected from the struggle against the national bourgeoisie in its totality. National liberation will be realised by the proletariat only as leader of the other oppressed sectors, struggling and taking political power, and the danger of an imperialist intervention will end when capitalism is overthrown by the international proletarian revolution" (24).

The concession to the 'national liberation' position is here only verbal. The formula of the permanent revolution is posed in reverse. In its original formulation, the permanent revolution explains the dynamic that allows the proletariat, supporting itself on the democratic revolution (national liberation, agrarian revolution) to gain political power and to start the socialist revolution which cannot stop itself within the national framework and transforms itself into international revolution. The Trotskyists went down the inverse road: they started from the conclusion (the taking of power) in order to explain the point of departure (the tasks and class dynamics of the revolution). The formula was necessarily falsified: once again the struggle against imperialism and the struggle against the national bourgeoisie are put on the same plane; and instead of establishing the correlation between the struggle against imperialism and against the bourgeoisie (the national struggle can only be consistent by means of the class struggle; in the struggle against imperialism, the antagonism with the national bourgeoisie is sharpened and not weakened), they are made identical. The disastrous role of this schema consists in hiding

a spectacular deed (of which he was fond) makes him enter into 'folk mythology' (27): on the occasion of the reception for Roosevelt he gets himself thrown out of the premises of the Chamber of Deputies after shouting "Down with North American imperialism!" - before the Yankee president. That same year, on the occasion of an investigation on the means of defending culture against the advance of fascism, he would dryly recommend: "the use of a machine-gun". There was a wave of criticism against him, including from the stalinists themselves. Justo took advantage of the occasion to break with them, publishing an "Open Letter to the communist comrades - Breaking with the Third International", in which he criticises the national and international policies of stalinism, the Moscow trials against the old Bolsheviks, proclaiming his solidarity with Trotsky and the necessity of a new international. Although his break has an individual character, it doesn't stop it having a certain repercussion. The open letter was published by the well known journal 'Claridad' and even reproduced by the Chilean Trotskyists with propagandist aims. Immediately he began activity on the question which at that time preoccupied the whole country, especially the intellectual middle class: the civil war in Spain. He published a paper ('España Obrera') in which, as well as information the Peoples Front policy was criticised, the repression against the POUM of Nin and Maurin was denounced, and the positions of the IV. International defended. Liborio Justo wasn't afraid to confront neither his class nor his friends of yesterday, but probably his personality corresponded more than any other in Argentina at that time with that of the "type of member" of the IV. International, described by Trotsky: "...the IV. International has regrouped courageous elements who do not mind going against the current...intelligent people who have bad characters, always indisciplined...but always more or less 'outsiders' separated from the general current of the workers movement. Their great value evidently has its negative side, because whoever swims against the current can not be tied to the masses" (28).

His personality, his antecedents, his own political culture and even the personal resources of which he disposed given his social situation (29) predisposed him to play from the start a leading role in the Argentine Trotskyist movement. The 7. November 1937, with the receipt of a letter from Diego Rivera (the famous Mexican painter, friend of Trotsky and IV. International member) about the American Pre-Conference of the IV. International as the motive, Justo arranged a meeting in his house in which representatives of all the 'tendencies of the movement took part. Justo (known as 'Bernal') poses the necessity of united action, firstly the publishing of a journal "which fell through (he says because of the attitude of the comrades who had entered the PSO, represented by Liacho, who presented themselves as a group, which turned out unacceptable for us who believed that we must treat ourselves as individuals" (30) - a phrase which shows his caudillismo (caudillo = chief or führer - note by translator).

"We", that is the 'anti-entrists' (for Justo the entrists made the mistake of not publishing an independent IV. Internationalist organ), led by Justo, Gallo, 'JP' and Milessi (who at that time held office in the leadership of the USA, a union centre formed after the splitting of the CGT in 1936) decided to jointly publish such a journal. The project was delayed, according to Justo, by the old personal disagreements between Gallo and Milessi, which ended with the latter withdrawing himself. In July 1936 the only issue of 'Nuevo Curso' appeared, reproducing essentially articles from the international Trotskyist press. A little later, Milessi, 'JP' and a group of followers start to publish 'Inicial', which would continue appearing until 1941 and accomplish an important role of regroupment.

Eventually, Justo and Gallo would also part, also for 'personal reasons'. In that moment of dispersion (the group inside the PSO is about to be expelled and finds itself disorientated by its 'leader', Carlos Liacho's abandonment of activity) Justo decides to start a crusade against the 'evils' of Argentine Trotskyism, publishing a printed pamphlet: "How to get out of the swamp". It isn't short on personal invective ("Juana Palma is, according to Gallo, the Argentine Rosa Luxemburg. We agree. She has a certain physical likeness... Mr de Peñale, a big revolutionary - physically - ...Milessi will be in his place making himself leader of the Radical Party...The strong point of Gallo is his studies on the tango...etc.) political critiques, critiques of opinions expressed in café conversations, critiques of philosophical conceptions and

even the artistic tastes of the 'leaders', lastly, proposals responding to the question in the title. Immediately those affected tended to group themselves on the fringes and against Justo, even Narvaja, the only one for which he observed a certain compassion ("a capable and intelligent comrade of the littoral"). But much of his criticism was aimed rightly at evident vices of the Trotskyist members of the country. In his interview with Trotsky, Fossa had complained that a good part of the Bolshevik-Leninists of Argentina were 'café masturbators' (31). Justo showed a will to militate seriously, which gained him the support of certain sectors (the 'La Plata students' group of Jorge Lagos, a group of 'anarchist students' headed by Jorge Abelardo Ramos - Servignac - 'Irlan' Mateo Fossa himself) with which he began to publish in April 1939 'La Internacional' (later 'La Nueva Internacional') which will be the basis on which the GOR (Revolutionary Workers Group) will be constructed.

The GOR proved itself very active, publishing its press in a large print run - 5000 and even 10000 copies on the occasion of the assassination of Trotsky, in spite of the meagre number of members, some fifteen.

Nevertheless, the organisation effort, did not hide the impatience to build an important political group without passing through a patient militant work: the majority of papers were given out in factory gateways and public squares.

A transport worker - a Yugoslav - who participated in the GOR, remembers: "Quebracho (new pseudonym for Justo - author's note) displayed an extraordinary activity in the movement, explainable by his economic conditions, his will to work in a movement under his leadership, his ideological assets, in addition to a certain better security in illegal work than any other militant could enjoy" (32). Which did not impede first Lagos (Frigerio), leaving GOR, at the end of 1939, in disagreement with the slogan of 'national liberation' (about which we intend to occupy ourselves) in order to form his own group; then Ramos (in a much more obscure dispute in which he tried to expel Justo) who together with his followers (six students according to the above quoted worker) formed the Bolsheviks Leninists - to which one must add Gallo himself, who had restarted the publication of 'Nueva Etapa' and reconstituted the above mentioned LCI. The 'Inicial' group made some attempt at unity at the end of 1939 which failed, but attracted some dispersed militants. A little later it came across a group of "independents, probably a new split from the CP" (33) attempted to form a Commission of Unification, which didn't succeed in uniting all the groups, but allowed the moving closer of 'Inicial', 'Nueva Etapa', the 'La Plata group', that 'of Rosario' and even that 'of Cordoba' (animated by Posadas, and which would soon return to its initial isolation). It is this process to which Orza (the transport worker mentioned) refers - separating himself at that time from GOR: "Upon its constitution, the 'Inicial' group immediately started to delimit themselves two positions: one whose main preoccupation was the anti-stalinist struggle, ended expressing itself as an anti-marxist current (...) this ideological discrepancy led us to form another group, the Liga Obrera Socialista, made up of Ontiveros, Miguel, Mecha, Marga, Angelica, Fernandez, the group of tramway workers from the railway workshops of Liniers and of other militants, with the adherence of the La Plata group - Lagos - and that of Rosario - Narvaja. In reality it was the only Trotskyist group which had a certain working class base. The role of theoretical brains was carried out by Ontiveros, Narvaja, Lagos..."(34). We are in March 1940, and in July, Ramos and his group join the LOS. In appearance the vast majority of the Argentine partisans of the IV. International have unified. But dispersion is the sign of the time: Lagos and Posadas "reveal themselves" a little later, returning to their "regional independence". The national conference of the LOS planned for the end of 1940, does not take place. The LOS, which had written to the Executive Committee of the IV. International - now removed from Paris to New York because of the war - asking for recognition as the section, would have to lower its aspirations.

Meanwhile the GOR, in which Mateo Fossa had stayed, redoubles its efforts thanks to the activity of Quebracho, continues publishing its press and strengthens itself incorporating some workers nuclei in Resistencia and Mendoza. In May 1941 it feels that its growth is sufficient to enable it to transform itself into the Liga Obrera Revolucionaria (LOR).

The problem of national liberation.

If we have dwelled a little on the figure of Quebracho, it is because his

presence in the Argentine 'movement' will operate as a real catalyst of the political positions in play. Although he would not be exempt from the climate of the existing personal disputes and rancour, he preoccupied himself likewise with giving a political character to the differences.

The polarisation around two main groups (LOS & GOR) helped the politicisation of the differences. But it helped much more the evolution of the political situation. The abstraction and personalism of the positions were confusing them in the face of the necessity for precise political definitions before a changing situation. The exacerbation of the inter-imperialist dispute, which will soon lead to war, upset all relations within the Argentine bourgeoisie, and its relations with the different imperialisms. To divide the Argentine bourgeoisie between pro-allied and pro-German would be an oversimplified schema: to that one would have to add in the pro-allied camp, the dispute which broke out (with less noise) between the traditionally pro-English and pro-Yankee elements. Finally, no classification of this type would be able to clearly exhaust the explanation that it was not a matter of a mere dispute between agents of rival imperialisms, but of a bourgeoisie which discussed its re-alignment in the face of an imperialist system weakened and in crisis, which threatened to radically transform itself as a result of the world conflict. History said that this crisis would end up refracting itself in a remarkable way in the institution par excellence of the state - the army - producing an unexpected result for all the sectors in struggle, through successive crises and an intervention of the masses. For the moment the changes reflected themselves in the deterioration of the political situation of the 'infamous decade': to the novelty of an ex radical president one had to add the contradiction that the latter would intervene the province of Buenos Aires, in the hands of a conservative (the philo-fascist Fresco) who was the symbol itself of the 'patriotic fraud'. The old political oppositions (conservatives/radicals, radicals/socialists, socialists/communists, etc.) tended to cede ground to other, newer ones: a breath of the Peoples Front had gone through the streets of Bs. As. when the tribune of 1. May in 1936 gave refuge to a formidable anticipation of the Democratic Union of 1945 - UCR, PDP, CP and SP.

Within the Trotskyist movement, Quebracho occupied, because of his own family background and experience, a privileged place from which to analyse the conflicts in the midst of the Argentine bourgeoisie. He did it with sharpness in a series of articles and pamphlets, where he similarly tried to fix the lines of political conduct for the Trotskyists to adopt. It was these positions which clearly hastened the political divergencies. We will transcribe some as briefly as possible.

"Argentina is a semi-colonial country tied to imperialism. This situation is derived, in the first instance, from its condition as an agrarian-livestock based country, which places it before the large industrial countries, in a dependent situation analogous to that in which the country finds itself in respect of the town. Argentina has been, through many years, a type of economic appendage of Europe, and particularly of England, which absorbs a large part of its production. This situation completely deformed the harmonic development of the productive forces of the country, paralysing its industrial evolution and the concomitant creation of an internal market, at the same time allowing the Argentine cattle-raising oligarchy with parallel interests to English imperialism - to perpetuate themselves in power until it constitutes the main brake on the progress of the republic (...) Hipólito Irigoyen, although not in the form which the real interests of the country demand, meant a little reaction against this state of things. Therefore he maintained Argentina neutral during the first world war, therefore he tried to nationalise oil and therefore, also, the oligarchy and imperialism overthrew him (...) the Radical Party was not dislodged from power because it was really anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialistic, but because it was a bad servant of the oligarchy and imperialism" (35). To keep ourselves to the essential, titles and sub-titles of other articles will give an idea of their content: "The socialists of the Casa del Pueblo, belicose vanguard of Anglo-French imperialism - The stalinists maintain a 'neutrality' at the service of nazism (at the time of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact - author's note) - The Argentine people do not want to go to the slaughter. The voice of neutrality extends itself throughout the country - We maintain neutrality, not in the name of Hipólito Irigoyen, but in the name

of workers internationalism - While Hitler 'protects' Europe from England, USA prepares itself to 'protect' Latin America from the nazi threat - The country moves towards the establishment of a strong government, resulting from the open struggle between the oligarchic sectors connected to the struggling imperialist gangs - Should we submit and go to die in the service of imperialism or struggle for national liberation?" To round out the thoughts of Justo we will see his answer to this last question: "The Yankee tutelage is preferable to misery - today this has been converted into the voice of order of the Argentine cattle-raising bourgeoisie (...) We utilise the evident decline and possible final fall of English imperialism, which has the country enchained and paralyses its progress, in order to achieve our economic liberation. It is impossible to remain impassive before the perspective of those English companies of public-services, industrial enterprises, agricultural companies and banks changing owners and going into US hands, as a legacy of war, as all the possibilities seem to indicate. The same can be said of territories which legitimately belong to Argentina, like the Malvinas. The Argentine people should demand and take measures to get restitution of all that belongs to it (...) The people has before it a double road on which this dual perspective will open up: to struggle for national liberation or to submit itself and to go and die in the service of imperialism which oppresses and exploits it. Its vanguard, the revolutionary proletariat, must make it choose its route" (36).

Here there was an obvious preoccupation to receive recognition from the IV. International as Argentine representative - Quebracho branched out into themes and terminology which until that time had been the patrimony of nationalist sectors (some reformist groups, FORJA) (37), and less so, of stalinism itself. But the polemic elucidated by the representatives of the 'old' Trotskyist movement was not absolutely terminological. Under the pen of Antonio Gallo, 'Inicial' published an article entitled "The position of the IV. International - National Liberation or Socialism?" in which one could read: A definitive theoretical gain. Thirty years ago, the reformist leader Juan B Justo stated what constitutes an unrenouncible theoretical gain of the whole of the Argentine proletariat, ratified by centrists of the Del Valle Iberlucea type, enriched and completed by the different Marxist movements that had existed in the country and defended, above all, by the leaders of the IV. International in Argentina: the capitalist character of the country's evolution, and the socialist character of the revolution. This principle is the bed-rock of the class struggle of the Argentine proletariat, its best gain on the theoretical plane (...) He who denies this is a vulgar traitor to the proletariat.

"The Argentine bourgeoisie, differing from that of the other indo-american states, is based on an economy which to a certain degree is its own, it has a considerable experience, counts on a well organised state and a formidable repressive apparatus. It has already made its revolution and is disposed to enjoy its profits. It doesn't have the least intention of launching itself into any 'anti-imperialist' revolution (...) José Carlos Mariátegui, the great American Marxist, wisely noted this difference existing between Argentina and the other American states. Radicalism and the oligarchy are equal accomplices of international finance capital which dominates Argentina economically (...) There are no more democratic revolutions, only socialist revolutions. The IV. International doesn't accept any slogan of 'National Liberation' that tends to subordinate the proletariat to the ruling classes and, on the contrary, assures that the first step of proletarian national liberation is the fight against precisely those classes.

"Recently Mr Marianetti republished the stalinist slogan, and lately a Mr. Quebracho and the fascists of the Alliance of Nationalist Youth made it theirs. But in the ranks of the IV. International one will not succeed in introducing the least confusion in this respect. In a recent article in 'La Nueva Internacional' (January 1940), comrade J Lagos characterises the 'national liberation' slogan as a "variety of the Peoples Front", a position exactly identical to that of the fascists (...) 'National Liberation' has nothing to do with our movement. For the class struggle! For the socialist revolution!" (38).

Seldom had it been said so clear - the finger was put in the sore. Jorge Lagos had, in effect, defended similar positions within the GOR (where the positions of Quebracho soon attained hegemony) before leaving and going on to increase the size of the LOS. He would write a pamphlet for the latter in

October 1940 - which played an important role at that time - where one could read: "As much as we value in importance the combatative role of the urban and rural middle class, we refuse categorically to condition the character, the intensity, the form of the social movement of the working class to the fickleness, the inconsistency and weakness of the petty bourgeoisie, such as the panegyrists of anti-imperialism try to do. One must have the audacity of the ignoramous and the chatter of the charlatan to refer to oneself in the general way as does the author of the pamphlet (Quebracho - author's note) to the paralysation of the industrial evolution of the country, as if it did not have industries, and equally to the internal market, as if this did not exist. The characteristics of our countries do not inform of some deformation of the capitalist economy - on the contrary, its form is natural to the existence of capitalism in the semi-colonies in the epoch of 'moribund capitalism' (...) The Argentine proletariat, two and a half million exclusively industrial workers, so infamously and violently exploited...will have to get ready to declare the strike and eventually take over control of the foreign factories, respecting the national ones (...) The working class of our countries must encompass the struggle that the bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying out but, far from seeking out the future national masters, it must think, work and struggle for its own power, for the Proletarian Revolution. In conclusion. Among the Aprista, stalinist, petty bourgeois nationalist and fascist theorists the tendency exists to mask the exploitation of the national bourgeoisie with that carried out by imperialism in combination with it; in seperating them, in presenting supposed and non-existing semi-colonial bourgeois groups interested in crossing swords with imperialism".

He ends with a paragraph of a prophetic tone: "Within this great social movement in which the industrial cities will have a directing role, the national movement will move over into second place. The important thing will be the Social Revolution which, without doubt will have continental consequences. Our revolution will be proletarian-socialist and not of bourgeois National Liberation" (39).

The discussion based itself upon national characteristics, even accepting the existence of "two and a half million industrial workers" in the Argentina of 1940, which constitutes a rash remark or an exaggeration. But the discussion has a world-wide programmatic range, as what is being debated is the nature itself of the imperialist system. No one formally denies the semi-colonial character of Argentina; the problem is what one understands by that, and what conclusion is it necessary to draw, in relation to the place occupied by the native proletariat vis-a-vis imperialism and the national bourgeoisie.

The debate concerns then, the whole IV. International. The LOS tried to give programmatic form to its ideas in that respect in the theses which preceded the already mentioned (and abortive) "first national conference", at the end of 1940, entitled "Socialist Revolution or National Liberation ?" : "The independence movement in Argentina was a bourgeois revolution, different from other countries of the continent, where it didn't have such clear characteristics, as in Peru for example. In the Argentine Republic there is a proletariat and capitalism, profit and surplus value and therefore class struggle, and thus the strategy of the proletariat must be that of the socialist revolution (...) The formalist pedants and the opportunists replace the class dynamic by purely national ideas. In consequence, if Argentina is a semi-colonial country in spite of enjoying political independence for more than a century, they convert themselves into standard-bearers of 'national liberation'. Marxist theory and strategy rejects categorically in all cases, the stupid idea that the proletariat should convert itself into a standard-bearer of bourgeois ideas and movements of 'national liberation' (...) as a party we always defend, and in the first rank, the socialist revolution, and counterpose it dialectically to national independence. It is a miserable reactionary concession to abandon the class struggle and the socialist revolution in order to launch oneself into agitation for the slogan which, apart from being alien to us, is the main motif of the demagogic agitation of fascists and stalinists and which, therefore, is resisted by all".

"What is national liberation ? The payment of the expropriations, or is it the best business deal of its radical and conservative agents ? In our country national liberation is not, nor can be, anything but the monopolist coordination

of transport, or the buying of the railways proposed by linedo. The 'anti-imperialism' which involves the 'national liberation' of fascists, stalinists and Quebrachists is a reactionary trick. The world must conduct itself according to international finance capital, or according to the international socialist order... The only anti-imperialism of good coin is socialism. The only anti-fascism of good coin is socialism. Upstarts and adventurers like Quebracho should found the fifth international...4) The characteristics of an advanced semi-colonial country, the relative industrial evolution, the high percentage of workers, the characteristics of agrarian exploitation, the theoretical, political and organisational traditions of the proletariat, and, above all, the conditions of the present imperialist epoch, of maturity for a world socialist economy, determine the strategy of the proletarian vanguard, the Argentine section of the IV. International in formation. That is, the strategy of the class struggle and of the socialist revolution. The revolution cannot stop itself at the democratic measures, nor within national limits. It will extend itself to the other American countries and it will seek the solidarity of the US workers. The problem posed thus eliminates all opportunist and demagogic considerations of 'national liberation' (40).

The position is formulated with clarity, although not with security: first the national characteristics are affirmed in order to establish the strategy of a purely socialist revolution (that is, it doesn't include national and democratic tasks in its programme), in order to further state that although the former did not exist, it would be the international conditions that would decide things. Regarding the fundamental political conclusion for the moment, that of the attitude towards the world war, this group will tend towards - as a consequence, one must recognise it, with all that exposed above - the classic slogan of 'revolutionary defeatism' (in 1941, 'Inicial' will state: "In Argentina the imperialist war must be transformed into a civil war"), without pre-occupying themselves too much by the fact that Argentina had not entered the war. Nevertheless, this was the main motive of the conflict between the Argentine bourgeoisie and the Yankees, who in March 1942 prepare to prohibit the export to Argentina of a series of basic products, owing to the refusal of the Argentine government to align itself unconditionally behind US bellicosity (in the Rio de Janeiro conference of 1942).

Notes.

- 1) L. Trotsky, 'Sobre la liberación Nacional', Pluma, 1976, P 67.
- 2) 'The Militant', 21. 12. 1930.
- 3) Roberto Guinney was born in England and educated in St. Petersburg, Russia, in the epoch of Alexander II. Returning to England he knew Tom Mann, leading figure of the 'New Unionism'. He emigrated to Argentina where he joined the CP in 1923. He was secretary of his sector of the Russian/Ukrainian language section. A leader of the PCRA (of Penelón) (facts from above cited copy of 'The Militant'). The names of the members of the CCO-ICA that we have been able to locate are: R & M Guinney, Camilo López, 'Juana', Ostrovsky and Manulis.
- 4) Mateo Fossa in 'La Opinión', "Mateo Fossa, el argentino que estuvo con Trotsky" (the Argentine who visited Trotsky - translator), 9. 1. 72.
- 5) Robert J Alexander, "Communism in Latin America", Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 1957, P 160. Also Emilio J Corbiere, "La fundación del Partido Comunista" in "Todo es Historia" 106, March '76, Bs. As.
- 6) "Breve reseña del movimiento cuartainternacionalista argentino", Acción Obrera, Bs. As. 1941 (Brief account of the Argentine F.I. movement - trans.).
- 7) 'Boletín de Oposición', February 1933, Bs. As. And, "Esbozo de historia del P.C. Argentino", quoted by JA Ramos, "Historia del Stalinismo en Argentina", Coyoacan, Bs. As. 1962, P 31.
- 8) "Breve reseña..."
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) 'Tribuna Leninista', No 1, Bs. As. December 1933.
- 11) Ibid. No 7, October 1934.
- 12) Ibid. No 1.
- 13) 'Nueva Etapa', No 1, Rosario, August 1933.
- 13a) In 'NE' No 6, David A Siburu, its main editor with Gallo (the 'NE' group was mainly situated in Rósario), stated: "at this moment in time they

scream without rhyme or reason against radicalism, it is to serve fascism and reaction which they have elevated upon its defeat", in allusion to 'Tribuna Leninista', quoted by the LOR in 'Análisis esquemático de las posiciones doctrinarias frente a los problemas nacionales sostenidas en su desarrollo por el movimiento cuartinternacionalista argentino', Part 1, 'Los Maestros', Bs. As. August 1941.

- 14) 'TL' No 7.
- 15) Ramos, op cit. P 85.
- 16) Carlos Silveyra, 'El Comunismo en Argentina', CPAACC, Bs. As. 1936. P 255.
- 17) Ramos, op cit. P 123.
- 18) 'Análisis esquemático...'
- 19) Ibid.
- 20) 'La Opinión', 9. 1. 72.
- 21) Alexander, 'Communism...', P 165.
- 22) 'La Opinión'. The editors of 'Pluma' are mistaken when they present Fossa as "forming part of the first Trotskyist group in Argentina" (L. Trotsky, 'Sobre...', P 71). Fossa joined in the period related above.
- 23) Arturo Jauretche, 'FORJA y la Década Infame', Mar Dulce, Bs. As. 1969, P 123.
- 24) 'Análisis esquemático...'
- 25) Ibid.
- 26) Quebracho, 'Cómo salir del pantano', Acción Obrera, Bs. As. 1939, P 8.
- 27) Rogelio García Lupo, preface to 'Masas y Balas' by Lebodón Garra, de la Flor Bs. As. 1974, P. 7.
- 28) Jean Jaques Marie, 'Le Trotskisme', Flammarion, Paris, 1977, P 93.
- 29) 'La Opinión', 9. 1. 72. and 'Cómo salir...', P 10.
- 30) 'Cómo salir...', P 11.
- 31) 'La Opinión', 9. 1. 72.
- 32) Miguel Medunich Orza, 'Los intelectuales de izquierda vistos por un obrero', Astral, Bs. As. 1970, P 38.
- 33) Robert J Alexander, 'Trotskyism in Latin America', Hoover University Press, Stanford University, California, 1973, P 53.
- 34) Medunich Orza, op cit. P 41. Miguel is Oscar Posse, Mecha is Mecha Baçall, Marga is Margarita Gallo, sister of Antonio, Angélica is probably Angélica Mendez, a union leader of Mendoza teachers, ex-CP member and having broken with the 'Sparkists' becoming linked to Raurich and thus Trotskyism. She was a university teacher (in the Philosophy & Arts faculty at Buenos Aires), and called 'La Negra'.
- 35) 'La Argentina frente a la guerra mundial', Acción Obrera, Bs. As. 1940.
- 36) Ibid.
- 37) FORJA: Fuerza de Orientación de la Joven Argentina. A youth group of the Unión Cívica Radical which proposed a nationalist orientation which would continue and supersede the limits of 'Irigoyenism' - Irigoyen is the radical president brought down by the 1930 coup. Opponents of the conciliatory wing of Alvear. Jauretche, Dellepiane, etc, participated in it. They derived inspiration from the works of the nationalist writer Raul Scalabrini Ortiz. Some later went into Peronism. They were accused of links with nazi sectors.
- 38) Liborio Justo, 'Estrategia Revolucionaria', Fragua, Bs. As. 1957, P 77.
- 39) 'Estrategia...', P 85-86.
- 40) Ibid. P 79-80.

Martin Valle

(militant of Política Obrera)

Translator's note.

This is the first part of a two part work reaching up to 1945, published in 'Internacionalismo' No 3, August 1981, and No 4, January-April 1982. The author planned to add a latter part and publish it as a book in Argentina, following the fall of the Videla, Viola, Galtieri, etc, dictatorship. Política Obrera took responsibility for publishing 'Internacionalismo' in exile, as the journal of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency.

m.j. (6. 6. 86).

The reader will be able to excuse us the transcription 'in extenso' of the previous quotes, which have as their object the exact explanation of the positions present in this extremely important debate. We share the evaluation of Guillermo Lora: "The discussion held starting from 1939 (in Argentina) always having the problem of unification as its axis, and which did not take long in centring itself around the axis of the national question, had in its time and still has, a capital importance for the IV. International in America, in Bolivia and in the whole world, as it posed the crucial points of the revolution in the backward countries in our epoch. It is a real shame that the histories of the IV. International which circulate do not refer at all to this significant occurrence" (41).

However, that is not to say that it was only this discussion which influenced the life of the Trotskyist groups of the time. We know that the Moscow Trials, with their resulting vile accusations and executions of the old leaders of Bolshevism, had a strong demoralising effect on many cadres of the revolutionary and workers movement, including Trotskyist militants. The assassination of Trotsky (August, 1940) similarly, not only robbed the IV. International of an irreplaceable leader but removed one of its emblems as a movement: that of having at its head one of the leaders of the October Revolution, an expression and embodiment of its organic continuity with Bolshevism. One depended on the hope of the rapid conversion of the IV. International - with Trotsky at its head - into a leading force, upon the ending of the Second World War and the opening up of a revolutionary period. It is possible that, in Argentina, the desertion of Antonio Gallo from the movement - in August, 1941 - is connected to these episodes, as those of some other hesitant cadres, or by being 'spent' by the isolation, though often this was hidden by the advancing of 'personal motives' as the justification for such resignations. The abandonment of Trotskyism by the other leading cadre from the beginning of the 1930's, Pedro Milessi, resulted from the first international crisis of the Fourth since its proclamation: the discussion on the nature of the Soviet state, which the Shachtman-Burnham faction of the SWP denied was a "degenerated workers state", and saw it as a new form of class oppression. These 'anti-defencist' positions (called as such due to the denial of the principle of unconditional defence of the USSR in the face of a capitalist aggression) had some influence in Argentina - at least Milessi would be expelled from the LOS in March 1941 as a result of them. The only member of the Executive Committee elected by the foundation conference of the Fourth who supported them (the Brazilian Lebrun - pseudonym of Mario Pedrosa) journeyed to the Southern Cone to win supporters, without great success in Argentina (Liberio Justo claims that in 1940 he met with a special envoy of the 'anti-defencist minority' of the SWP, who didn't convince him, without mentioning if it concerned Lebrun) - but with more success in Uruguay, where the future section of the IV. International emerged as an 'anti-defencist' group tied to the international current headed by Shachtman, in order to later modify this position and affiliate to the Fourth.

These events, however, seem to only have influenced the immediate destiny of a few militants, taken individually. The discussion on the national question, on the other hand, decisively influenced the formation, the regroupment or even the disappearance of the organisations. This was because it decidedly displaced the axis of the debate from the international or doctrinal questions (Stalinism, the USSR, the Spanish Civil War) or from the organisational or even personal ones, towards the immediate strategic problems to be confronted by the Fourth Internationalist movement in Argentina and Latin America. From that point of view it could not but have healthy results. Already Trotsky had demonstrated to Mateo Fossa that the press of the Fourth in Argentina referred too much exclusively to doctrinal problems ("They are in Argentina, they have a series of revolutionary problems, one must deal with these problems and resolve them in the best possible way. And not talk of Trotsky. Resolve the problems of the country, the revolutionary problems" - 34 years later Mateo Fossa recalls the words of Trotsky thus, on that occasion) (42).

For 1941, the Executive Committee of the IV. International had moved itself from Europe (where the development of the war and the nazi occupation impeded its functioning) to the USA. In fact, its leadership rested on the most

experienced militants of the SWP (Cannon, Dunne, Curtis) and on some European leaders exiled in North America with the aim of securing the continuity of activity of the international centre (Marc Loris, one time secretary to Trotsky, Fischer). The IEC had equipped itself with a Latin American department which sent letters to the groups on the continent which supported the Fourth and made reports on them for the international leadership. During 1941, the IEC intervened openly in the polemic between the Argentine groups. This polemic had by now spread to the majority of Latin American groups adhering to the Fourth. Quebracho (who at the time already saw himself as the head of an international tendency against the 'centrism' of his opponents) writes: "Against (the LOR and the 'national liberation' concept) were the so-called 'trotskyists' of Uruguay, through the Liga Bolchevique Leninista, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario of Bolivia (however, the Centro Revolucionario of Bolivia, wrote...that it shared the positions in our pamphlets) and the Partido Obrero Internacionalista of Chile. Supporting us...the Partido Obrero Revolucionario of Chile (...) also accompanying us in defence of 'national liberation' was the Partido Obrero Revolucionario of Cuba" (43).

In effect, Justo had been active in the diffusion of his positions throughout the continent. Diego Enriquez, the main leader of the Chilean POR, would end up representing his struggle against the POI as a battle against 'centrism', in the same manner as that waged by the Argentine LOR against the LOS, even taking up the criticisms which Quebracho was by now making public of the 'ambivalent' policy towards it followed by the IEC and LA Department (44).

As for the Bolivian POR, Guillermo Lora admits that at that time its leadership defended the conception of a purely socialist revolution which ignored the national question, which reflected the lack of clarity on the issue in the POR programme adopted in 1938 (45).

The only pronouncement of an official nature by the IEC about the polemic would be a brief set of theses written in May, 1941 referring to the question which largely concerned themselves, in fact, with the slogan of 'neutrality' raised by the LOR. We will reproduce the essence of it, pointing out that in its introduction it characterised the discussion as 'very serious' and concerning all the colonial and semi-colonial countries:

"In almost all the countries of the world, just as in the semi-colonial countries, the bourgeoisie is divided into 3 sectors concerning the question of their participation in the imperialist war: 1) a sector of the bourgeoisie favouring anglo-american imperialism; 2) a sector favouring German imperialism; 3) a sector wishing to be neutral in the struggle between these imperialisms. It is only under very special circumstances that the bourgeoisie of a small or semi-colonial country can effectively be neutral.

"(...) For the proletariat or some section of it to support the idea of neutrality and to present it as a slogan would only succeed if it tied itself to that section of the bourgeoisie hoping and praying that the world war will leave it alone. In spite of whatever attempt one makes to give the idea of neutrality some content which distinguishes it in its use by the proletariat from that which some sector of the bourgeoisie gives it, it leads inevitably to the blunting of the distinction between the revolutionary party of the proletariat and that sector of the bourgeoisie defending neutrality. (...) The concept of neutrality tends to evolve in a purely legalist direction. One adopts the idea that a neutral nation can be impartial in a fight between two imperialist powers. Impartial means that whatever one allows one power, will also be allowed the other. This totally lacks the spirit of struggle against the two imperialist camps. In its apparent attitude of indifference to the victory of either camp, one cannot find the proletarian attitude that both camps are in reality one and the same and must be destroyed.

"Needless to say, of course, that the forces of the IV. International cannot ever be neutral in a fight between a colonial or semi-colonial people against an imperialist power. We understand perfectly that the comrades who utilise the neutrality slogan do not wish to give the impression that they would be neutral in such a case (...) The slogan of neutrality in most cases leads to a passive role which does not promote the struggle against imperialism. A slogan of this nature, in consequence, can not be adopted by the IV. International.

The revolutionary parties of the South American countries, South American sections of the IV. International, must utilise slogans which mobilise the workers and peasants of those countries against all the imperialisms (...). Attacking not through neutrality, but through an active anti-imperialist struggle, imperialism in general, must be pointed towards the main imperialist danger at the time. In this case Yankee imperialism is lining up all Latin America behind its own aims. We must attack above all Yankee imperialism. The proletariat must clearly distinguish itself from its own bourgeoisie which only plays at neutrality in order to win a place where it can negotiate a greater part of the loot of imperialist exploitation, or in order to sell itself for a higher price to one of the powers. Today it is American imperialism which is being assisted by the Latin American bourgeoisie. The assistance under the mask of the defence of democracy against fascism, must be exposed and attacked by our forces. It must be clear that only through the alliance of the Latin American masses with the American proletariat can American imperialism be defeated as much as the native bourgeoisies in their common machinations in order to preserve the Latin American peoples under their yoke.

"As substitutes for the slogan of neutrality we propose: Down with the imperialist war! Down with Yankee imperialism! Against all the imperialist exploiters! For the socialist unity of Latin America!" (46).

The declaration is far from the slogan of 'revolutionary defeatism' (a position which, however, it does not criticise). The slogan of neutrality is correctly criticised, as belonging to (a sector) of the native bourgeoisie: in Argentina it was defended by the oligarchic sectors most linked with British imperialism, for whom the entry of our country into the war accelerated its passage into the orbit of Yankee imperialism. Still neutral, Argentina maintained itself during the bellicose period as the main supplier of meat to Britain.

Precisely because of its character, 'neutrality' isn't a slogan able to mobilise the masses against the war and imperialism. Purely legalist, it is a bourgeois slogan that can only translate into an attitude of pressure on the government; that is, which places the proletariat behind the national bourgeoisie. The LOR accepted the withdrawal of the slogan. It is significant that Quebracho, soon to launch himself into a violent battle against the IEC of the IV. International, made no further references ever, in the many texts he devoted to the issue, to this set of theses of the IEC, the only official ones on the problem.

Which was the orientation in order to prepare an independent mobilisation of the masses, in that situation? That of the IEC limits itself to the level of generalities (down with the war, imperialism, the exploiters). On the other hand, though within an opportunist perspective of pressure on the bourgeoisie ('neutrality'), the LOR posed that the workers should have taken advantage of the war in order to raise the expropriation of the imperialist enterprises and banks ('national liberation'). The perspective of a mass anti-imperialist movement, in which the Trotskyists should fight in order to provide it with an independent working class leadership, was one of the basic prognoses of the analysis of the IV. International concerning the war. In the 'Emergency Manifesto' on the war - one of Trotsky's last writings - one can read:

"By its very creation of enormous difficulties and dangers for the imperialist metropolitan centres, the war opens up wide possibilities for the oppressed peoples. The rumblings of canon in Europe heralds the approaching hour of their liberation".

The political confusion of the IEC on that aspect, was evident in a fragment of the report of its delegate who at the time travelled in Argentina (Sherry Mangan):

"...the total rejection of 'neutrality' by the LOS, not only as a slogan but as a talking point, strikes this observer as it contains much sectarianism and ultra-leftism (...) The desire for neutrality on the part of the Argentine proletariat, the rural workers, and broad sectors of the petty bourgeoisie, is passionate and profound...that popular sentiment can be used as a point of departure for an effective explanation to the industrial workers and rural workers of: a) why the national bourgeoisie cannot because of its very nature be permanently neutral and keep Argentina out of the imperialist war; b) why a passive or merely neutral attitude on the part of the workers implies that

they are tied to the national bourgeoisie, it is not only ineffective, but contrary to their interests and those of the workers of the belligerent countries - that their natural wish to not end up in the imperialist slaughter can be better expressed and served by taking an active position against both imperialist camps" (47).

How does one take up an 'active' position? It is a problem that the IEC declaration doesn't resolve. Its confusion expresses itself also in the benevolence of its criticism of the LOS, in respect to the hardness concerning the LOR: if the position of the latter was wrong (and the criticism of the IEC partially correct), that of the LOS ('revolutionary defeatism') was directly disastrous; it didn't take into account that Argentina didn't participate in the war, nor struggled against the pressures of imperialism to involve Argentina in it.

Besides, the Argentine government maintained frictions with the Yanks in that respect (it didn't wish to participate). This was the other omission of the IEC: the possibility of frictions between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie (the declaration only speaks of the 'common machinations' of the two of them). The case arose in a very practical manner in 1942 in Argentina and Chile, countries not involved in the war, after the Pan-American Conference of Rio de Janeiro. The importance of this crisis in the relations between the oppressed country and imperialism, is enormous, as it creates the possibility of a mass anti-imperialist movement - of which a sector of the bourgeoisie will inevitably attempt to take control of (3 years later - 1945 - the development of that crisis led to the birth of Peronism in Argentina). The crisis was already visible at the time of the IEC declaration. After the 1942 conference, imperialism threatened to blockade - inclusive militarily - Chile, if it didn't enter the war. Faced with the unwilling capitulation of the Chilean bourgeoisie, the POR - section of the IV. International in that country - posed:

"This right to national self-determination is essentially bourgeois democratic and not socialist. But the rupture of the world imperialist front is not conceivable other than as opening up a wide door to all the subject peoples of the earth in order to decide their own destiny. The Atlantic Charter itself, which neither Britain nor the USA respect, establishes in one of its points this fundamental right. In Chile, the dependent and cowardly bourgeoisie is incapable of raising this democratic banner (...) The internal and external politics of Chile MUST BE DECIDED IN CHILE and not in the United States...in Chile the only class CAPABLE OF ADVANCING A POLICY OF THIS TYPE IS THE PROLETARIAT and not the governing bourgeoisie" (48).

Here one can see the influence of the positions of the LOR. But the possibility of a debate inside the Fourth that would clarify these questions will be frustrated. Because at that precise moment, Quebracho is already resolutely leading the LOR towards a break with the IV. International.

The polemic between Quebracho and Marc Loris.

In the same 'International Bulletin' where the IEC theses were published, 'On the slogan of neutrality', a member of the IEC, Marc Loris publishes a 'Letter to the Argentine Comrades' aimed at criticising two pamphlets which we have already quoted from: 'La Argentina frente a la guerra mundial' of the GOR, and 'La IV. Internacional y la lucha contra el imperialismo' by Jorge Lagos (LOS). Loris clearly develops the confused aspects of the IEC position, although in a personal capacity. In fact, this leads him to defend the positions of the LOS against the GOR.

Concerning the paragraph of the GOR: "we make agitation in favour of Argentina itself, so that all the great public service companies, industrial enterprises, agricultural societies and foreign banks that at present impoverish and dominate us pass into the hands of our people" - Loris can find nothing better to say in reply than: "And the national bourgeoisie? What does one wish to say with the formula 'pass into the hands of our people'?" This is part of the arsenal gone from the epoch and left behind by all the petty bourgeois demagogues".

A bit further on: "The pamphlet (of the GOR) speaks likewise of the Argentine economy as 'deformed' by imperialist oppression. Will it be a

question of 'restoring' the Argentine economy, of making it 'normal'? Within the framework of imperialist capitalism, is it possible to expect that it will follow a course of harmonious development?'. And later he compares the 'author of the pamphlet' with...Sismondi (49), describing his perspective as 'reformist'. Faced with this manifest incomprehension of the role of imperialism in the backward countries, of the different place occupied in the imperialist system by oppressor and oppressed countries, Quebracho, far from polemicising in order to put it into relief, limits himself to dryly replying: "we didn't write so that the imbeciles could read us" (50).

After counting the times the word 'socialism' appears in the GOR pamphlet, Loris is scandalised by seeing that: "the proletarian revolution is presented as the instrument, the means of national emancipation!!" Loris sprinkles, finally, his 'demolition' of the GOR with observations like "NO, all this is far, very far, from Marxism...No, here there is no revolutionary language"(sic). Then he passes onto the criticism of 'comrade Lagos' - praising him beforehand for having 'corrected' the errors of the GOR, "although falling into, at times, errors of a sectarian nature". Faced with the affirmation of Lagos about the lack of feudal remnants in Argentina (which for him was the basis of his strategy of the purely socialist revolution) Loris replies that such remnants exist in countries like the USA or Britain - in order to then comment: "it is not a question of transplanting the proletarian revolution with the bourgeois revolution. But the proletarian revolution itself resolves the bourgeois democratic tasks which the most advanced bourgeoisies have been and are not capable of resolving". Loris adheres then, to the thesis of the similarity of the revolution in the advanced countries (those having accomplished their bourgeois democratic revolution) and the backward ones (those not having gone beyond such a revolution). In the name of every revolution - in the imperialist epoch - cannot conclude triumphally except as a proletarian revolution, one negates every difference between the programme of the revolution in a metropolitan country and in an oppressed country. Furthermore, the only moment when national oppression appears for Loris, is when he sees himself obliged to criticise the following position of Lagos: "A war between one of our countries and one of the imperialist sectors will be an imperialist war". In reality, the whole polemic between the Argentine groups was contained here: if the war between a semi-colonial country and an imperialist country is an imperialist war on both sides, what devils imperialism represents?

Loris reminds Lagos that a war between a colony and an imperialist country 'can be' a war of anti-imperialist defence. And nothing more (51).

What is evident - in the measure that Loris is a member of the IEC of the IV. International - is the confusion existing in that leadership in respect of the oppressed countries. One distinguishes - formally - between oppressor and oppressed countries, to then end up assimilating them. One denies the need for the proletariat of the backward countries to fight for national liberation. Within the revolutionary movement, this position has an antecedent: that posed at one time by Rosa Luxemburg and Piatakov - criticised by Lenin in 'A Caricature of Marxism' - which denied the struggle for 'national self-determination', with the hypothesis that it was unrealisable under imperialism, and that the socialist revolution signifies the destruction of national borders (dissolution of nations). Lenin replied that such 'unrealisability' did not exist, but that, "not only the right of nations to self-determination, but all the fundamental demands of political democracy are only partially 'realisable' under imperialism, and then in a distorted form and by way of exception". He pointed out that: "It would be a radical mistake to think that the struggle for democracy was capable of diverting the proletariat from the socialist revolution, or of hiding, overshadowing it, etc. On the contrary, in the same way as there can be no victorious socialism that does not practise full democracy, so the proletariat cannot prepare for its victory over the bourgeoisie without an all-round, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy" (in theses on 'The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination', from 1916). This question was particularly important in that it refers to the colonial and semi-colonial proletariat. For Lenin, "it is perfectly clear that in the impending decisive battles in the world revolution, the movement of the majority of the population of the globe, initially directed

towards national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism and will, perhaps, play a much more revolutionary part than we expect" ('Report on the Tactic of the RCP', 3. Congress of C.I., 1921 - our stress).

If it is correct to pose that the bourgeoisie of the backward countries - in the present epoch of imperialism - cannot liberate its country nor consummate the democratic revolution, this doesn't mean to say that the proletariat ought not to pose itself those tasks. Rather, the latter become part of the programme of social emancipation of the working class. "With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving democracy and national emancipation is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses" (Trotsky, 'The Permanent Revolution', Basic Postulates - first underlinings ours, second in original). One can appreciate that the position of Trotsky and that of Loris are counterposed.

Only the proletarian revolution can consummate national liberation in a 'complete and genuine' sense, but this doesn't mean that other classes cannot enunciate this task, or set themselves its realisation in a 'partial, distorted form'. It happens thus when the national bourgeoisie (or petty bourgeois or even military sectors) attempts - and succeed in a greater or lesser degree - to attract the working and exploited masses behind their nationalist demagogy. As one saw, the only way whereby the revolutionary working class can dispute the bourgeoisie for the leadership of the exploited, is not denying national liberation ("such renunciation would only be advantageous for the bourgeoisie and the reaction", indicated Lenin), but by consistently - revolutionarily - posing the democratic and national questions. The confusion which the position of the IEC introduced among the Argentine Trotskyists can be measured by the fact - which we will see later - that its principal supporters (Ramos, Posadas), would later adopt pro-Peronist positions, when that nationalist movement emerged a few years later.

Quebracho will immediately take advantage of the obvious weaknesses in the text by Loris in order to open fire on him. In the 'Answer to Marc Loris' of the LOR gibes and insults push the real political reply into the background. After treating him as a 'disciple of Stalin' and giving free rein to his polemical verbage, he finishes with an 'ear-full': "I have lived long enough in Union Square (the seat of the SWP - author's note) for missives as yours to alarm me and my stay in that quarter of New York allowed me very clearly to perceive the scornful concept which many pseudo-revolutionaries there, of a petty bourgeois type, have about our Latin American countries, making themselves accomplices of the imperialist scorn for them. You, Marc Loris, are one of them" (52).

Another SWP leader, Charles Curtis, manifests his good instinct demonstrating his disagreement with the 'Letter...' of Loris - although with its tone, rather than its content - in a private letter to the delegate of the IEC in Argentina, recommending him the prudence which the letter lacks (53).

In vain. Although Lagos himself would write to Quebracho: "Believe me, I consider the letter of M. Loris, in which he carries out a criticism of your position deforming it...superficial, poor tactics and in the end counter-productive. I know that your position is not that which M. Loris criticises" (54), for Quebracho the problem has ceased to be the Argentine and even Latin American 'centrists', from then his enemies would become the 'centrists' who led the International.

The creation of the P.O.R.S.

Because of the political and organisational questions involved, the Argentine 'case' meant a real 'test' for the IEC concerning its capacity as leadership of the IV. International. The 'movement' had developed in Argentina practically without contacts with the international leadership, keeping scarcely a written contact with its Latin American Department (DLA) later. In a report of the latter to the IEC of May, 1940, one could read: "The Latin American Commission (CAL) has tried to unite all these groups (one refers to the GOR, the LOS and the 'regional' ones) into one organisation, but up to now its attempts have failed. At first their divergencies were minor and of

a personal type largely (...) In 'Inicial' No 7, a basic document appeared on the character of the revolution in Argentina, which tends to demonstrate that it will be exclusively socialist. Recently the GOR has sent a letter to the CAL asking to be recognised as the Argentine section of the IV. International. (...) The 'Inicial' group has posed the exclusion of comrade Quebracho as a condition for the unification with the GOR. The CAL has sent a text expressing its disapproval of this ultimatum. (...) Now the divergencies are taking on a political aspect, and therefore it will be much easier for us to decide which of the groups expresses the ideas of the IV. International" (55).

We have already seen the texts of the first intervention of the IEC in the debate. About the same time, the latter decided to send a delegate to the countries of the 'Southern Cone' with the aim of moving towards the unification of the groups existing there. Terence Phelan (pseudonym of Sherry Mangan) arrived in Argentina during the first months of 1941. He did so in the shape of correspondent for the magazines 'Time', 'Life' and 'Fortune', a job he had obtained at the request of the IEC, with the object of facilitating itself of his trips around the world, in order to build up contacts between the IEC and the different groups. Mangan had adhered to U.S. Trotskyism since 1934.

His first stable contact seems to have been in Argentina with the LOS, and in particular with the youth responsible for its paper (Jorge Abelardo Ramos, 'Sevignac'). In his first report to the IEC he notes the impasse which the LOS was in vis-a-vis its slogans referring to Argentina and the world war - an impasse, we say, connected to its policy of "transforming the imperialist war into a civil-war" and 'revolutionary defeatism' in a country not involved in the war: "Not a kilo of meat, nor a gram of wheat, for the imperialist powers" - is the slogan of the moment of the LOS - which proposes to take advantage of the war not in order to expropriate imperialism but in order to suspend exports. Phelan bemoans the 'poorness' of this slogan, and asks himself what the British and French workers would think of it. At the same time he maintains, however, that the differences between the LOS and the LOR (ex-GOR) are not programmatic, but of 'application' (tactical) (56).

In contact likewise with the LOR, his relations with it become tense quite rapidly. In June, the unification congress of the POR and POI of Chile takes place. The result is the POR, Chilean section of the IV. International. Phelan takes part as a delegate from the IEC and Quebracho on his own account for the LOR. In the course of the congress, Phelan reads from the 'Letter' of Loris quoted above and transmits a greeting from the LOS recorded on a record. Justo reacts offended, but takes the opportunity to pose his positions on 'national liberation', a thing the congress is grateful for. Each one sees the congress as a triumph: Phelan because he believes that it had demonstrated that the unification of the groups is possible. Quebracho because he saw it as a triumph of the 'revolutionaries' - POR - against the 'centrists' - the POI.

In Argentina, Phelan notes also the weakness and dispersion of the groups of Trotskyists. Displaying great energy, he travels throughout the country and convinces the 'regional' groups - of La Plata, Santa Fe (animated by Narvaja), and Córdoba (where Esteban Rey and 'Flores', a primitive pseudonym of Posadas, are) - to participate in a process of unification. Eventually, he succeeds in uniting them all in a Committee of Unification which he then proposes, in August, that the LOR participates in.

The LOR accepts with reservations, as it considers that it is correct to previously arrive at a delimitation of positions. The committee accepts the criterion and proposes that each group presents written theses. The LOS does so. The LOR does so too, but in an odd way. Quebracho is convinced that it doesn't concern 'smoothing-out differences' but a political battle in which his positions must defeat those of the 'centrists', and starts publishing a series of 'Documents for the unification of the Argentine Fourth Internationalist movement', the first being a 'Brief chronological outline'. In them he not only criticises the positions, but also the trajectories of the rival groupings, attempting to demonstrate the existence of a centrist current from the very beginning of Trotskyism in Argentina. Five 'Documents' appear, and the LOR diffuses them publically and continentally, and continues unperturbed even after the unification efforts have broken down. This attracts to the

LOR the sympathies of other Latin American groups (the Cuban and the Chilean) and also brought upon it the wrath of the other Argentine groups, and the criticism of Phelan himself, who, discouraged, notes that the LOR and the LOS do not even agree on what it is one must discuss.

It is undeniable that in his interventions in the efforts (if one can call them such) Phelan gave much more importance to the organisational questions than to the political divergencies, which he tried to minimise. His contribution to the Committee of Unification consisted in a huge 'Draft Resolution on Organisation of the Party'. There he affirmed, polemicising "Our comrade Quebracho has now quoted on various occasions, correctly, the words of our great theoretician L. Trotsky: "It is the idea that creates the cadres and not the cadres the idea". What he forgot to mention was the context of that quote, which refers to a situation where we already have the idea. That 'idea' is nothing but the programme of the Fourth. Quebracho retorted: "Is it good enough to be in agreement with the programme of the IV. International to arrive at unity? No, it is not enough. That programme does not resolve all the manifold aspects which pertain to the revolutionary strategy in the subject countries and only touches upon what pertains to the character of the revolution in them. Therefore the imperious necessity of completing it facing up to and resolving the multitude of points of fundamental importance for the colonial and semi-colonial countries which until now have not been clarified in a definitive manner. And as these points are, precisely, those which are here in dispute, it happens, in consequence, that the programme of the IV. International in abstract is not sufficient, but that one must clarify and be in agreement in what pertains to its application in Argentina" (57).

Phelan utilises the programme for an objective contrary to that for which it had been written: not to open up, but to close the debate. Just after the adoption of the Transitional Programme, Trotsky had praised the Trotskyists of New York, who instead of merely repeating it parrot-fashion, had set about studying how to adapt it to the concrete situation in the USA, and how to explain it to the masses.

Independently of the leadership of the Fourth, one of its most important Latin American sections - the Cuban POR - interested itself in the "Argentine" debate, posing a more correct method and a more concrete position on the problems in dispute. Maybe its letter had arrived too late (February 1942?): "...in the problem of the Argentine comrades there are two fundamental points required...for a unification of our forces in that country: the particular evaluation of the Argentine revolutionary problem, starting from our Marxist-Leninist principles, in order to translate a general strategic line into the application of the specific tactic of struggle that corresponds to the conditions of the country and, in second place, the organisational aspects consistent with the previous point. We believe that this way of seeing things has not been properly interpreted by the majority of comrades, in spite of the correct insistence of the LOR on the necessity of clarification first and unification after.

"For us the problem of national liberation, given our semi-colonial status, that is, as a country where the major part of the democratic gains have not been attained, is an integral part of the general process of the permanent revolution. It is obvious that for us national liberation does not mean in any way the transfer of the imperialist enterprises into the hands of a native bourgeoisie, but the expropriation, by the Cuban state, without compensation, of such enterprises. This implies, quite naturally, the conquest of power by the Cuban proletariat. And this conquest of power will not be the socialist revolution, because what it would do would be to combine the democratic tasks with those socialist tasks possible. It would be positively national liberation, but not executed under the hegemony of a bourgeoisie, but of the working class" (58).

The position has the virtue of trying to integrate the national problems and the 'permanent revolution'. One outlines, nevertheless, a tendency to separate - to 'place a wall' - between the democratic and the socialist revolution, when one poses that the taking of power by the proletariat would not be the socialist revolution. Precisely, the taking of power by the proletariat means that the democratic revolution has been transformed into socialist one, which will carry out 'in passing' (Lenin) the tasks not yet

accomplished of a democratic nature. Quebracho will pose a similar conception.

At least, it concerns a clear position before the problems. That of Phelan, on the other hand, still considers national liberation as a secondary problem, and referred to it in his text to the Committee of Unification:

"Argentina is a semi-colonial country, decidedly capitalist (sic) and relatively advanced. This latter fact is primary and fundamental, and agreement on this is decisive. The democratic revolution, although very advanced, has not been completed. Arriving too late in this epoch of dying imperialism, the national bourgeoisie is incapable of accomplishing the remaining tasks of the democratic revolution, including that of 'national liberation' from the yoke of imperialism.

"(...) Unquestionably, in Argentina a longing, vague but intense, exists for national liberation from the imperialist yoke. Under the penalty of not only losing as allies the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and even proletarian elements who feel such a confused anti-imperialist desire, but also of delivering them into the arms of the national-fascist-demagogue sector of the national bourgeoisie, we cannot risk disregarding that longing which correctly understood and evaluated can serve as an important point of departure for our propaganda.

"But a point of departure for agitation is not the same thing as a slogan of 'national liberation', it is the describing of a problem not its solution. Convinced as we are that only the dictatorship of the proletariat can carry out not only this but all the tasks of the democratic revolution we will have to take care in selecting our slogans, in order to avoid any tendency to blunt the class nature of our solution. Furthermore, we must know the secondary and transitory position which the slogans referring to this problem must play within our programme of action. Above all we must not, through our interest in this problem, weaken even an inch our struggle against the native capitalist exploitation. Summing up, as a decisive principle in all the similar problems, we must always subordinate 'national liberation' to the world proletarian revolution" (59).

For Phelan, national liberation is not an objective problem, posed by the structure of the country and the state and its connection with world imperialism, but subjective, a 'vague longing' of the middle classes and some workers. His formulation for the revolutionary party appears only as a concession to those sectors, and not as the method whereby one disputes the leadership of the exploited with the bourgeoisie. The nationalist sectors of the latter are identified with fascism: Phelan advances thus the argument with which almost all the left embarked upon, soon after, with the Union Democrática.

Trotsky had started from the world economy, finally united under capital by imperialism, in order to define the adherence of all countries to the capitalist economy. Phelan inverts it, and starts by defining Argentina as a capitalist country, and to postulate the degree of development of that capitalism ('relatively advanced') as a principled agreement. The will to 'not blunt the class nature of our solution', and to 'subordinate national liberation to the world revolution', are correct, but neither Phelan nor the IEC understands the latter as Lenin:

"The social revolution cannot take place other than under the form of a period in which the civil-war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie in the advanced countries, unites with a whole series of democratic and revolutionary movements, comprising the movements of national liberation, in the undeveloped, backward and oppressed nations" (60).

The whole text by Phelan appears marked by eclecticism, owing to the will to conciliate, and not to clarify, the positions in dispute.

In every way, the Committee of Unification breaks up, at least in respect of the participation of the LOR, in a series of unclear episodes. In a private letter to Curtis, Phelan points out his belief that Quebracho is "crazy; without doubt mentally unbalanced", which does not stop him from seeing in him as "by far the most dynamic political talent of Argentine socialism", fearing that his loss does not convert him into "a new Mussolini, destined to join fascist nationalism, in the Vargas style" (an allusion to the reproach attributed to Zinoviev against the Italian socialists, of having lost Mussolini, "the greatest talent of Italian socialism"). The private correspondence of Phelan reveals just how much the problems posed by Justo worried him in this

sense (61). In October, violent disputes occur between the LOR and Phelan over the absence of 'theses' from the LOR or maybe by the way it decided to present them. As it turned out, the LOR decided to stay in the Committee only with 'observer' status. Phelan decides at the same time that he has already made sufficient concessions to the LOR. The urgent need for Phelan is to organise 'the party'. Curtis writes to Phelan recommending caution in order to not exclude Quebracho. Phelan replies to the IEC asking it to grant him its confidence, "as new concessions to Quebracho and the 27 in dispute, can break up the unity of the other 75 who I have counted" (62). It remains unclear whether the calling of the first congress of the Partido Obrero de la Revolucion Socialista was approved by the IEC, or simply decided by the Committee of Unification with Phelan, as it was fixed in the month of December. For Phelan, the stage foreseen in his 'Draft...' had already been gone through: "...I hope that I have explained what I want to say by the distinction between main points and secondary ones. If we find ourselves in agreement on the former, it is my firm conviction that we must procede immediately towards the unification, through the organisational discussion, leaving the other points for discussion in a series of internal bulletins of the new organisation" (63).

The LOR will continue publishing its documents under the motto (first of Plekhanov, later of Lenin) "before unifying ourselves and with the aim of unifying ourselves we must previously delimit ourselves in a clear and decisive manner".

In December 1941, then, the PORS held its congress in Punta Lara, near La Plata. The delegates were no more than thirty or so. Present were the old LOS (without Gallo or Milessi now), the groups from La Plata, Córdoba, Rosario and Santa Fe. Also the group of transport workers around the Yugoslav Medanich Orza. Among the delegates of the La Plata group, the young physics student Ernesto Sabato, well known later as a writer (64). Phelan actively intervenes during the congress, above all in the organisational discussions - the lack of adequate methods is what he judges to have impeded the Argentine Trotskyists from growing. The programmatic resolution is entrusted to Jorge Lagos and is adopted by the congress. A Central Committee is elected whose General Secretary is Carbajal (Narvaja). Two functionaries are employed, who were to stay in the capital: Posadas and Esteban Rey, although the latter, doubting the future prospects, refuses to move his family from Córdoba. The treasurer would be the German Kurt Steinfeld, an exiled Austrian who headed a German group in Buenos Aires that published a paper directed at exiles from the nazi regime. Steinfeld, employed at the Overseas News Agency is expert in handling money and for some time organised the flight of militants (especially of Jewish origin) from nazi persecution in Europe. The press, eventually, is entrusted to Jorge Abelardo Ramos. The new paper is called 'Frente Obrero' - 'organo del PORS', although its first issue presents it as a follow-up to 'Inicial', taking over its numbering. Concerning the programmatic resolution, of which it is natural to expect that it reflects the result of the pro-unification discussions which we have been relating, we will quote a few paragraphs: "Westinghouse understood well when it fused with Siam Di Tella in order to exploit the Latin American market in electrical machinery, General Motors and Ford understand it well when they re-open their assembly workshops in the country and pay such vast factories. The so remanent slogan 'national liberation' which elements such as Marianetti presume realisable by a popular government of national liberation has been concretised by the financial oligarchy with the direct support of Yankee capital (65).

"The present one is not a 'deformation' of the national capitalist economy, but its authentic form. The Argentine bourgeoisie is incapable of struggling or of attempting to struggle against imperialism and therefore the struggle against imperialism must be mainly a struggle against the national bourgeoisie which holds the political power of the national and foreign exploiters".

"It is necessary to recognise that the war of the Argentine Republic, whatever sector of the bourgeoisie that holds power and one of the imperialist sectors, would be an imperialist war" (66).

The resolution not only maintains the positions previous to the discussion, but totally ignores Phelan's text. His eclecticism meant that his intervention totally lacked any political influence. Shortly after the congress Phelan went

back to the USA, where he asks for the recognition of the PORS as the official section of the IV. International.

What kind of industrialisation ?

The intervention of the leadership of the Fourth did not change in any way the positions of the Argentine Trotskyist sector with which it maintained privileged relations. Characterising the country, the latter based itself, however, not on Trotsky nor on the Bolshevik tradition of the 3. International, but on the Argentine socialist theoretician who had developed the most coherent characterisation: the reformist Juan B. Justo (see 'Internacionalismo' No 3). For Justo, the incorporation of the great majority of national territory into production (agrarian) for the world market, was a typical example of 'capitalist colonisation'. The backward character of this capitalism, however, did not escape him: lack of industrial development, agrarian backwardness, predominance of anti-democratic political forms. For him, the axis of economic development which would allow the supersession of those defects was foreign capital: "The entry of great masses of foreign capital is necessary and inevitable... The great construction enterprises that it is necessary to carry out in order to complete the evolution of the country and the working people who inhabit it, cannot be made by the native rich class, dissipated and inept... Foreign capital is going to accelerate the economic evolution of the country, and with even greater force it is going to accelerate its political and social evolution" (67).

This schema, formulated at the start of the century and according to which the backward countries would re-run, via the influence of external capital, an economic and political cycle similar to the advanced ones, was taken up literally by the Trotskyists four decades later. The difference consisted in them seeing the process as finished: industrialisation of the country, association of foreign capital with national capital, which had strengthened the Argentine bourgeoisie permitting it to erect itself as a fully ruling class. This was what they based themselves upon in order to pose the 'socialist revolution' as the future stage of development. It is undoubtable that the jump in the Argentine industrial growth during the 1930's influenced them in drawing that conclusion.

But, had the country been industrialised really ?

Argentina had fully entered the international capitalist circuit by the half way of the last century, as a producer of prime materials (leather, cereals, meat), for the industrially advanced nations. The first great industries to develop (cold-storage and railways) were an appendix to 'pastoral Argentina', that is, they consolidated Argentina as an agricultural appendix of the industrial development in the world capitalist centres. The period of prosperity of the economy based on the ranch and commercial capital also gave a shove to the emergence of certain industries which produced for the home market. It was an industry limited to the foodstuffs branch and to other essential produce, not competitive due to the cost involved and the distance from the world manufacturing centres. It did not concern an industrialisation, as its capacity for expansion was very limited, and "one produces without a heavy industry on a large scale appearing, which at that same level of the 19. century would have characterised the order of other societies totally different from each other: the United States and the German. Argentina will lose its local and regional structures of production and consumption, without transforming itself into an industrial power" (68).

The axis of economic development was, then, agrarian production in function of the needs of the industrial powers, and the growth of industry was subordinated to that. Latifundism consolidated itself as a productive unity and the land-owning oligarchy as the ruling class. This will lead the Argentine economy to subordinate itself to the accumulation of capital with its centre in the industrial nations (above all, Britain). But the latter, owing to the accumulation already overflowing their national borders, launched themselves into penetrating the backward countries, obtaining investments for their surplus capital. An extremely profitable investment was in public services and bonds of the backward countries, whose capitalist economic development was thus born,

prisoner to international finance capital. In our country, in 1885 45% of the capital of the railways was in Argentine hands against only 10% by 1890; interest paid by Argentina to foreign capital represented 20% of the total exports in 1881, 44% in 1884, 66% in 1886. This process, by making the country more and more dependent upon its primary exports, liquidated any financial basis of its own for industry, at the same time, it laid the basis for the political dependence of the state. In 1890, in total financial crisis, the government emptied the country of foreign exchange in order to pay the foreign debt: foreign capital appropriated almost the total national surplus. "The centre of power appeared to shift itself from the producers to the local representatives of the world centres of decision (lawyers, financiers, intermediaries)" (69).

The lineal schema of J.B. Justo failed, by not taking into account that capital, considered on a world-scale, had already attained its full maturity. In the advanced countries it showed without pretence its hostility towards the exploited, and turned chauvinist and reactionary. In the backward countries it would compete in obtaining super-profits (superior to the world average), for which it allied itself with the most reactionary classes, consolidating the economic, social and political forms of backwardness, on which their domination was seated.

The industrial growth starting from 1930 was limited to replacing those industrial products which already could not be bought on the world market as a consequence of the fall in buying power of the primary exports. The international prices of Argentine products fell by 40% between 1926 and 1932, while the industrial goods maintained their previous value. The causes of industrial development were not internal but external. "There was not a deliberate will of the governing powers nor an integrated development of industry as a consequence of the natural process of expansion, in the style of what occurred in the metropolises. The market existed, it had a measurable and known demand which supplied itself until that moment from the exports and that could be satisfied through the local production" (70).

The economic content of this 'industrialisation' was not typical to that which occurred in the advanced countries: the relative displacement of the production of consumer goods by that of goods of production (machines and industrial items). Rather, the production of consumer goods continued (and continues) predominating in an overwhelming form in the industrial structure. By its social content, the industrialisation in the advanced countries meant, in the last century, a transformation of property relations: the expropriation or transformation of the old feudal classes and their displacement from political power (bourgeois democratic revolution) which laid down the bases of the expansion of industrial capital. In Argentina (and in the backward countries), the old oligarchy associated itself with this bastardised process of industrialisation, whose dynamic factor was foreign capital. The 'Argentine industry' consolidated in the 1930's, was a consequence of the industrial crisis in the advanced countries and an appendix of the latter: "The enormous mass of workers condemned to idleness and the high percentage of inactive equipment called for the opening of new markets into to recover stability and the level of production of previous years... Thus was born 'export substitution' in the centres. Given that they could not send complete plant to the under-developed countries because these could not pay for them, they installed final-assembly plants in order to then continue sending them parts. The combat strategy (with other imperialist countries) requires installing enterprises in other countries and generating captive clients for the possible exports" (71). Argentina anticipated in the 1930's a process that would spread throughout the world in the subsequent decades.

The distinctive characteristics of this 'industrialisation' are:

a) The stagnation of industry on a primary level of development: in 1937, the establishments with less than 10 workers were 85.5% of the total (the proportion grew subsequently). To this artisan-type basis of industry one must add that the primary branches continue being predominant (those which characterise the dawn of industrial production): in 1937, "food, drinks and tobacco" comprised 40% of production, "textiles" ca. 20%, while "metals, vehicles and machinery" did not make up 15% (72).

b) As a consequence of the above: the low productivity of industry generally. In 1937, the productivity per worker in Argentina was 4.5 times lower than in the USA (a proportion which, likewise, could not but increase) (73).

c) The non-displacement of the axis of economic development: the valuation of the land and the farming production. This was already noted, in 1933, by the commercial counselor of the British Embassy: "however rapid the growth of manufacturing industry has been, a large series of requirements exist which can only be satisfied abroad. Almost all first class articles require for their production iron and steel goods; the lack of a local coal and iron industry has impeded the development of a machine-producing industry on an extensive scale. The only means whereby Argentina can obtain the products of the latter abroad is by exporting its grain and meat surpluses". But precisely the prices of those exports had fallen dramatically; to which one must add the financial dependence of the state. The same report points out: "Argentina possessed great reserves of gold. Approximately a half of the reserves were impounded in 1930 and 1931, mainly in order to pay the debt services and in order to prevent the currency being devalued" (74). Just as in 1890, finance capital, with the complicity of the oligarchic government, delivered the mortal blow against the autonomous industrial development, liquidating its financial basis.

The consequence of the whole process is the political prostration of the state. The need to maintain the British market for the primary products, led the Argentine government to sign the Roca-Runciman pact in 1933, wherein the Argentine government, in exchange, made all types of concessions to Britain (customs concessions, transport monopoly in Buenos Aires, types of preferential exchange, closure of the market to Britain's competitors, etc.), that is, it renounced the right to freely determine the policies of the state.

The supposed industrialisation of Argentina was an example typical of the combined development common to the backward countries, where one combines the last word in technology with agrarian and industrial backwardness. The backwardness of industry did not impede the fact that, already in 1936, 47 factories (0.1% of the total) employ 15% of the workers, with which the degree of concentration exceeded by more than 10 times that of North American industry (75). It concerns an industry which was born monopolised, without passing through the stage of free competition (which was the motor of its development in the advanced countries): the industrial census of 1935 indicated that 671 limited companies controlled 2,300 establishments which yielded between them more than 50% of the total production. This small group of monopolies obtain enormous profits, based on the agrarian and industrial backwardness: the first produces a constant flow of cheap labour from the country to the town, the second sees that the market prices are fixed for 90% of the enterprises (of an artisan-type): the enormous difference in price between the latter and large-scale industry is pocketed by the monopolies. It concerns an industry which lives-off the backwardness, exactly the opposite of the youthful stage of industrial capital in the metropolises (when it fought to destroy the backward forms of industrial production - artisan guilds - and agrarian production - feudal latifundia).

Argentine industry expanded within the limits fixed by imperialist capital. Far from accentuating the economic independence of the country, it increased its dependence, adding to the manufactured goods the industrial items and products that had to be bought abroad. Far from securing the Argentine bourgeoisie in control of the state, the political weight of foreign capital was strengthened, as much as by the decisive weight of its participation in industry, as by the increase of dependence on international finance capital.

All this escaped the attention of the great majority of Argentine Trotskyists of the 1930's, who thought exactly the opposite. In some way, they saw themselves subjected to the ideology and propaganda of the ruling classes (who saw in the association with foreign capital a triumph of 'self-determination'). This influence was possible owing to the lack of a programme, which characterised the country, its classes, and indicated the objective tasks of the revolution. The light-mindedness with which they wielded certain figures - claiming 2½ million industrial workers when the 1935 census gives the exact figure of 526,594 'employed in industry' - reveals the lack of concern for programme, which left them open to all kinds of impressionism. Lacking their own programme,

they adopted the only one the Argentine left had produced until that moment (that of reformist socialism) trying to draw from it 'revolutionary' conclusions. In such an adaptationist labour they retreated even in respect to the programme of Juan B. Justo, as the latter pointed out the incapacity of the native ruling class to create a 'modern' capitalist country, while the Trotskyists presented it as an exemplary bourgeois class, which had fully completed the objectives of national liberation and the democratic revolution.

The death of the LOR.

After the creation of the PORS, the political alternative for the LOR is that of continuing the fight for its ideas, on a national and international scale, with the perspective of building a tendency within the 4. International. Justo retrospectively presents things as if such a tendency had existed 'in fact', which is perhaps not far from the truth (viz. the quotes from the PORS of Chile and Cuba). But circumstances did not permit the LOR to be anything but a small group shaped in the personal mould of Quebracho. The personality of the latter - who had already showed his tendency to megalomania (76) - did not in any way predispose him to start a long-term struggle from a minority position.

In February 1942, referring to the recently born PORS, the LOR will state that it is more "worthy of pity than of criticism". Which will not prevent it from systematising its differences with the PORS, of which we wish to quote some: "4)...before the increasingly greater and more pressing advance of imperialism in the dependent countries, some bourgeois sectors of the latter, in order to avoid being smashed by imperialism and struggling for their own existence, can rise up against it, starting an action that they will never carry to its end, but which the revolutionary proletariat, without giving up the most intransigent class struggle, and without ceasing to point out that the bourgeoisie will sooner or later betray this action, can accompany while it lasts, trying to gain the leadership of it in order to complete it.

"(...) 6)...the proletarian vanguard of the colonial and semi-colonial countries must pose itself, in the first place, the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution, realised through the conquest of power by the working class and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"7) That the proletariat in power, realising the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution, cannot stop there and, in agreement with the principles of permanent revolution, according to the economic conditions of the country and always counting on the sufficient force or with the adequate help of the world proletariat, will immediately pass to the socialist tasks" (77).

It is worth looking closer at this text, which represented the maximum (and final) point of elaboration, by the LOR, of the problems of the revolutionary programme in our country. The conception of an "agrarian and anti-imperialist", or even, democratic, revolution, is taken literally from the theoretical arsenal of Stalinism of the third-period (1929-34). The First Latin-American Conference of the C.I. (June 1929) indicated: "every tendency to create an independent national economy within the framework of bourgeois legality, is doomed to failure. Only a bourgeois democratic revolution directed against imperialism and the great landlords, can create the conditions for that independent development (...) the real struggle for national independence must be realised against the large national bourgeoisie and imperialism, from which one deduces that the character of the revolution in L. America, is one of a bourgeois democratic revolution (...) That revolution will have to put in the first place: the struggle against the great landlords; for the giving of the land to those who work it; struggle against the national governments, agents of imperialism and for the workers and peasants government" (Minutes of the South American Secretariat of the C.I. published by 'La Correspondencia Internacional', Buenos Aires, 1929).

Underneath the verbal concessions to the feverish ultra-leftism of the Stalinist 'third-period', one observes something else altogether. One scorns 'bourgeois legality' in order to postulate...a revolution which stops at the bourgeois democracy. The 'workers and peasants government' is not, as it was for the first congresses of the C.I., a popular version of the 'dictatorship

of the proletariat' (to be such, it would have to concern the proletarian revolution): its content is given by the character of the revolution (democratic). The same text adds: "it would be a grave error to overestimate the role of the petty bourgeoisie and the growing industrial bourgeoisie, as possible allies of the anti-imperialist revolution. In some cases they can be momentary allies; but the motive-force of the revolution must be the workers and peasants". The subsequent destiny of this conception is well known: the 'momentary' ally transformed itself into a 'permanent' one, and Stalinism into a permanent ally of the native bourgeoisie. The alliance between the workers and the peasants should not leave the framework of the bourgeois democratic revolution.

The criticism of Trotskyism took up and enriched the theses of the C.I.: the historical epoch in which the bourgeoisie could lead a consistent struggle for democracy has ended, the anti-imperialist struggle of the backward and oppressed countries integrates itself thus into the process of the world proletarian revolution. And it required: in the measure in which the working class takes the leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle, in which it realises the worker-peasant alliance "fighting irreconcilably against the influence of the liberal-national bourgeoisie", it transforms the democratic revolution into the socialist revolution, converting it therefore into a permanent one. Something more: only the proletarian revolution can make the objectives of democracy triumph, as the national bourgeoisie, through its fear of the mobilisation of the proletariat (which also turns against it), ends up allying itself with imperialism against the masses.

The programme of the LOR turned out to be a mixture of Trotskyist ideas and the Stalinist conception. From the Trotskyist point of view, the proletarian vanguard cannot pose itself, "in the first place, the agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution" (bourgeois, in other words) as a process independent of the socialist revolution, that is to say of any revolution effectively led by the proletariat. Another failure of Justo was in not characterising the Argentine ruling classes (their divisions, the nature of their relations with imperialism, their attitude faced with the national problems), limiting himself to pointing out that "some sectors of the bourgeoisie can rise up against imperialism". Which? The great political problem posed by that question - the attitude of the proletariat before the bourgeois nationalist movements - is not even sketched out. The opportunity which the emergence of these movements gives to the workers vanguard of posing a programme of consistent struggle against imperialism (and, therefore, of disputing the leadership of the nation with the bourgeoisie) is substituted by a "accompany it while it lasts", which slides towards the theory of the strategic bloc with the national bourgeoisie.

Justo, subsequently, moved towards nationalist positions: he ended up postulating that the Latin American emancipation should result in a new nation which he called 'Andesia'. Logically, he broke with Trotskyism, which was already announced at the end of the article mentioned: "The 3. International was formed more from above downwards (...) The 4. International, in dialectical contradiction with the 3., will construct itself from below upwards, not in the shade of the prestige of the Russian revolution, but on the basis of Marxist principles, of the study of the experience of that revolution and of the failure of the 3. International. Therefore we give much more importance to our own programme than to any recognition from abroad".

Pure demagogy. No revolutionary party (no party in general), much less an International, constructs itself from below upwards. As Justo himself liked to quote: "it is not the cadres that create the programme but the programme that creates them". The programme, at first, is preserved by a revolutionary vanguard, which is what creates the organisation starting from that programme. Otherwise, one would have to wait until the exploited go through all the previous experience, in order to arrive at the revolutionary conclusions of the programme (to which, moreover, only a vanguard will arrive at). In reality, when Quebracho wrote "from below upwards", it should read "from me downwards", as revealed four months later when this curious conception of dialectics applied to the construction of Internationals, transformed

itself into the grotesque slogan: "Neither Moscow nor New York!! Revolutionary Fourth International!!", which terminated a letter from Quebracho directed to the members of the LOR and its sympathisers abroad. The letter had a message for the International Executive Committee: "All those affiliated with the said PORs have demonstrated a flexibility of the spinal column very apt in order to operate among us as representatives of yourselves. That is the 'Argentine section' you deserve and require".

Yet if it had been so, it would have necessitated a political convergence between the international leadership and the Argentine militants who ignored the national question. But Justo refused to combat it inside the Fourth. He stated, addressing himself to his comrades: "Our struggle against centrism in this country and in Latin America leads us, as a consequence, into carrying out the struggle against centrism in its own present redoubt, the SWP of the USA" (78).

The delirium of the posture became quickly evident. The struggle against 'centrism' which should finish in New York after having crossed all Latin America, in reality did not get beyond the limits of greater Buenos Aires. The majority of the members of the LOR, identified with Quebracho, abandoned it. Mateo Fossa made clear that he did so in opposition to the break with New York (with the IV. International). Justo intended a battle of apparatuses with the leadership of the Fourth. He who had fought the 'centrists' and for 'national liberation' in Argentina, sought to ally himself with the North American centrists who had some time ago already broken with the International: Oehler, Stamm and Weisbord (the first having broken with Trotsky opposing himself to the demand for the 'national independence' of the Ukraine). Total failure, as the above-mentioned factions disappeared shortly after.

What little remained of the LOR published a South American Bulletin (five issues appeared in a year) aimed at organising the break of the groups of the continent with the 'centrists', who gradually became transformed into "the agents of Wall Street". The only success was the picking up of a tiny and short-lived 'Liga Obrera Marxista' of Oruro (a split from the youth of the Partido Socialista Obrero Boliviano of the ex-POR luminary Tristan Maroff) which will dissolve itself upon the disappearance of the LOR, integrating itself into the POR, the Bolivian section of the IV. International. The POR of Chile and of Cuba vainly sent letters to the LOR asking it to reconsider the attitude adopted. The paper of the LOR, the 'Lucha Obrera' (with the large print-run) will get suppressed. The few members of the LOR begin to leave. At the time of the coup of 4. June 1943 (before which the LOR produces its last declaration) only two remain: Quebracho and Santiago Escobar (pseudonym of the gastronomic worker Enrique Carmona). The latter also leaves, in order to return to his native province of the Chaco. Liborio Justo, exhausted, also withdraws to the islands of Ibicuy, where he will remain for a number of years. Thus died the LOR (79).

In a very brief lapse, Quebracho had succeeded in erasing with his elbow the best that had emerged from his hand. His positions had politicised the Argentine Fourth Internationalist movement in a way previously unknown, raising it out of the terrain of personal disputes in which it was involved. We can affirm, with G. Lora: "he has the great credit of having pointed out that the Trotskyism of his time committed the error of assimilating Argentina to the imperialist metropolises and ignoring the national question. One owes to him the return, at least in Argentina, to the contributions of Lenin and Trotsky in that respect" (80). Then, in the face of the first mishap, he declared the movement founded by León Trotsky three years before to be dead, and he sought to reproduce on a world scale the climate which he himself had repudiated in Argentina a short time earlier. Instead of confronting the movement (the IV. International) with the tasks which applied themselves (the programme), he ignored both and limited himself to extending the label of 'bureaucrats' to its leaders.

Concerning the programme - and after a number of years of programmatic struggle - he thought it enough to launch the anathema of 'cosmopolitanism'. Ignoring the sense of proportion, he saw himself as the leader of a new world movement, and when that too failed, he consoled himself with the view that he was a prophet before his time. We continue with Lora: "in his time Quebracho

launched himself into a struggle against wind-mills. He took the opinion of a few leaders as if it represented the thoughts of the different parties, as if the latter could have exhausted the discussion of the problems posed in Argentina" (81).

So it is. As Quijote wished to supersede the exploits of Amadis of Gaul, so Justo wished to supersede those of Trotsky, but without the talents or the sacrifices of the latter. The last step was undertaken when in 1959, in his stubborn effort to 'supersede' Trotsky, he published a book accusing him of "having put himself at the service of Wall Street". Infamy and pathology are mixed up in this regurgitated heap of old stalinist slanders. What is curious is the political argument (the only one) used by Quebracho in order to base his bizarre theory: that of Trotsky having defended - against imperialism - the nationalisation of Mexican oil carried out by the government of General Cardenas. Trotsky also had to explain the nationalist character of the measure for an ultra-leftist group - applauded by Quebracho - who saw the measure in terms of "a manoeuvre of one imperialist sector against another, at the same time as he defended a programme of class independence in the face of Cardenas and his stance, and was for "workers management of the nationalised industry". We can share, in the face of such a ridiculous accusation, the indignation of Medunich Orza: "It is well known that the whole imperialist reaction, whether pro-English or pro-Yankee, accused Cardenas of expropriating the oil firms on advice from Trotsky (...). And finally, with errors or without them (Trotsky) dedicated all his life in the struggle for the emancipation of the exploited class, which was not the same as the spiritual pleasure of a Quebracho" (82).

Upon ending his 'internal exile', Justo became enthused over the role played by the POR in the Bolivian revolution, to which he dedicated a book. Connected with the POR, he attempted to convince it of his views about a new International, opposed to the Fourth. At that time he published 'Estrategia Revolucionaria', in which he goes over the struggle we have been relating, and 'astutely' eliminates a critical reference to G. Lora (a POR leader) contained in an original document of the time reproduced in the said volume. When the POR reproached him for his incredible book 'Leon Trotsky y Wall Street', Justo reacted by declaring it his deadly enemy.

Guillermo Lora, who knew him during his period of enthusiasm for Bolivia, said of him: "The son of President Justo preoccupied in making scandals in his own country and outside of it with the premeditated objective of drawing the attention of the press to himself, could have had some future (...). But Liborio Justo finished himself with revolutionary politics when he sought to draft a course of action for the continental activity of the Marxists from his comfortable study (...). He who voluntarily escapes from the reality of the environment in which he lives, he who attempts escapism in all his actions, is a coward who is prevented from stamping his imprint on events (...). The Justo we knew was a fighter of yesterday in total decadence" (83).

The Trotskyist fighter was finished in 1943: his Trotskyism was scarcely more than an episode of youth. The Fifth International which he proposed founding after did not succeed in even being a curiosity, except for those who interest themselves in megalomaniacs. But, as "that which the pen writes cannot be erased by the axe", it is right to point out together with his subsequent ship-wreck, that the Quebracho fallen in 1943 is, even without knowing it, he who yielded to Argentine Trotskyism the best service.

The death of the P.O.R.S.

Robert Alexander states (84) that the PORS was recognised as Argentine section of the IV. International, on the recommendation of Terrence Phelan. A study of the correspondence of the latter and his 'trusted confidant' in Argentina, Kurt Steinfeld, does not confirm that assertion: without doubt Phelan proposed such a recognition, but it clashed with the reservations of the IEC.

The Executive hesitated to confer upon the PORS such a status as right from the start of its activities it manifested signs of decomposition. The paper 'Frente Obrero', announced as a weekly, then a fortnightly, then a monthly, finally saw the light of day scarcely twice during the first six

months. The first important desertion is that of the General Secretary himself, Narvajas, who withdraws to Rosario saying that his post can be better filled by Cristalli (Posadas). If one believes Steinfeld, Narvajas had expected a rapid growth, and in discussions had maintained that the inevitable defeat of the USSR before the German invasion would favour the recruitment of the Stalinist militants. In the event, from his native base he took up a skeptical position, although remaining affiliated, which will later cause him to drop out. Ramos, who is accused of a personal and uncontrolled control of the press, also gives up his membership. Eventually numerous quarrels break out around organisational issues: meetings of the CC and NC, inflated figures of membership (accusations of the CC considering mere sympathisers as members), lack of dues payments for the groups in the interior, which hinders the publication of the paper, failure to prepare the following congress at the foreseen time, accusations that Steinfeld manipulates the finances and interest as a means of blackmail and pressure, confusion concerning the 'dual membership' of the Germans (in the IKD, as well as the PORS), then, expulsions. Desertions continue occurring: 'Carlos', Margarita Gallo, Angélica, the young Hugo Bressano leaves and joins the LOR. He writes a pamphlet for it: 'Three months of life in confusionism. On my leaving the PORS' (15.5.42). Two months later he is also expelled from the LOR, not before Quebracho had given him the pseudonym 'Nahuel Moreno', which will later become well-known. All this takes place during the first six months of existence of the PORS.

Phelan follows the crisis by correspondence. In the face of the apparently organisational nature of the crisis, he does not stop recommending organisational remedies, advising Steinfeld not to 'Argentinise himself', that is, to not get involved in the clique squabbles which typify the organisational irresponsibility of the militants native to that country. He informs him of the discouragement existing in the IEC over the developments within the Argentine 'section'. In another letter to the Chilean section he returns to the issue and complains bitterly about this 'human' characteristic of the Argentines. Steinfeld informs the IEC (June 1942) that the PORS is split into four 'camps': 1) Cristalli, 'Lavalle', 'Irlan', 'Lisardi', 'Victor', who maintain that grave errors were made during the unification, whereby known centrists and reformists were admitted; 2) 'Carbajal' - Narvajas - and the Rosario group, adopting a wait-and-see attitude; 3) 'Frigorini' (R. Frigerio or 'Jorge Lagos'), 'Quarrucci' (Esteban Rey), 'Sevignac' (Ramos), Steinfeld, Barto and the rest of the German group, who place themselves in a situation of 'passive resistance' to the CC majority (camp 1), opposing its violations of the Organisational Resolution (Ramos produces a document calling for the congress) and they call themselves 'legalists'; and 4) Miguel (Oscar Posse), Hugo Spaghetti (Guevara), Margarita Gallo, Medunich Orza, Krause and the group of Yugoslav workers, Alberti, who maintain that the leadership are violating the statutes and programmatic bases of the PORS, and that it is irretrievable. Phelan shows his sympathy for camp 3 and recommends working with the two most promising militants: Ramos and Posadas, the latter because he is the only one making an effort to obtain PORS penetration into trade union milieux. He sees camp 4 as being too impregnated by the old sectarian ideas of Gallo (85).

This situation of inaction prolongs itself for some months. When the LOR communicates its break, the IEC asks them to make every effort to save Mateo Fossa, who seems to be not in favour of following Quebracho (whose code-name in correspondence is 'Juana La Loca' - 'Crazy Joan'). Simultaneously, Steinfeld provokes a scandal upon proposing that the pages of 'Frente Obrero' are opened up for militants of other tendencies: through his German work he finds himself linked to supporters of Brandler, Vereeken, Brockway, Marceau Pivert and others. It is the IEC which is closest to hitting the nail on the head when it formally approaches the PORS requesting it to open up the suspended discussion on 'national liberation' and submits theses regarding the issue (July 1942). The leadership of the International is probably influenced by the heap of accusations against the PORS by the LOR - documents from the LOR arrive regularly to the IEC, not so those of the PORS.

Because it is around this question, above all the organisational problems, that the PORS will break up. A first split, provisionally, takes place in 1943, when two 'FO' are published parallel with each other: they distinguish

themselves mutually as 'FO large' and 'FO small'. At the head of the latter one encounters those who in the future will radically revise the conception of a purely socialist revolution, which had prevailed within the PORS: Ramos, Posadas, Niceto Andrés. In the former those who continue defending it are grouped: Posse, Guevara, M. Orza and, in spite of the advice of Phelan, the German group. It is worth noting that it is this sector which 'saves' Mateo Fossa for the IV. International.

The split occurred, along the lines of the most radical political positions, and not on the basis of the organisational criteria defended by each current. The coup of 4. June 1943, and the illegality in which it placed the activity of the left act in order to complete the dispersion. Ramos and Andrés will evolve on their own account until they form the 'Liga Comunista Revolucionaria' first, and the 'Octubre' group later, which will adopt nationalist positions up to the point of permitting Ramos to collaborate with the Peronist government (a road down which Andrés will not accompany him). In full logic with this evolution, 'Octubre' will break with the IV. International in 1947. Jorge Lagos will enter the...Communist Party, from which he will exit forming a part of the pro-Peronist faction of Rodolfo Puigrós ('Clase Obrera'). Esteban Rey will return to the North, where he will develop an 'entrism' work within the Socialist Party on his own account. Also in 1943, Posadas enters the SP in the capital, from which he will exit with a small group which will form the 'Grupo Cuarta Internacional' (GCI), future section in Argentina, starting from the Third World Congress of the IV. International in 1951. Moreno, a law student, will attempt to sum up his experience in a pamphlet, published in 1943, entitled 'El Partido', in which the question will be analysed on the basis of 'Hegelian categories', and he will regroup a small nucleus of youth with which he will form the 'Grupo Obrero Marxista' (GOM). Alexander mentions that Marvajas will continue maintaining a 'PORS' until 1948, something quite improbable. Probably it refers to an 'autonomous' group in Rosario, composed of student militants and which also maintains links with the old Trotskyist David Siburu, who lives retired in Rafaela. Guevara, the trade union militant, will return to his 'regional autonomy' and will form a Trotskyist trade unionist group known simply as 'Southern Zone' (of Buenos Aires), which was certainly not the only one of its type. The only sector which will maintain the old positions, upon which the PORS was founded, will be the 'Unión Obrera Revolucionaria' (UOR), animated by Oscar Posse, within which Mateo Fossa will participate for a time.

The partial denouement of the Argentine political crisis which the coup in June was, inflicted the coup de grâce to the PORS, which lived with great difficulty for less than a year. At the end of 1943, 'Owen' (Phelan) despairingly asked an Argentine correspondent if it was correct that from the PORS... ten groups! had arisen.

Terence Phelan, agent of imperialism ?

Sherry Mangan ('Phelan', 'Owen', 'Pilan') was a courageous militant of the IV. International. Gross, something of a bohemian, a drinker, he specialised in making contacts (clandestine or not) with the foreign groups when the IEC functioned in the USA as a result of the war. Thus, not only did he travel in Latin America, but towards the end of the war, taking advantage of his situation as a correspondent, he succeeded in reestablishing contact with the Trotskyist groups of the European countries occupied by the nazis (Belgium, Austria) at a risk at times to his own skin. Later also he was in Bolivia, succeeding to gain contact with the militants of the POR imprisoned during the 'sexenio' (1946-52). Once the IEC moved back to Europe, he worked together with it. Later again, he returned to Bolivia, establishing himself in Cochabamba. There he worked on a novel about the miners of Catavi and his companion Margarita died there. McCarthyism in the USA hindered him from publishing his novel. He died in Switzerland, in 1961, at the age of 57.

When participating in the efforts at unification in Argentina during 1941, an article appeared under his name in 'Fortune' magazine, which, in essence, advised the USA to improve its penetration of Argentine politically. It led to a wave of criticism by its intrusion into the life of the country. Among the critics one found Quebracho, who, as noted by Medunich Orza, did not make

it public at that time, and then when he did so, much later, it was in order to give Phelan the description of 'agent of imperialism', with which he would later go on to label the IV. International in its entirety, and finally Leon Trotsky himself. Phelan protested against the accusation, claiming that his words had been distorted. A version of the article, corrected by himself, appeared in December 1941 in the magazine 'Claridad' - in which the phrases do not allow any doubt about misinterpretation: "The continuation of the war in Europe added to our position in respect of Japan in Asia, makes us necessitate South America at the same time that it gives us the opportunity of removing from it other powers, especially Great Britain, who at this moment are too gravely occupied in other parts in order for them to give full attention to its defence" (86). And thus by the style, Alexander surprisedly notes that the 'Militant' of the SWP commented on the article in 'Fortune' as a demonstration of the imperialist policy of Uncle Sam, without making any comment on the fact that its author is a leader of the SWP itself. In his commentary on Alexander's book, Joseph Hansen, a key leader of the SWP for many years, never made any reference in that respect (87).

Things did not end there, as the accusation was taken up again by another group breaking with the Fourth ('Octubre' of Ramos), which led Kurt Steinfield to write to the Brazilian section, 12. May 1947: "An Argentine Trotskyist publication denounces Terence Phelan and myself as agents of imperialism. Until such time as the IV. International has not taken a position on the issue, it would be better to consider me as dead" (88).

What had happened? The only defence of Mangan made by a 'Trotskyist' leader that we know of, is that by Livio Maitan: "Since one has made so much about the same grave insinuations (!) in the course of factional polemics, above all in Argentina, whoever writes can witness that Sherry Mangan went through all the latter years of his life in very precarious financial conditions, if not in poverty" (89).

There are defences which kill. Why could not an 'agent of imperialism' (what 'insinuation'!!) "have died in poverty"? Mangan deserved a better defence.

To combine the task of delegate of the IV. International with the job of a correspondent of the imperialist press was a complicated task. The means available to the Fourth obliged it to utilise such methods. In itself, this is not in any way dishonourable. A revolutionary leadership must, moreover, be capable of coming out in defence of such methods when the slanderers denounce them in order to destroy it. Even in the case where the militant in question had 'put his foot in it', as was certainly the case with Mangan. If during the life or the activity of the latter, it was not possible to do such a thing publically, such justifications do not exist afterwards. To not do so is to leave the door open to the slanders which stain not only the memory of a militant, but (what is worse) the banner of an organisation. If it cannot do this, such a leadership is condemned.

Balance sheets of the P.O.R.S.

With the dissolution of the PORS and the LOR one closes a stage in the life of the Argentine Trotskyist movement, which not by chance, coincides with the end of a stage in the life of the country. For the Trotskyists the stage is closed, there can be no doubt, with a failure as they must start again, organisationally, practically from zero. But politically not so, if they are capable of taking advantage of the lessons of the period which closes. This is, without doubt, a task which concerns not only the Argentine militants, but the International in its entirety (primarily its leadership) as the building of the revolutionary party in a country, for the Trotskyists, is no more than the expression of a world-wide struggle for its essence 'nationally'.

It turns out interesting, as a matter of fact, to re-examine the opinions, fragmentary and dispersed, that exist about what was - de facto or de jure - the first Argentine section of the IV. International.

Liborio Justo, in the middle of the volley of insults which he lavishes upon the PORS and on each of its members, leaves us with an interesting idea: "instead of rooting (the PORS) its trajectory from the point of degeneration in the spiral of the development of the 3. International, its line of departure

was linked to the positions of bourgeois democracy and the 2. International, those which were counterposed to, or had been superseded by, the "Third" (90). We recall that A. Gallo, ideological inspirer of the positions on the national question, not only reduced his previous political experience to that of reformist socialism (which characterises itself, in Argentina and in the world, by ignoring the distinction between oppressor and oppressed nations), but sought out support explicitly among its native theoreticians in order to justify the perspective of a purely socialist revolution. Gallo represented with his ideas a whole sector and whole stage of the Argentine Trotskyist movement. Quebracho, on the other hand, possessed the experience of having participated in a movement with a democratic and anti-imperialist content: that of the University Reform. Finally, no political current of the left in Argentina avoided being traversed by these two options (the numerous splits of the SP and then the CP one sees in problems such as neutrality during World War I, anti-imperialism, the attitude towards the Peron government, etc.), Trotskyism was no exception. An 'internationalist' neutrality before national problems cannot be sustained: in not being superseded, it leads to either pro-imperialism or to nationalism. Lamentably, the subsequent history of the Trotskyist movement will confirm this often enough.

Miguel Medunich Orza, a worker who participated in the PORS, very quickly drew his own balance sheet: "After having founded the party a month previous, we wrote a letter for the IBC of the IV. International, in which we denounced the activity of Phelan and the orientation erroneously followed by the party. We stated in the letter that, if it was not possible to rectify this orientation and put an end to the internal intrigues, the party would disappear in the very near future. At the request of comrade Oscar (M.P.) we did not send it (...). The failure of the PORS, along with the bad objective and subjective conditions within and the defeat of the working class in other countries, had fundamental causes in the ideological inconsistency of the middle class, its constant vacillation between revolutionary and reformist positions...its fondness for personal gossiping and intrigues, as weapons in the fight for leadership ascendancy, its incredible lack of knowledge of the elementary necessities of the working masses and of socialist theory, its scorn for the opinions of the workers...its cynicism, disloyalty, personal rancour and the claim of unconditional obedience to its command, the lack of an own personality in the majority of cases which would enable it to oppose the orientation imposed on the movement by the bonze or the bonzes of the moment, even though it thought it erroneous" (91). This reproach towards the characteristics of a movement made up largely by intellectuals is far from the only one of its type. On the contrary, the experience of the PORS will encourage an 'anti-intellectualism' in the subsequent stage of the Argentine Trotskyist movement, which will lead it at times into a frank scorn for the struggle for ideas.

In the light of the previous views, let us look at the conclusion of Posadas when in 1946 he tells the International Secretariat of the existence of his group: "...owing to the dissolution of the PORS and over the experience it gave, of seeking to create a movement and a party over, behind the back of, and above the proletariat, we direct our activity wholly towards uniting ourselves in the daily and permanent process of the proletariat in the factory, workshops, unions, etc, in order to draw from there, in the living struggle, our militants and to educate ourselves in order to create our cadres" (92).

The posture totally evades the theoretical and political problems and tries to resolve them empirically ("go to the factories"). It is important to note this because he will soon become, not just one of the main Argentine leaders, but a Latin American and world leader, of the IV. International. Go to the factories, yes...but with which programme? For Posadas it lacks importance.

From Jorge Abelardo Ramos it is better to not ask for a balance sheet, even though his memory of the PORS congress betrays him: "It was an attempt to organise a revolutionary party, that party ideal, intransigent and unbreakable which tempered the aspirations of our adolescence and which still today constitutes the objective of our struggle. Having founded the tiny party the axis of its public operation was its opposition to the imperialist war and to Argentine participation in it" (93). We have recounted that that was not the 'axis' of the PORS, even though Ramos speculates with bad memory in order to

wash away this sin of youth. Ramos drew up his balance sheet in a very practical manner: he broke with the IV. International and converted himself into a paid purveyor of arguments of a leftist type to Peronism - and not against imperialism (whose President Eisenhower he saluted) but against the left (against the working class). A realist, transigent, mature; and above all breakable, Ramos had to remind himself of that "ideal, intransigent and (alas!) adolescent" FORS, with a certain guile. The 'adolescents' of the future will take up the banner which he, though not staining, just abandoned.

Noting changes like that of Ramos, Oscar Posse - the only one who was consistent with the FORS programme - hit the nail on the head in spite of it: "Until 4. June 1943, the idea that the proletariat should attain power on the basis of a highly socialist programme had only been discussed by one of the groups which defended the programme of the IV. International in this country, the one led by Quebracho (...) The military movement of 4. June 1943 had a surprising effect on the political thought of many Argentine Trotskyists (...) For them Argentina ceased to be a country of pronouncedly capitalist features where the proletariat should take power struggling mainly against the bourgeoisie, in order to turn itself into a backward nation in which it still remained to complete or terminate the bourgeois democratic revolution. It was evident that this changing of positions was closely linked to the deeply nationalist character of the military movement. For the first time, in the heat of world events, a bourgeois movement arose in Argentina with the aims of converting this country into a major power, breaking the bonds which tied it to imperialism (...) Those who had combatted the positions of Quebracho as opportunist, without then grasping more correct ones, allowed themselves to go along with the current and they launched a furious revision of our positions" (94).

Undoubtedly the rise of Peronism had stirred up the idea that Argentina was a "developed and independent capitalist" country. That schema excluded a nationalist movement with support among the masses, as in such countries nationalism assumes wholly reactionary and anti-working class forms. Posse limited himself to insisting upon the previous schema, falling into the same overestimation of the Argentine bourgeoisie, which would not only cross swords with all imperialist domination, but which he saw as preparing to transform itself into a 'great power'. Posse skated over the conflict with imperialism which had provoked the greatest mobilisation of the masses of the century. The other Trotskyists, in order to survive, had been forced to 'furiouslly revise' positions. The UOR, led by Posse, will be the first of the Trotskyist currents to disappear.

Mahuel Moreno, commenting in 1947 on the contributions to Argentine Trotskyism of Phelan, gave us a phrase in the style of which we are going to become accustomed from his pen: "Just as most times the mediocre imperialist ware is superior to the best colonial ware, Phelan, in spite of his grave organisational and tactical errors, has been the only one who basing himself on the theoretical elements and on the few materials of the Argentine groups, laid down the general programmatic fundamentals of the Argentine Trotskyist movement". Wishing to be well in with both God and the devil, Moreno only succeeds in treating everyone as idiots. After quoting the 'contributions' of Phelan on national liberation - a 'secondary question' - which we have already seen, Moreno criticises him: "National liberation is the most colossal revolutionary task in the backward countries and is not subordinated, but unquestionably related, to the world socialist revolution. Without the world revolution the colossal task of liberating the backward countries from imperialism is not possible. Therefore, the weapon of national liberation is the most intransigent international and national class struggle". Then what was the contribution of Phelan to the 'programmatic fundamentals'? And that of the FORS? According to Moreno:

"its correct position on the country and the national bourgeoisie (...). They pointed out the dependence of industry and the national bourgeoisie on foreign capital. The national bourgeoisie cannot nor wishes to transform this state of things".

Moreno continues distorting. As we have seen, the FORS characterised itself by presenting the Argentine bourgeoisie as a fully ruling class, which associated itself freely with imperialist capital (therefore it did not pose

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'national liberation'). It concerns a deliberate blindness, as Moreno himself quotes from the PORS:

"Through the process of mortgaging and indebtedment of the land, of the capitalisation of the land rent, of the more and more decisive role that the banks and limited companies play in the life of the country, the great farming and urban bourgeois and imperialist capital have joined in a 'financial oligarchy' which has as its economic organ the Banco Central and as its general management the national state".

As a consequence of that, the PORS saw in the Argentine neutrality during World War 2 a movement independent of its bourgeoisie. The criticism of Moreno will consist in pointing out that behind it were European and British capital:

"One does not take into account that if it is imperialist capital and concretely the yanks and the British, who dominate the consumer market and the capital, the government cannot carry out a policy independent of the dominant imperialisms. (...) If North America is strengthening itself within the country, as the PORS assures us, how come that this does not manifest itself in the policy of the Argentine government? (Peron - author's note)" (95).

The criticism is worthless, as it criticises something the PORS never said. The whole operation of Moreno reduces itself to presenting - just as the PORS - the imperialism and all the factions of the native bourgeoisie as forming a homogeneous bloc, but with imperialist hegemony, which is accepted with joy by the Argentine bourgeoisie. From this schema - just as with the PORS - all national conflicts or crisis in the state owing to imperialist oppression are excluded. The problem of Peronism, Moreno resolves it by saying that Peron was, just as any other bourgeois, an 'English agent', only representing the army, the bureaucracy and the police. The enormous mobilisations against Yankee imperialism, during which Peronism arose can be limited to "the most backward workers limited themselves to supporting one wing of the capitalist regime against another" ('Movilización antiimperialista y movilización clasista', July 1949). With this conception, Moreno lined up with gorilismo (a term for thuggery, usually in uniform - translators note), as he described Peronism as "the vanguard of the bourgeois offensive" (the Unión Democrática, supported by imperialism was "less totalitarian"). There was not even a trace of a conflict, not even deformed, between the nation and imperialism. After introducing 'national liberation' by the door, Moreno removes it through the window. The political myopia of the PORS passed entirely over to Moreno, with slight retouchings. Moreno carried into practise what the PORS only sketched out: the most atrocious sectarianism in the face of nationalist movements; Morenism converted itself into an insignificant sect during a whole decade.

If one can apply the words balance sheet to deliberate blindness, we can admit such a name to that of Terence Phelan. On 1. November 1944, in France, Phelan presents a report to the first congress of the Parti Communiste Internationaliste (which he played a role in organising), on the situation of the IV. International outside of Europe. To give an idea of the exaggerated optimism of the report, we quote a few lines on Argentina (we recall that Phelan already knows that the PORS was dissolved in 1943): "In Argentina, in 1941 and after long negotiations, a fusion was able to take place between four different Trotskyist groups. That led to the creation of the PORS and ended in unmasking the adventurer Quebracho, who on the last occasion we heard of him was in favour of forming a Fifth International of his creation" (96).

The European militants would have had more interest in hearing about the PORS than in the misadventures of Quebracho, who here served as a loin-cloth to cover a political failure.

Of course such a consideration could not be put to the Argentine groups once more in 1947 when the International Secretariat of the IV. International will try again to unite them: "It seems that many Argentine comrades consider that the conception itself of the PORS was defective. The fundamental conception of the PORS was that of uniting all the comrades there were who sincerely accepted the international programme of the Fourth (...) The defect of the PORS derived not in its conception of the party but in the fact that the discussion, a condition sine qua non for homogenisation of the party and its ideological arming, DID NOT TAKE PLACE. The party was not capable of giving itself, in the absence of such a discussion, a clear analysis of the character of

Argentina, nor could it forge itself a line of action that would be understood and accepted by the great majority of members. It is not worth the trouble at this late date trying to determine precisely who in Argentina or elsewhere should accept responsibility for the break-up of the PORs (...) in a certain sense, it is the experience of the PORs that one must once again go through" (97). There is some progress here in accepting that the previous indispensable discussion of delimitation did not take place, but...it is worth noting that one sees a leadership of the IV. International that rejects drawing out a balance sheet of its own activity (forget it and start again - we do not want to go over the past). This will nourish a lack of confidence in the leadership of the IV. International which will become the norm in the Argentine groups. The 'conception of the party' was correct, the problem was that the PORs lacked a programme, says the IS. Well now, for Trotsky, the party is the programme (98). The 'conception of the party' separated from the programme appears as a criterion of an apparatus. The same that, having presided over the formation of the PORs one utilises in 1947 in order to propose to the Argentine groups to unite...and after discuss. How should the Argentine militants draw out the lessons of their own history, if the international leadership does not encourage them in that sense, giving a good example.

In the way of a conclusion.

What can the author add, the majority of whose opinions have been flowing through the text as comments on those of the actors themselves?

During this period in Argentina, the IV. International carried out - and it will not be the only time - an experience proving that it is not the shortest route which goes the furthest, and that the line of least resistance can provide some immediate satisfaction, but also a much greater bitterness.

During the first fifteen years, it is the problems of the programme (the idea) which are foremost - and in that character this work handles them. Trotskyism succeeded, it is clear, in attracting some workers, among them some trade unionists of prominence (as it would seldom or never do later), but a 'Trotskyist faction' in the workers movement was far from existing. Therefore the problems of intervention in the workers movement were practically not posed: the movement did not rise to a sufficient height in order to pose them. It was not the case everywhere: in Chile during the same period the successive Trotskyist organisations were one of the most dynamic factors in the trade union movement. It was not that the programmatic problems in Chile were resolved once and for all - the consecutive dispersions of Chilean Trotskyism demonstrate the opposite.

Two objective factors will contribute to the debility of the insertion in the working class during that period: 1) the birth itself of Argentine Trotskyism as an ultra-minority of an already minority Argentine Stalinism (1929), and; 2) the general situation of the workers movement, which in this period experiences its greatest ebb of its whole history, with a few upsurges (1933-36). That undoubtedly favoured - due to the small numbers and the social composition - the climate of cliques and personal squabbles, but not up to the point of drawing the conclusion (of Quebracho, Moreno and Posadas) that this was the only feature of the movement.

Because at the same time Trotskyism drew to its ranks some of the best militants and intellectuals of their generation. To those already mentioned one should add, for example, José Boglich, who was active in the PSO and died in 1943 or 44, author of one of the first (and almost unique) serious studies of the agrarian question in Argentina, from a Marxist perspective (99). The problem consisted in harmonising all those elements into a political force, which was not achieved. Firstly, one had to resolve the principled questions: the character of the revolution in the backward countries, and their place in the world imperialist system. The majority faction of the militants at that time, which a fortiori achieved the support of the international leadership, liquidated both problems with the assertion: "there are no more democratic revolutions now, only socialist revolutions". It concerned a disappearing trick, as the concrete question of the character of the revolution in the backward countries, corresponds to an affirmation on the character of the

open for capitalism considered on a world-scale. The socialist revolution is the only one possible, but there are those which arise out of the nature of the antagonism between capital and labour (in the imperialist countries), and those which arise out of the struggle in the backward countries against national oppression. By refusing to consider the problems of national oppression and backwardness, one ignored also the class struggle underlying them, and which result in the ruling classes themselves posing them (the latter were presented as forming one bloc along with imperialism). The most important thing is that one refuses to discuss the central problem of the revolution in the face of the national problems: what attitude must the proletariat adopt in the incompleting of the national problems, that is to say, those originating in the fore-front of politics in the backward countries (the nationalist movements cannot but express them), their ignorance placed the Trotskyists in a sectarianism far from reality, in the majority of cases, or lined up with the pro-imperialist band, at worst. Trotsky, in systematising the theory of the socialist revolution, did not ignore the incompleting tasks of the democratic revolution: "...the democratic revolution can only triumph through the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported on the alliance with the peasants and directed towards, in the first instance, the realisation of the objectives of the democratic revolution (...). The dictatorship of the proletariat, which rises to power in the capacity of chief of the democratic revolution, finds itself inevitably and suddenly in triumphing, before objectives linked to profound transformations of the right of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution transforms itself directly into a socialist one, transforming itself therefore into a permanent revolution". To the confusion in respect of revolutionary theory, one must add the disorientation regarding characterisation of the country. On this point, certain characteristics of the development of Argentine capitalism assist the confusion. G. Lora evaluates them in this manner: "In Argentina, where Trotskyism made the first attempts at constructing itself as a programme following the sharp polemics around the thesis of the purely socialist revolution and that of national liberation (at that time this latter position underwent the Stalinist deformation which saw it as a strategic aim), the formation of the revolutionary vanguard had to begin (...) from the analysis of a reality which did not correspond, precisely, to that of a classical semi-colony and where the presence of an important industrial bourgeoisie induced the seeing of apparitions of every type" (100). Adhering to a primary anti-Stalinism, which sought to polemicise even with the terms that it utilised itself (and above all with it, rather than with its ideas), which is often the first step towards Trotskyism, they end up provoking a catastrophic confusion. It would be false to describe only the 'Argentines' thus: this phenomenon existed in other Latin American groups, as we have seen. But above it, it also existed in the leadership of the IV. International, new (after the liquidation of the leadership of the Left Opposition by Stalinism and Nazism) and formed above all by reference to the problems of the USSR and the class struggle in Europe and the USA. Its confusion concerning the problems of the oppressed countries was made evident in the Argentine case, where it supported the worst positions. Unfortunately, this confusion would not be overcome in the following years, and the leadership of the Fourth will oscillate between sectarian positions and capitulation before nationalism.

The unification of the Argentine groups without previous discussion was directly impelled by the IEC, which considered that no programmatic differences existed. "There does not seem to be one difference of such a nature as would impede the unification of all the groups", they insisted in April 1941 in a letter of JSB Stuard (101). Revealing its lack of will to consider the problems, the IEC treated the 'squabbles' among the Argentines with contempt, their delegate tried to close the debate rather than open it, he covered with his authority a unification which was forced and held together with safety pins, he presented such a thing as a political victory, and the abortion which resulted confirmed that saying that "the fish begins to rot at the head". The IEC declined firstly in its leadership, and almost immediately. The leadership of the Fourth in 1941 should have realised that it did not have the same authority as when Trotsky stood at its head. And even if it had so, the IV.

International, which existed and fought, still had to construct itself. And not simply through the accumulation of militants, but through political delimitation and clarification. What is worse is that, five years later, they would explicitly propose, "to repeat the experience of the PORs".

Because "if one takes into account that the revolutionary struggle permanently wears down and destroys the cadres" (102) one will understand that the lack of political clarity leads to the haemorrhage of militants, although they may be armed with the best 'Organisational Resolution'. As evidence of the failure of this first stage of the IV. International in Argentina, the majority of those who played a leading role throughout it abandoned activity and will be absent during the following stage: Gallo, Milessi, Justo, Lagos, Narvajas, when they are not present in the opposite trench: Ramos.

The first important political turn collapsed with the artificial construction of the IEC. With a consequence that the intervention of the masses which, in October 1945, produced the greatest Argentine political crisis of the first half of the century, and which opened up the most favourable situation until then for the rooting of Trotskyism, found the Trotskyists more dispersed and disorientated than ever since their birth in the country.

The activity which they displayed starting from then, with all its errors and limitations, confirmed the validity of the Trotskyist programme and the IV. International, in a certain way in spite of the Trotskyists themselves, with the supplementary handicap of not possessing a balance sheet of the first fifteen years of their history and of their first great crisis. All which would expose them - and did expose them - to repeat the same errors, together with other, new ones.

Fifty years after the birth of Trotskyism in Argentina, none of these questions have lost actuality.

27. 5. 80.

Notes.

- 41) Guillermo Lora, 'Contribución a la historia política de Bolivia - Historia del POR', Ed. Isla, La Paz, P. 304.
- 42) 'La Opinión', 9. 1. 72.
- 43) 'Estrategia...', P 83, 84.
- 44) 'Estrategia...', P 79, 80. Diego Henriquez is the pseudonym of the leader of the Chilean left Adonis Sepúlveda.
- 45) Lora, op. cit. P. 244.
- 46) 'International Bulletin', IEC of the IV. International, Vol 1, No 6, July '41.
- 47) Ibid.
- 48) 'Frente Proletario', organ of the POR of Chile, No 12, October '42, Santiago de Chile.
- 49) Sismondi: a socialist economist criticised by Marx for proposing to only eliminate the 'bad sides' of capitalism and not the mode of production.
- 50) LOR, 'Boletín Interno', No. 1, 'Respuesta a Marc Loris', August '41.
- 51) 'International...'
- 52) 'Estrategia...', P 158.
- 53) Letter from Terence Phelan to Charles Curtiss, 28. 10. 41.
- 54) 'Estrategia...', P. 157.
- 55) 'Les Congres de la IV eme. Internationale', Ed. La Breche, Paris, '78, P 402.
- 56) 'International...'
- 57) 'Estrategia...', P. 104.
- 58) Ibid. P 102.
- 59) Nahuel Moreno, 'Tesis: diferencias del movimiento trotskista argentino', in 'Revolución Permanente', Nos 2-3, Bs. As. October '49, P. 15 & 16.
- 60) V.I. Lenin, 'Collected Works', Vol 20, P. 432, Ed. Cartago, Buenos Aires.
- 61) Phelan to Curtiss, op. cit.
- 62) Ibid.
- 63) Moreno, op. cit. P. 15.
- 64) J.A. Ramos, 'Crisis y resurrección en la literatura argentina', Ed. Coyoacan, Bs. As. 1961, P. 73-74.
- 65) Moreno, op. cit. P. 18.
- 66) 'Estrategia...', P. 92.

- 67) 'Juan B. Justo y la cuestión nacional', Ediciones Fundación Juan B. Justo, Bs. As. 1980. Introduction by Gragorio Weinberg.
- 68) Sergio Bagú, 'Evolución histórica de la estratificación social en Argentina' Ed. Esquema, Venezuela, 1969, P. 33.
- 69) Alejandro B. Rofman and Luis A. Romero, 'Sistema socioeconómico y estructura regional en la Argentina', Ed. Amorrortu, Bs. As. 1974, P. 111.
- 70) Jorge Schvarzer, '1925-55: auge, expansión y crisis' in 'Todo es Historia', September '77, P. 57 & 58.
- 71) Ibid.
- 72) Fichas de investigación económico y social, No 1, April '64, P. 19.
- 73) Ibid. P. 35.
- 74) Stanley G. Irving, 'Economic conditions in the Argentine Republic', report of the Trade Councillor of the British Embassy, London, 1933.
- 75) Felix J. Weil, 'The Argentine Riddle', New York, 1944, P. 260.
- 76) Among other extemporaneous attitudes, Liborio Justo had seen it as important to publish his autobiography in 1940 under the title 'handbook'.
- 77) 'Estrategia...', P. 95.
- 78) Ibid. P. 117.
- 79) Enrique Garmona killed himself under the wheels of a train in 1945 at 25 yrs Medunich Orza, with whom he at times clashed, has nothing but praise for this young worker and union activist, putting his death down to political disappointment.
- 80) Lora, op. cit. P. 299.
- 81) Ibid. P. 303.
- 82) Orza, op. cit. P. 52, 53.
- 83) Lora, op. cit. P. 302, 303.
- 84) Alexander, 'Trotskyism...', P. 57.
- 85) Correspondence between Phelan and K. Steinfeld, 1942-43, Michigan University
- 86) 'Estrategia...', P. 106.
- 87) Alexander, 'Trotskyism...', P. 56. Joseph Hansen, 'El trotskismo en América Latina' in 'Perspectiva Mundial', Vol 1, November-December 1977. The book by Alexander was reviewed by Hansen in 'Intercontinental Press' Nos. 31 & 32 August - September, 1977, the 'PM' edition is surely the same - note by tran
- 88) Letter by Kurt Steinfeld, 12. 5. 47, in archives of USFI.
- 89) 'Apuntes sobre una historia del trotskismo en América Latina', L. Laitan, Ed. Jose Carlos Mariátegui, Paris, 1978.
- 90) 'Estrategia...', P. 99.
- 91) Orza, op. cit. P. 49.
- 92) José Posadas to the International Secretariat of the IV. International, 1. 6. 46. in archives of the USFI.
- 93) 'Crisis y Resurrección...', P. 73.
- 94) UOR, 'Boletín teórico', No 1, Bs. As. October '48.
- 95) 'Tesis: diferencias...', P. 19 & 20.
- 96) 'Bulletin du Secretariat Europeen de la IVeme. Internationale', No 1, Nov '4
- 97) 'ISFI to the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria of Argentina', 5. 6. 47, in the archives of USFI. Copies of this letter, or one similar, were sent to all the Trotskyist groups of that time (UOR, GCI, GOM, MOR of Jujuy and Tucuman, animated by Esteban Rey, etc.).
- 98) In the 'Discussions on the Transitional Programme', notes taken of oral interventions by Trotsky, he states: "Now, what is the party? In what does the cohesion consist? This cohesion is a common understanding of the events, of the tasks, and this common understanding - that is the programme of the party. Just as modern workers any more than the barbarian cannot work without tools so in the party the programme is the instrument. Without the programme every worker must improvise his tool, find improvised tools, and one contradicts another. Only when we have the vanguard organised upon the basis of common conceptions then we can act". (7. 6. 38).
- 99) José Boglich, 'La Cuestión Agraria', Bs. As. Ed. Claridad, 1937.
- 100) Guillermo Lora, 'Proyecto de informe sobre América Latina', Documents of the POR, Paris, 1977, P. 13.
- 101) 'Estrategia...', P. 97.
- 102) Lora, 'Contribución...', Vol 1, P. 27.