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The Interrupted Revolutions in Latin America: The Approach of Adolfo Gilly and Florestan Fernandes

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Abstract

This article aims to engage with the works of Adolfo Gilly and Florestan Fernandes regarding the relevance of the concept of "interrupted revolution" and the concept of "permanent revolution" to the capitalist realities of Latin America. A brief description of the processes of bourgeois revolution in Mexico and Brazil is presented, illustrating Gilly's concept of "interrupted revolution" and Fernandes's concept of "permanent counterrevolution." The article also discusses some strategic approaches derived from diverse understandings of the capitalist transition in the region. Finally, the paper raises some questions regarding the relevance today of the categories of permanent revolution, interrupted revolution, and autocracy for analyzing the realities of 21st-century Latin America.

Keywords: Dependent capitalism; permanent revolution; interrupted revolution.

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Introduction

The transformations in global capitalism have always preoccupied social scientists, especially those who, beyond their academic concerns, have also produced critical and militant work. This article aims to explore the incorporation of Leon Trotsky's concept of permanent revolution into the theoretical work of two such committed authors: Adolfo Gilly and Florestan Fernandes.

Gilly actively participated in revolutionary activities in Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, and, finally, Mexico; Fernandes became involved in a Trotskyist organization while still a young man and established himself as a militant educator of the Brazilian revolution. Both analyze the transformations that occurred in the 20th century from a critical perspective—that is, from a viewpoint concerned with the purpose of the event under analysis. As intellectual militants, they raised theoretical questions that could help elucidate the contradictions experienced by Latin American societies—in particular, the characterization of the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions and the more or less rapid transition from one to the other. The various ways of understanding this transition were the subject of the most profound controversy within 20th-century Marxism and gave rise to disputes over distinct political strategies.

Among the controversies and issues raised by the thinkers discussed, priority will be given to the question of the concept of revolution and its implications in a Latin American class society.

Origin of the Concept of Permanent Revolution

To address this issue, it is necessary to revisit the tradition of revolutionary theory rooted in Marxism. This conception views conflicts between material interests as the driving force of history. To this end, it is essential to investigate which contradictions are fundamental and which are secondary at different moments in human history. At times of change in modes of production, certain social sectors rise to become the protagonists of the political struggle to advance their material interests; and when these clash with other interests, a period of conflict begins.

In the 1850 text *"Message to the Central Committee of the Communist* League" by Marx and Engels (2010), the developments surrounding the transition from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist mode of production are analyzed. For this reason, this work is essential to our discussion. In it, members of the Communist League—a revolutionary party of the time—discuss the actions of the proletariat in the midst of a bourgeois revolution. The authors' historical interpretation indicates that the contradiction between the level of development of the productive forces and the social relations of production placed the "key" to political resolution in the hands of the bourgeoisie, since it already possessed economic power created by the

process of commodification of social life —not due to any preestablished determination, but rather due to the set of variables involved in that struggle, in that social formation. In this work, Marx and Engels outlined scenarios in which the political struggle would unfold, charting a political-revolutionary strategy for the proletariat. They did not do so based on their own will, but rather on an objective interpretation of reality. Both were communist activists and knew that they were not in the midst of a socialist revolution, but rather a bourgeois revolution.

From this concrete historical situation, communist leaders and social theorists identified the fundamental elements of a preliminary theory of revolution. According to Marx and Engels (2010), these elements are:

1. It is necessary to objectively analyze the nature of the revolution;
2. The proletariat needs an autonomous and independent organization;
3. It needs its own program;
4. It requires both legal and clandestine activities;
5. We must build a dual armed power; and
6. Establish a permanent revolution with an international character.

This last element—the permanent revolution—is essential to understanding the logic of revolution as a constant element in humanity's social production. It was this element that sparked debate among various theorists and revolutionary leaders. The "Message to the Central Committee..." was a call for permanent revolution because many of the mistakes made by the proletariat in the defeat of the 1848 revolution stemmed from a lack of class autonomy and independence. In the words of Marx and Engels, the proletariat was left trailing behind the democratic bourgeoisie. These authors draw from French revolutionary literature the term *en permanence*—that is, that the revolutionary class must maintain the pace of transformation, without interruption, until final victory. This did not happen in the French Revolution, due to the Restoration, nor did it happen in Germany in 1848 due to the bourgeoisie's betrayal—which was already expected—and the proletariat's lack of independence.

From this historical context emerged the perspective of permanent revolution as part of a revolutionary strategy for the working class. It is well known that the permanent revolution is a powerful concept in the work of another author in the Marxist tradition. Leon Trotsky made extensive use of it to

counter the mechanistic interpretations of the Second and Third Internationals. Three fundamental aspects of Trotsky's (2007) elaboration are highlighted here:

1. The continuity of the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution without the need for intermediate stages;

2. In the event that the proletariat seizes power, the socialist transition must also proceed without interruption;

3. The proletarian revolution must be international; otherwise, it will regress or wane.

Leon Trotsky (2007) draws on the Paris Commune as a historical comparison to analyze the Russian situation amid the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905.

The theory of permanent revolution is already present in Marx and Engels' letter, but it is through the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905 that it gains historical objectivity. The Russian bourgeoisie, the product of capitalist development from the outside in—that is, carried out by French, Belgian, British, German, American, and other companies—materialized as a class that was economically weak and lacked political vitality. The convergence of interests among this local bourgeoisie, the international bourgeoisie, and the agrarian aristocracy found in the tsarist state a political form compatible with joint action. Thus, the typical aspects of this social formation embody the universal elements of the capitalist mode of production in a unique way. On the one hand, in the major cities, industry is the foundation of the emerging world; and in the rest of the vast country, the old traditional forms of backwardness in the Russian countryside prevail. This conceptual synthesis is captured by the category of the unequal and combined development of Russian capitalism. Hence, Trotsky's contribution to the assessment of the workers' defeat in the Paris Commune and in 1905 in Russia lays the foundation for a strategic formulation far more powerful than that previously accepted by the labor movement.

The hegemonic strategy of the Second International was based on a non-dialectical understanding of the need for the expansion of capitalist relations prior to a socialist rupture. Trotsky's interpretation imposed a new perception of the class struggle, in which the proletariat must assert its revolutionary essence from the very outset of the struggles and not delude itself with the idea of a common struggle with the bourgeoisie against the old regime. These categories will be essential for Gilly and Fernandes in their interpretation of Latin America.

That said, we return to the fundamentals of the six elements identified by Marx and Engels in *the*

"Message." Therein lies an outline of a theory of revolution. The six basic elements have been addressed by the proletarian movement and by the authors themselves in very different contexts, from 1850 to the present day. Marx, for example, after writing the "Manifesto," spent the rest of his life studying economic n politics and developing a critique of political economy, which culminated in his work *Capital* (1867). In it, he provides us with the key concepts that explain the prevailing mode of production. It is in this work that the foundations of a comprehensive theory of revolution with an anti-capitalist character are laid. Without incorporating the universal theoretical concepts for grasping the logic of capital, it is impossible to formulate a victorious revolutionary strategy.

In many cases, the proletarian movement based its interpretations solely on the rough outlines of the defeated experience of 1848–1850 and failed to delve deeper into the analytical concepts regarding the different social formations presented in that seminal work, which interprets the capitalist mode of production. This shortcoming of the labor movement led to an ahistorical conception of revolutions and created a radical-bourgeois version of class struggle that did not transcend the limits of the democratic order.

It seems that Florestan Fernandes and Adolfo Gilly attempt to overcome this limitation, drawing largely on the tradition of the permanent revolution as articulated by Marx and Engels, but also directly from Trotsky.

The Bourgeois Revolution in Mexico—According to Gilly

Adolfo Gilly, an Argentine activist and researcher, spent time in Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba, and Mexico. In Mexico, he was imprisoned in the 1970s. While in prison, he wrote a book on the Mexican Revolution. According to this author, the events in Mexico at the beginning of the 20th century are linked to two concurrent transformations:

1. primitive accumulation; and
2. capitalist accumulation.

At the same time that a class of large landowners linked to agrarian businesses was expropriating the peasants, this class was transforming itself into a bourgeoisie that accumulated wealth through industrial enterprises. In the classical bourgeois revolutions, this occurred over a period of time, due to the long process of the incubation of truly bourgeois relations still within the feudal mode of production. The bourgeoisie in

the classical revolutions had to confront the obstacles of the old regime, which led to violent conflicts before the new mode of production could take hold. In late capitalist transformations, sectors linked to the world market—such as slave owners, merchants, bankers, etc.—gradually became bourgeois. In this sense, the conflict did not take on the same original character. Such bourgeois revolutions leave a trail of violence against those at the bottom—social sectors not economically and politically integrated into the new situation.

In Mexico, at the beginning of the 20th century, Porfirio Díaz, the former leader, and Madero, a representative of the new bourgeois generation, sought reconciliation from above and attempted to put an end to the revolution that had erupted into mass movements since 1910. However, Zapata, a peasant leader, did not lay down his arms and continued with the Plan of Ayala: "First, divide the land; then, discuss." The peasants and workers, amid a mix of interests and contradictions, found a way to express their class consciousness. Note: it is the impossibility of reaching a compromise with the bourgeoisie that drives them to continue the struggle, since the program is not anti-capitalist. But the political intensity of the conflict escalates into a civil war.

A revolutionary period then begins. According to Mignon (2020), Gilly explains that "revolution is the product of specific, historically defined social relations between human beings and the material forces of production that constrain their actions" (Mignon, 2020, p. 771).

Thus, understanding social changes in the midst of a civil war can only be explained through a complex web of actors and actions. Hence, a mechanistic and linear perspective fails to capture reality in its contradictory movement.

The nature of the revolution in Mexico is unclear, as the transformation of large landowners into bourgeoisie proceeds at a slow pace, which is not the same among peasants and workers. For this reason, the new bourgeoisie does not seize power with the ouster of Porfirio Díaz, while the armed peasants, led by Zapata and Villa, hesitate to take power. From this situation emerges a historical pattern of bourgeois class action in Latin America: the brutal repression of those who have the potential to set a different civilizational course for the process of economic, social, and political transformation on the continent.

However, the changes did not proceed with sufficient depth and scope. The military's actions and the rebels' hesitation ultimately brought the revolution to a halt—a key moment in Gilly's analysis. Reflecting on the origins of his interpretation of the interruption of the Mexican Revolution, this activist and theorist states:

> In Trotsky's view … Cardenism was a "sui generis" form of Bonapartism, which sought to rise "above the classes," making concessions to the workers in order to

> secure a certain degree of maneuvering room against foreign capital (Gilly as cited in Mignon, 2020, p. 781).

It is not the purpose of this article to delve deeply into the Mexican revolutionary process, but merely to point out that the interruption of the revolution at a bourgeois-democratic stage produced a typical " " pattern of social formation in that country. It is also important to emphasize that while there are negative aspects to this interruption, there are also positive ones, since it was preceded by a violent class struggle between the ruling and ruled classes—for example, the experience of a disciplined military organization committed to the revolution. Such political education can be seen in the tradition of Mexican popular, labor, and indigenous organizations to this day.

The Bourgeois Revolution in Brazil—According to Florestan Fernandes

From a very young age, sociologist Florestan Fernandes was challenged to understand Brazilian society. He had to work to survive starting at the age of six; at 20, he decided to enroll in the then-newly founded University of São Paulo (USP) to study social sciences. At the same time, he began his political activism in the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR), a Trotskyist organization and member of the Fourth International (Silva, 2024). In 1946, Florestan Fernandes translated Karl Marx·s *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* into Portuguese for the first time. These biographical details are necessary to contextualize the dual role played by the author: that of a social scientist and that of a revolutionary activist.

From his earliest works, the São Paulo sociologist sought to explain the transition from the old colonial regime to a class-based society. His research on the Tupinambás, on the integration of Black people, and on folklore in São Paulo are works that, in different ways, reveal the economic, political, social, and cultural characteristics of Brazilian social formation. At a certain point in his career—after the 1964 military coup and, especially, after his forced retirement in 1969—he waged a relentless war against the autocratic nature of the Brazilian bourgeoisie.

One of his fundamental contributions lies in his explanation of the bourgeois revolution, which broadly resembles Gilly's understanding. For Fernandes, there is a capitalist transformation in countries with a colonial past that differs from classical bourgeois revolutions. In the latter, the driving force behind this economic transformation comes from outside; therefore, they are heteronomous societies. In the latter, economic forces originated from within; that is, they possessed an internal driving force of capitalist relations and class conflict, and were thus hegemonic societies.

With the increasing complexity of the world market that emerged following the European

industrialization process, the colonies became the focus of the expansion of capitalist relations. Fernandes (1975) categorizes the patterns of external domination as follows: 1. Colonialism: in which the subjugation of host societies occurred through political and legal mechanisms of domination. This was the era of domination by the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain; 2. Neocolonialism: subjugation is now economic in nature, yet it occurs through the incorporation of the social sphere into the metropolis via market mechanisms in the process of simple commodity exchange; 3. Imperialism: This is a form of economic, political, and legal domination in which imperialist countries impose rules on host countries, which, in turn, adopt the relations of production typical of the capitalist mode of production. England, France, and the United States are examples of this type; 4. Total imperialism: the most complete form of capitalist domination. It is in this form that nations gradually cease to be the organizational foundation of subjugation, paving the way for the active role of large corporations. These corporations begin to create and recreate relations of authority and dependence at all levels of society.

Note that the forms of external domination are a characterization of capitalist relations in motion—that is, they transform according to the material conditions of each historical period. Added to this characterization is the conceptualization of the formation of the bourgeoisie in countries undergoing a colonial-neocolonial-dependent transition. The author points out that, in Latin America, there are varying degrees and forms of capitalist development, with some countries still being neocolonies and others already dependent.

The concept of dependent capitalism is also of central importance at this point in the discussion. It is on this basis that Fernandes constructs his explanation of the specific bourgeois revolution in dependent capitalist countries, including Mexico and Brazil. For him, capitalist transformation was not coupled with the creation of a competitive social order; rather, archaic traditions of authoritarianism persisted within a new mercantile economic base. In other words, the old slave-owning society gradually ceased to exist due to the universalization of the labor market, yet it continued to coexist with surviving hybrid elements of those colonial relations. External pressures for the expansion of the capitalist market—demanding the end of slavery, the rationalization of the legal system, and the organization of state administration on a market-based foundation—are felt by the elite managing the new global economic situation. At the same time, these archaic domestic sectors become bourgeois as they come into contact with import and export schemes linked to the world market.

For Fernandes, what matters is the “combination of internal and external influences, which has calibrated (and continues to calibrate) the dynamics of class society in accordance with the requirements of patterns dependent on capitalist development” (Fernandes, 1975, p. 75).

Thus, even during the neocolonial transition period, external influences are received and managed internally by a bourgeois class that reinterprets them and acts in accordance with its material basis of interests. These interests involve capital accumulation determined by its place in the international division of labor. Note that the manner in which the market emerged and expanded in Latin America did not pit a new, profit-hungry class against another class that violently defended its interests. Here, what occurs is a reconciliation from above—a non-classical bourgeois revolution. There is a very peculiar nascent society, where changes in the economic base facilitate an accommodation among the sectors "at the top." In summary:

> Labor relations of colonial origin served as the foundation for the type of primitive accumulation of capital that would fuel the emergence of the modern capitalist market, direct integration into the world market, and the production-export-import scheme that both presupposed (Fernandes, 1975, p. 62).

Furthermore, a rearticulation of the system as a whole takes place, and what appears "archaic" is in fact updated, serving as a foundation for the modern, whereby the modern seems to lose that character, revitalizing its opposite or generating socioeconomic forms that blend pre-capitalist accumulation with specifically capitalist accumulation" (Fernandes, 1975, p. 62).

The excerpt above is a strong indication of the influence of Trotsky's thought on Fernandes's formulation. The logic of uneven and combined development is evident, and without it, it is not possible to grasp the particularity of Latin American social formations.

In contrast, in the case of the United States, there was a bourgeois revolution accompanied by nationalizing autonomization that pitted archaic sectors against modern ones. The War of Independence served to historically advance the capitalist transformation and, at the same time, created a competitive social order marked by the specific legacy of the Civil War—the deep scar of racism. In Latin America, these transformations were deprived of the very modernity that propelled a conquering bourgeoisie onto the stage of history. On the subcontinent, the pattern was the interruption of progressive changes at a stage prior to the political socialization of marginalized sectors and those newly incorporated into the market. Thus, Black people, Indigenous peoples, and poor whites were left on the margins of history-making, left only to suffer.

A dividing line can be discerned in this brief description: on one side, the countries and classes capable of acting autonomously—in this case, the United States; on the other, the countries and classes that are heteronomous or dependent. This is due to the historical context of social formation in which they developed, being determined not only by their own interests but also by negotiations over their positions of power as dependent economies. The bourgeois classes in these societies are weak externally but very strong internally.

According to Fernandes (1975, p. 69):

> The "privileged classes" (that is, the "upper" and "middle" classes) face structural limitations generated directly by the dual pattern of original capital accumulation and by the resulting mode of distributed appropriation of the national economic surplus (Fernandes, 1975, p. 69).

Fernandes explains the specific form of the dependency relationship through the mechanism of dual appropriation of the economic surplus. This means that the resources produced by this society are partially drained out of it, preventing primitive accumulation capable of propelling the bourgeoisie toward autonomy. Thus, the material base of these dependent bourgeoisies is weak and discontinuous, as it lacks full decision-making capacity. The dualist explanation—which proposed an alliance between popular sectors and the national bourgeoisie to limit imperialist power—failed to take into account the objective co-optation to which the local bourgeois class was exposed. The practical implication of this framework is the impracticality of an alliance with any bourgeois sector to carry the revolution forward.

This understanding clashes with the explanations of the Third Communist International, which in 1928 defined the guidelines for a broad front against fascism. From a political standpoint, the Third International lacked a theory capable of explaining the particularities of capitalist development in the periphery. We have seen thus far that Gilly and Fernandes run counter to the communist movement led by Stalinist orthodoxy.

Fernandes (2015) engages in a debate with those sectors of the left that ground their strategy for social change in a misguided understanding of decolonization. The São Paulo sociologist asserts that the theory of internal colonialism—marked notably by the Brazilian Communist Party's interpretation at the time—raises "the banners of the struggle against 'feudalism,' archaic structures of production, and, above all, anti-imperialism" (Fernandes, 2015, p. 100). However, Fernandes predicts: "something is better than nothing" (Fernandes, 2015, p. 100). His reflection stems from his opposition to critical theories that fall within the spectrum of bourgeois radicalism and reformist nationalism. His understanding of the evolution of capitalist transformation in countries with a colonial past compels him to revisit the classic questions regarding the evolution of the world economy. Fernandes frames the issue as follows: "History did not repeat itself because there was no reason for it to repeat itself. It was a different history—the history of capitalism in countries with a colonial past" (Fernandes, 2015, p. 92).

Fernandes's social theory is further complemented by a perceptive theory of the state within this dependent capitalism. For him, the state is the political form capable of uniting the various "bourgeois

islands" that emerged from the neocolonial transition to dependent capitalism. Using the German and Japanese revolutions as benchmarks—which utilized the state as a concentrator of political power to compensate for those countries' late entry into imperialist competition—Fernandes asserts that the state in dependent capitalism enables the unification of bourgeois action to confront conflicts with those "from below."

From this arises a pattern of class struggle that is extremely harsh and cruel toward the working masses. Fernandes (2005) characterizes this political action as a true bourgeois autocracy, and the state as a bourgeois autocratic . It serves

> as a springboard for counterrevolutionary political, military, and police measures that have tied the national state not to classical bourgeois democracy, but to a technocratic version of restricted democracy, which could be accurately described, in technical terms, as a bourgeois autocracy (Fernandes, 2005, p. 313).

From his reflections on autocracy and dependent capitalism, the Brazilian thinker develops a key category for the class struggle: that of "permanent counterrevolution." In the author's view, the bourgeoisie has learned from historical experiences; the proletariat has not yet.

Permanent Revolution versus Interrupted Revolution

The theoretical elaborations of Gilly and Fernandes draw heavily on Leon Trotsky's concept of the process of permanent revolution and its ramifications. To analyze these ramifications, one must understand that the Mexican and Brazilian realities undergo a metamorphosis to incorporate the capitalist market mechanisms stemming from imperialist expansion. These social formations did not witness a struggle by the bourgeoisie against the dominant strata of the old regime, but rather an alliance among the dominant sectors. From this first characteristic stems the second, related to the interruption of the revolution.

According to Gilly, in Mexico, the revolution was underway when workers and peasants took up the struggle to implement Zapata's Plan of Ayala. However, the leadership of the popular movement was peasant-led, which is said to have prevented it from making significant progress on radical demands. On the other hand, the interruption is said to be related to the insufficient political and programmatic organization of the rebellious masses.

Another theoretical element brought to light by the Mexican experience—and its interruption—is the historical particularity that becomes explicit in contrast to certain universalities of how revolutions function.

This means that, within the capitalist mode of production, and in the labor pains of bringing it into the world, certain events necessarily occur. These universalities form the basis of Marxist thought and are present in the conceptual framework of Marx·s *Capital* (2017). But there are also particularities, which can only be understood through a concrete analysis of the social formations generated by the world market. Both Marx and Trotsky always took into account the internationalism of capital and, consequently, the necessary internationalist action of the working class. Thus, interpreting the universal and the particular at each historical moment is fundamental to formulating a revolutionary, , and strategic approach. Different understandings of reality give rise to different practical-political propositions.

According to Gilly, interpretations of the Mexican Revolution can be divided into three categories:

1. The bourgeois conception, shared by reformist socialism:

> which asserts that the revolution, from 1910 to the present, is a continuous process—with phases that are faster or slower but uninterrupted—that is gradually perfecting itself and fulfilling its objectives under the guidance of successive "governments of the revolution" (Gilly, 1994, p. 397).

2. The petty-bourgeois and centrist socialist conception, which "maintains that the 1910 revolution was a bourgeois-democratic revolution that achieved its objectives only partially or very partially" (Gilly, 1994, p. 397). According to this conception, another revolution is necessary.

3. The proletarian and Marxist conception, which asserts that

> the Mexican Revolution is an interrupted revolution. With the emergence of the peasant masses and the impoverished petty bourgeoisie, it initially developed as an agrarian and anti-imperialist revolution and, in the course of its development, acquired an empirically anti-capitalist character (Gilly, 1994, p. 397).

For Gilly, the lack of proletarian leadership and a program led to the interruption of the revolution at two points: first in 1919–1920, and then in 1940. Based on these experiences, Gilly states: "It is therefore a permanent revolution in the consciousness and experience of the masses, but one interrupted at two historical stages in the objective progress of its achievements" (Gilly, 1994, p. 398).

This synthesis of the differences between the strategies carries a powerful theoretical and political critique on the part of the Argentine author. He situates the formulations according to the class position of their historical subjects. Thus, the bourgeoisie attempts to mystify its own incapacity by emphasizing the continuity of the revolution—therefore, it would never have been interrupted. This interpretation is shared

by a large portion of proletarian organizations, insofar as it does not presuppose the necessary break with the existing order. This continuity-oriented formula of the revolutionary process resembles the Russian Menshevik and German Social Democratic elaborations—from Kautsky and Bernstein to Martov and Plekhanov. Those who would challenge this interpretation at the beginning of the 20th century were Trotsky and Lenin, who, having taken different paths, met in May 1917 in the midst of revolutionary Petrograd.

Returning to Latin America, it is worth noting that the second strategic formulation—that the Mexican " " revolution was merely a bourgeois-democratic one—resembles the position of the Bolsheviks in February 1917, under the leadership of Kamenev and Stalin. At that time, they believed that the two revolutions—the democratic and the socialist—were separated in time, just as had happened with the bourgeois revolution. It follows from this understanding that the second revolution would only occur once capitalism had developed and matured enough to be taken over by the workers and peasants. During this transition, leadership would be shared among workers, peasants, and the bourgeoisie. Note that this view was nearly unanimous among the revolutionaries of the time, with the exception of Trotsky and, to some extent, the German Spartacists, according to Löwy (2015).

Regarding the first two approaches to understanding the Mexican Revolution, Gilly asserts that the petty-bourgeois conception is based on a "belief that, in the era of imperialism, revolutions unfold as national revolutions ...; that is, that revolutions are independent of one another, unique, and occur within each country as if in a closed container" (Gilly, 1994, p. 399).

Once again, we see the strong implication of a theoretical error on practical action. When the model of socialism in a single country was developed by Stalin and Bukharin, they had already lived through the era of German social-chauvinism. At the start of World War I, the German Social Democratic Party voted in favor of war credits, sending millions of workers to the battlefields to defend the Reich. After the revolution in Russia was stifled, Stalin also did something very similar by confining political action within the borders of a single country, thereby abandoning the continuity of the revolution.

However, in Latin America, the social upheavals could not be directed by either the bourgeoisie or the proletarian organizations. It is therefore worth reflecting on the situation. Gilly (1994, p. 402) tells us that the Marxist conception asserts that "the Mexican Revolution is a revolution interrupted in its course toward its socialist conclusion. It is the application of the theory of permanent revolution to the entire revolutionary cycle in Mexico since 1910."

It becomes possible for it to be a permanent revolution due to the victory of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the creation of the Soviet state. Gilly continues his reflection by asking why the revolution is interrupted and not defeated:

> Precisely because it is permanent. The Mexican peasantry took up arms to seize the land. In the course of its peasant war, it was driven to turn it into a struggle for power and to challenge bourgeois property rights. It went beyond democratic limits and measures and implemented empirical anti-capitalist measures. Through these measures, it developed an empirically anticapitalist content at the base of the revolution which, due to its peasant-class limitations, it was unable to express in the form of a conscious program and state leadership capable of exercising and maintaining power. It therefore lacked, for this purpose, the leading intervention of the proletariat, with its program and its party, and the worker-peasant alliance (Gilly, 1994, pp. 403–404).

However, in Fernandes's Brazil, the discussion of the bourgeois revolution hinges on an understanding of the peculiarity of dependent capitalism. It is from this level of grasping reality that one can formulate tactics that transition from actions within the order to actions against the order. For this reason, identifying the fulcrum of workers' action is fundamental, which requires the following description:

> In fact, it is linked to an attempt by leftist vanguards to gain a foothold in driving the transformations within the existing order associated with the bourgeois revolution (these transformations were described in Europe as "revolutions" and are what mark the advance of the bourgeois revolution: the agrarian revolution, the urban revolution, the industrial revolution, the national revolution, and the democratic revolution) (Fernandes, 2015, p. 101).

Here, Fernandes points to the arc of social changes engendered by the bourgeois logic of revolution in its classical form—that is, in the revolutions in France, England, and the United States. Thus, distinguishing the forms and degrees of development in other countries becomes important, since historical periods do not repeat themselves; the mechanisms of political, social, economic, and cultural organization are different and unique. If social theory fails to grasp these realities objectively, it will fall into serious scientific errors and, consequently, into practical errors. For the working class, this has even more serious consequences, as these errors lead to political defeats with an incalculable human cost. In other words, critical social theory cannot yield to bourgeois illusions.

In this regard, Fernandes makes a strong statement regarding moderate socialist propositions (in full agreement with Gilly's critiques) that advocate for peaceful coexistence between countries undergoing socialist transition and capitalist countries:

> Consequently, it failed to adapt the theory of social classes and class struggle to the concrete conditions of countries in a neocolonial situation or under dependent

> capitalism; and it did a very poor job of articulating the demands of rural and urban workers in a specifically socialist and revolutionary language. It also ended up, therefore, into the orbit of bourgeois reformism, although one cannot underestimate its importance in terms of the political mobilization of sectors of the poor and working population systematically excluded from civic culture and civil society, as well as for the nationalist and radical-democratic indoctrination of some sectors of the middle classes or even the upper classes (Fernandes, 2015, p. 101).

Action confined to revolution within the existing order—which Fernandes believed to be a radical-bourgeois deviation—takes on a different orientation when calibrated by his understanding of the advancement of action outside the existing order. Note:

> Taking decolonization to its ultimate consequences is a cause analogous to the national revolution and the democratic revolution—and this demand would have to be made in socialist terms, even if aimed at the "acceleration of the bourgeois revolution." It seems clear that decolonization cannot be confined within these limits and that, in practice, rather than accelerating the bourgeois revolution, it fosters "destabilization" and the evolution of revolutionary situations to critical points (Fernandes, 2015, p. 102).

This clearly entails embracing the concept of permanent revolution. Beyond this acceleration—which falls to the working classes—it is also necessary to understand that the socialist strategy in the periphery serves to calibrate the revolutionary dynamics of the existing order through the social problems and dilemmas that the bourgeoisie have not attempted to confront and resolve, as this is not in their class interest within the forms of capitalist development inherent to semicolonialism and dependency (Fernandes, 2015, p. 102).

These observations point to a turning point in the development of revolutionary theory in Brazil. Until the mid-1970s, the formulation of a permanentist strategy of a socialist character was the exception within the labor movement.

The dialectic of a revolution within the order and a revolution against the order is part of the critical and creative strategic formula that Fernandes pioneered in Brazil. Such a formulation has been little studied in Marxist literature and even less incorporated into the political struggle by workers' organizations.

Concluding Remarks

When reflecting on the prospects for revolution in Latin America, one recognizes the need to draw upon the Marxist theoretical arsenal, particularly the concept of permanent revolution inherited from Marx,

Engels, and Trotsky. In engaging with the authors selected here—Gilly and Fernandes—one observes the complexity of the situation in which Mexico and Brazil found themselves during the capitalist transformation to which they were subjected. The "interrupted revolution," as defined by Gilly, adopts a permanentist perspective on revolution; that is, he places on the agenda political action of a revolutionary nature with a socialist program. Fernandes (2005), on the other hand, uses the concept of permanent counterrevolution, indicating that it was the bourgeoisie that utilized the theory of permanent changes inherent in dependent capitalism to prevent the socialist revolution—thus constituting a theoretical and practical shortcoming of the Brazilian socialist movement.

It is also worth noting, in this brief text, some questions that have arisen from the theoretical review of these authors:

- Could the category of "interrupted revolution" explain the events surrounding the workers' political struggles in Mexico and Brazil in the early 21st century?

- Can the concept of "permanent counterrevolution" explain the political events that have taken place in Latin America over the past 30 years?

- Is bourgeois autocracy still a theoretical tool compatible with the bourgeois-democratic political form accepted by most so-called left-wing parties?

Finally, the theoretical-political task of developing a theory of revolution is urgent, but it cannot obscure the historical necessity of systematically studying the theory of bourgeois counterrevolution. This theory is produced with immense institutional resources and put into practice on a daily basis against the rebellious uprisings of those "from below."

There is much to be done, and as Professor Florestan Fernandes would say in his 1988 campaign for a seat in the Constituent Federal Chamber of Deputies: "Against the ideas of force and the force of ideas."

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