

# COB betrayal paves way for “state of exception” in Bolivia: strategic lessons of the workers’ uprising

## Part 2

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*This is the second of a two-part series. Part one was published here.*

### The Bolivian crisis as a “laboratory of class struggle”

The deeper implications of the line pursued by the Morenoites emerged in a programmatic statement on the Bolivian crisis published in *La Izquierda Diario’s* weekly supplement on June 17. Titled “The rebellion in Bolivia and the strategic crossroads that run through Latin America,” it was signed by the Permanent Revolution Current’s leaders Josefina Martínez and Matías Maiello.

They close the article claiming that Bolivia is “a laboratory of class struggle that concentrates many of the strategic crossroads running through Latin America.” This is correct, and the Morenoites’ statement exposes their position as irreconcilably opposed to the interests of the working class.

The Morenoites’ sociological interpretation of the mass uprising that shook Bolivia over the last 50 days is summarized by the assertion that “the question of plurinationality, as well as... the problem of the land,” are “a banner of struggle and a great motor of the current rebellion.” They substantiate this thesis by directly quoting from Morales’s former vice-president, Álvaro García Linera, on the impossibility of “governing without the indigenous peoples.”

The Morenoites’ capitulation to the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Towards Socialism – MAS) is unambiguous. Their article credits the MAS—which stood for almost two decades as the ruling party of the Bolivian capitalist state and suffered a historical collapse in 2025—with having been “a vehicle of conquests for the originary population.”

The present mass upsurge in Bolivia, according to the Morenoites, has the meaning of opening “the perspective of a new historic bloc of workers, peasants and indigenous people”—that is, for a new bourgeois trap after the shipwreck of the MAS. “And this is a key element for strategic reflection, even beyond Bolivia,” they revealingly declare.

Javo Ferreira, LOR-CI’s main leader, is also quoted in the article as a central reference for this rotten petty-bourgeois nationalist line. Ferreira advocates indigenous “national awakening”—“pride in ethnic and cultural belonging”—as “a highly progressive factor and a motor

of the class struggle,” and frames the question as one of “the liberation of the originary peoples.” This framework is substituted for a class one, and the different social class layers among the indigenous population are merged into an undifferentiated “people” whose material interests dissolve into a common ethnic identity.

The oppression of Bolivia’s indigenous masses is real. It constitutes a profound democratic question rooted in centuries of colonial and capitalist plunder.

But the entire history of Bolivia confirms what Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution establishes: this democratic question cannot be resolved under capitalism nor by any form of bourgeois nationalism. Its solution depends on the working class taking power at the head of the oppressed masses, as part of the international socialist revolution.

The Morenoites’ “historic bloc of workers, peasants and indigenous people” liquidates this understanding, reducing the proletariat from the leading class to one component of a multi-class coalition in which non-proletarian and ultimately bourgeois forces hold the political reins.

This formula has the unmistakable stench of the Stalinist “bloc of four classes” imposed on the Chinese revolution of 1925–27, which chained the workers to the bourgeois Kuomintang and ended in their slaughter. It is a nationalist conception of the revolution, which is to say a conception of a bourgeois revolution. This assault on the Theory of Permanent Revolution is grounded on conscious revision at the foundation of the PRC’s politics, as the Brazilian Socialist Equality Group clearly established in its analysis of the Morenoites’ rebranding.

### The Bolivian Popular Assembly of 1971

Across the PRC/LOR-CI statements, the Morenoites insist on one historical model for the present: the Bolivian Popular Assembly of 1971. The choice is profoundly significant, for this is among the decisive strategic experiences of the Latin American and international working class.

In 1970-71, the Bolivian working class was directly confronted with

the question of taking political power. But the betrayal of the workers' revolutionary struggle led it to be drowned in blood by the fascistic military led by Col. Hugo Banzer.

The COB trade unionists, the Stalinists and—above all—the Pabloite Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Revolutionary Workers Party, POR) were responsible for this bitter defeat. Their promotion of the “Popular Assembly” was the chief mechanism that diverted the working class from establishing its political independence and disarmed it before the bourgeois state.

Falsifying this history, *La Izquierda Diario's* statement of June 17 proclaims:

Although it did not quite become a soviet or council properly speaking, like the soviets of the Russian revolution of 1917, the Popular Assembly was conceived as a permanent institution of the mass movement and aimed at a centralization of the worker, peasant and popular alliance around the workers' movement. One of its great problems was that its reformist leadership did not conceive of it as the organ of a new power to defeat the bourgeois state, but as an organism of pressure on the government of General Torres. But it is an enormous experience. How necessary it would be today to make the general strike effective and put a Popular Assembly like that of 1971 on its feet, so that workers and peasants may take the reins of the situation and defeat Paz!

The Morenoites offer as the solution to the crisis confronting the Bolivian working class in 2026 a reedition of a betrayal that led to the most tragic defeat in its history.

The crisis of 1971 turned on a single question. Gen. Juan José Torres, a bourgeois-nationalist officer employing “left” rhetoric, presided over a regime caught between an insurgent working class and the fascists within the state and the Armed Forces preparing to drown it in blood. The Popular Assembly that convened that May—called by the COB, based on the unions and, above all, the miners—gathered the immense combative energy of the Bolivian proletariat. The question it posed was whether the working class would take power, smashing the bourgeois state and its army, or be subordinated to a bourgeois regime and disarmed before reaction.

The leadership of the Assembly gave the fatal answer. The COB and the Stalinist Communist Party, with the Trotskyist credentials of Guillermo Lora's POR lending them cover, supported a resolution declaring that the proletariat would back the Torres government's “anti-imperialist and progressive measures” while criticizing its reactionary ones. This subordinated the working class to the national bourgeoisie and abandoned the Theory of Permanent Revolution that the POR had once applied to Bolivia in its “Thesis of Pulacayo.” Lora trusted Torres to arm the workers against the fascists; Torres armed no one. Banzer launched his coup from Santa Cruz, took La Paz in three days against the heroic but poorly armed resistance of the workers, and imposed seven years of dictatorship.

The “soviet” characterization the Morenoites now revive was the theoretical instrument for this betrayal. By cloaking the Assembly in the authority of 1917, Lora and his Pabloite co-thinkers buried the reality of its domination by Stalinist and trade-union leaders and its ultimately bourgeois character.

The Pabloite betrayal of the Bolivian workers was combatted by the

International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) as it unfolded, treating it as a strategic experience of the international working class. In “Bolivia: Bitter Lessons of the Defeat,” written nine days after Banzer's coup, the ICFI warned that a failure to draw its lessons would result in this defeat being repeated across the continent—a warning confirmed by the subsequent coups in Chile, Uruguay, Peru and Argentina.

The struggle to raise 1971 to the level of an international strategic experience, against the Pabloites and the French International Communist Organization (OCI), which provided cover for Lora as it broke with the International Committee, was inseparable from the defense of orthodox Trotskyism itself. This is not an academic dispute. The division between genuine Trotskyism and Pabloite revisionism has been written in the blood of the workers of Bolivia and of Latin America as a whole.

The Permanent Revolution Current belongs to the other side of that divide—along with the treacherous petty-bourgeois bureaucracies, against the working class and its revolution. Not by chance, on Lora's death in 2009, *La Izquierda Diario* eulogized him for his “intransigence toward the bourgeois regime and class collaboration.” That it now answers the gravest crisis of the Bolivian working class in decades by reviving the strategy that produced the catastrophe of 1971 is the most complete vindication of the ICFI's assessment. It demonstrates, in the sharpest form, the objective necessity confronting the Bolivian working class: the construction of a revolutionary party founded on the strategic lessons of its own history and unconditionally independent of all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces—the Morenoites of the LOR-CI among them.

Such a party cannot be built on merely national foundations. The Bolivian uprising is one front of a rising international movement of the working class, driven by a single global crisis and confronting a single offensive by imperialist capitalism. The revolution that begins on the Bolivian altiplano can be completed only on the international arena upon which capitalism itself operates. This means the struggle for the United Socialist States of Latin America and for world socialism. That is the perspective upon which the Bolivian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International must be built.



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