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Obituary

# Daniel Pereyra, a Life Well Lived

- Features - In Memoriam - Obituaries and appreciations -

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**Our dear friend and comrade, Daniel Pereyra, died February 6 in Madrid and the age of 95, after a long and exemplary career as a tireless fighter, of which he gave testimony, in part, in his *Memorias de un militante internacionalista* [Memoirs of an internationalist militant] published in 2014.**

On Viento Sur's behalf, we hope to pay him the tribute he deserves soon, but in another article recently published on our website, one of his closest friends and fellow fighters, Roberto Montoya, has reminded us of his first steps and his active participation in the process of building successive revolutionary organisations in his native Argentina and in Peru and his subsequent exile in Madrid after the triumph of the military dictatorship in his country.

Daniel Bensaïd in his memoirs, *Une lente impatience* (2004) [English translation: *An Impatient Life: A Memoir* Verso, 2014] gave testimony of how he met Ché Pereyra when he travelled to Argentina in 1973: there, he said, he found that "this former young metal worker was a legend (...). His unchanging joy, his courtesy, his humour, his chivalrous elegance, contributed not a little to winning our support for the orientation of armed struggle". And indeed, part of that legend, especially his harsh Peruvian experience, has later been reflected in films, books, such as *Avisa los compañeros, pronto* [Warn the compañeros quickly], and other works.

Some members of the editorial staff and Board of this magazine met him later, together with his partner Juanita, when he arrived in Madrid in 1978 and immediately joined the activities of the Liga Comunista Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Communist League/ LCR), willing to assume any type of task, such as the one that he took on arranging the logistics for our 5th Congress, held in Madrid a few months later. Since then, he has participated in the activities of this organisation, always with his own political opinions and, more than once, freely expressing his differences with the decisions that were made, as for example, regarding the unification process with the Movimiento Comunista [Communist Movement/MC] as recounted in his Memoirs. [1]

Besides his Memoirs, Daniel authored other works, amongst them: *Del Moncada a Chiapas. Historia de la lucha armada en América Latina* (1994 y 1996), *Argentina rebelde* (2003), *Mercenarios* (2007), *Che, Revolucionario sin fronteras* (2017) and with Roberto Montoya, *El caso Pinochet y la impunidad en América Latina* (2000). He also wrote a long list of articles in different magazines and media. Among them, by the way, a harsh criticism under his pseudonym Luis Alonso in 1984 of *Historia de Mayta* [published in English as *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*], by Mario Vargas Llosa, an anti-Trotskyist pamphlet that, according to him, gave Kremlin propaganda little to envy. Probably one of his last published articles was one that appeared in special number 150 of Viento Sur. In it, one can see his concern for taking stock of the different experiences he had gone through in the Spanish State and attempting to contribute some ideas to a "party-movement" project in which the political and the organisational were always closely intertwined.

We also know that he was writing some notes in which he tried to draw lessons from the experience of armed struggle in Latin America during the 1960s, 1970s and later.

The description that Daniel Bensaïd gave of Ché Pereyra when he met him in Madrid after a long time sums up his mood very well: "As dynamic and joyful as ever, he has gone through the depressing post-Franco years without giving up, attentive to the slightest regrowth of hope, faithful to his commitments, to his colleagues and to his dead." Daniel "el Gallego" [the Galician] was, in short, a great friend of his friends from very different generations, always kind and respectful of other opinions, far from sectarian, and open to what might seem heterodox at first glance, but seeing that it could be impregnated with a subversive, revolutionary and prefiguring potential of a communism

worthy of the name.

As the poet Miquel Martí i Pol wrote in his *Lletra a Dolors*, it will be difficult for us to imagine that he will be absent forever, but there are so many memories that he gave to us and those memories demand that we always remain faithful to his legacy.

*Jaime Pastor*

*February 10, 2023*

*Translated by David Fagan from [Viento Sur](#).*

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# A Consistent Internationalist Militant

**He was born Daniel Pereyra Pérez, however, like the majority of revolutionary militants, he was known by other names.**

In the Peru of the 1960s, the media called him "Che Pereyra." He was Argentine and, like Che, had gone to another country in solidarity with other comrades to provide armed support to the peasant guerrilla led by Hugo Blanco. There he was captured, tortured and imprisoned in the El Frontón high security prison, located on an island. In his militant work in Argentina, he used the alias Alonso, both in the first political formations in which he participated and when he did so in the founding of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores-El Combatiente (Revolutionary Workers' Party-The Fighter / PRT-EC) and later when he broke with them to create the Grupo Obrero Revolucionario (Revolutionary Workers Group/ GOR).

Daniel was born just ten years after the October Revolution and it marked him from an early age. When he was only three years old, Argentina experienced one of the many bloody military coups that the country has suffered, this one led by Generals Uriburu and Justo that ended the democratic government of President Irigoyen.

The son of a woman who cleaned other people's houses and of a father who became unemployed after the crisis of 1929, whom Daniel lost when he was very young, he dropped out of secondary school at the age of 17 to work in order to survive. He first worked as an apprentice in a printing house; then in metallurgical factories where he was elected union delegate by his colleagues. It was at this time he became involved politics; he joined the GOM (Grupo Obrero Marxista / Marxist Workers Group) and began to devour books on Marxism and to read Marx, Lenin, Trotsky.

From those years until February 6, 2023, he never stopped being a militant, it was such an essential part of his life. He died at the age of 95 in a residence for the elderly on the outskirts of Madrid, proudly claiming to have been part of the Fourth International, and to continuing to be a militant of Anticapitalistas and a member of the Advisory Council of Viento Sur.

There were many acronyms that revolutionary Marxism adopted in those first decades of its militancy in the 40s: GOM, Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Revolutionary Workers Party) Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialism, Política Obrera (Workers' Politics.) He was strongly marked by the presence of Spanish Republicans who arrived in Argentina fleeing the Spanish Civil War. Daniel lived under the governments of Juan Domingo Perón whilst in the ranks of the GOM with 'Nahuel Moreno' (Hugo Bresano), and would recognise years later the sectarian position he

took himself against Peronism, attacking it with the same fierceness that he attacked those who ended up overthrowing Peronism in 1955 with a bloody civil-military coup supported by the Catholic Church and the United States.

Shortly after, the POR (Partido Obrero Revolucionario), successor to the GOM, made a self-criticism of its serious error and entered Peronism through a front, the Movimiento de Agrupaciones Obreras (Movement of Workers Groups/MAO), it created to include different trade union associations opposed to the dictatorship but also opposed to the Peronist bureaucracy.

During those years, Daniel met Juana Perelstein, Juanita, who would become his compañera for life. Juanita was a member of the Socialist Party and daughter of a communist, and they began living together that same year. A year later they would have their only son, Carlos.

In his Memoirs, Daniel also recognised the sectarian vision, the new serious mistake committed in 1959 by the Morenista formation of which he was a part, Palabra Obrera, in the face of the triumphant Cuban revolution. A year after that triumph that would cause a shock throughout Latin America and the Caribbean and that would change the world geopolitical scenario, Palabra Obrera continued to characterise Fidel Castro as a "puppet of the United States." However, Daniel reminds us in his Memoirs, shortly after there was a sudden change in characterisation and he went on to support the new Cuban regime and also the armed struggle.

While the organisation decided to create a first military team led by Vasco Bengoechea, who trained with other comrades in Cuba, Daniel Pereyra was assigned the task of leading a small group to travel to Peru and support the Peruvian sister party the Partido Obrero Revolucionario- Frente de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Workers Party-Revolutionary Left Front/ POR-FIR), through bank expropriations to raise funds and other military operations.

After an operation at a bank in Lima that ended in a shootout, Daniel and other participants were arrested. They would spend five years in jail before being able to return to Argentina in 1967. Hugo Blanco was also arrested in 1963.

By the time Pereyra returned to Argentina with his compañeros, the political differences with Nahuel Moreno had grown greater. Moreno came to use the Peruvian press as a channel to attack Pereyra. "Pereyra is a madman and an adventurer (...) It was Pereyra who coordinated the assault and the revolutionary plans," he wrote in Lima newspaper La Prensa on May 29, 1962, distancing himself from a plan that had been approved by the Political Bureau of Palabra Obrera.

In 1964, Vasco Bengoechea had already separated from the organisation to form the FARN (Fuerzas Armadas de la Revolución Nacional/Armed Forces of the National Revolution) after a hard debate in a party meeting. A few months later he would die when a bomb that he was handling exploded in an apartment in Buenos Aires.

The political situation had changed in Argentina by the time Pereyra and his compañeros arrived back from Peru. In 1965 Palabra Obrera had begun a process of discussion and cooperation with the FRIP (Frente Revolucionario Indoamericano Popular / Popular Indo-American Revolutionary Front) founded in 1959 by Mario Santucho, centered mainly in the northern provinces of Santiago del Estero and Tucumán. In May of that year, the first unified congress of the two organisations had been held, thus giving birth to the PRT (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores / Revolutionary Workers' Party).

A year later, a second congress of the new organisation took place, which approved joining the Fourth International, although already at that moment important differences could be perceived between the two merged groups. While

Santucho described the situation in the sugar mills of Tucumán as a pre-revolutionary one, Moreno maintained that it was neither insurrectionary nor pre-revolutionary. That same year there was a new coup, led by General Onganía, who overthrew the government of Humberto Illia, of the UCR (Radical Civic Union), the main opposition party to Peronism.

The Morenistas managed to impose their stamp on the third congress of the PRT, rejecting the intention of the Santucho supporters to launch a mobile guerrilla column in Tucumán and exclusively approving certain defensive actions. From that time the coexistence of the two internal currents became more and more difficult and in 1968, when the IV party congress took place, the differences on the characterisation of the stage and the priority tasks sharpened and the rupture took place between the PRT-La Verdad (The Truth, newspaper of that current) headed by Nahuel Moreno, and the PRT-EI Combatiente (The Fighter, newspaper of that group), led by Mario Santucho, with whom Daniel Pereyra and the majority of the party aligned themselves.

In that congress, Leon Trotsky, Che, the Vietnamese Nguyen Van Troi and Ángel Vasco Bengoechea, were elected honorary presidents and a substantial turn was given to the party's strategy, focused fundamentally on "preparing and starting the partial armed struggle linked to the labour movement throughout the country." At that time, the "creation of an army in the countryside and promoting the urban guerrilla" was proposed, and the idea of creating the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP/Revolutionary Army of the People) began to take shape.

In 1969 PRT commandos participated in the massive popular uprisings that took place in the provinces of Córdoba and Rosario, occupying a radio station to broadcast communiqués and storming a police post from which they took weapons. That same year, Pereyra traveled to the Italian city of Rimini to attend the 9th Congress of the IV International as a delegate of the PRT-EI Combatiente, where this organization received formal recognition as an official section, thanks to the support of the majority sector represented by Ernest Mandel, Pierre Frank, Livio Maitan and others. The representatives of the PRT-La Verdad and the Socialist Workers Party of the United States were against this decision and the resolution approved in that congress in support of the armed struggle in Latin America.

The divisions did not stop there and that same year internal differences in the PRT-EI Combatiente deepened when Mario Santucho, head of the Military Committee, presented a broad plan of military activities throughout the country, a plan that a sector of the party, which included Pereyra, considered disproportionate to the level of consciousness and struggle that the workers showed at that time. In his memoirs, Daniel criticises the manoeuvres carried out by Santucho to prevent the opposition from hindering his plans. These included the convening of the 5th party congress on an island in the Paraná River in July 1970 without notifying the opposition which had previously presented an alternate document. In that congress, the creation of the ERP was formally decided and a very broad plan of military operations in different regions of Argentina was approved to publicise the fact.

In 1971 the sectors critical of this new stage of the party decided to leave: Pereyra, heading a group that would end up forming the GOR; another group, led by a member of the Central Committee, Eduardo Urretavizcaya, would form the Orientación Socialista-Fuerza Obrera Comunista (Socialist Orientation-Communist Workers Force) and a third, led by Horacio Lagar, Sergio Domecq, Oscar Prada and others, Sindicalistas-Milicia Obrera (Syndicalists-Workers Militia.) "The difference", Pereyra would say, "was that they were constituting an army. Ours was an accumulation of forces in accordance with the march of the class struggle and the partisan forces (...) We understood armed struggle as a phenomenon of support for the labour movement and resistance".

In 1972 the PRT-ERP suffered another split, the PRT-22 de Agosto, which moved closer to leftist Peronism, and in 1973 that of the Red Fraction of the PRT-ERP, whose leadership I was part of, which obtained the support of the Fourth International, with which the Santucho leadership had broken.

## Daniel Pereyra, a Life Well Lived

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In 1975, in circumstances of full repression by the Government of Isabel Martínez de Perón and her Triple A parapolice, the GOR said: "We assume and promote the armed struggle to defend the organisation and contribute to the defense and development of workers' and popular struggles. It is not about supplanting the action of the masses or exercising any kind of paternalism".

The GOR, like all left-wing organisations, would suffer from General Videla's new coup d'état of 1976. Under the lashes of a repression unknown up to that moment in the country, the lives of 30,000 "disappeared" ended and the class-struggle trade union currents and all kinds of resistance were destroyed. After the arrests and assassinations of GOR leaders and militants in 1978, what was left of the leadership decided to embark on the path of exile.

Daniel arrived with Juanita in Madrid in July 1978, leaving everything behind, as so many thousands had done in recent years, and beginning a new life in those turbulent years of the transition to democracy in Spain, only three years after the death of Franco.

Both began to organise their new life and immediately joined the ranks of the sister organisation in the Spanish State, the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League).

Despite the heartbreak suffered and the impotence before the daily news of the scope of the repression in Argentina, both found -as we found others- their political family, an immense solidarity, camaraderie and friendship with compañeros and compañeras, which allowed for a rapid integration .

Juanita died in 2016 and Daniel, despite being ill since 2008 and with increasing mobility problems, did not stop being a militant, first in the LCR and later in its successor organisations, Espacio Alternativo (Alternative Space) from 1994, Izquierda Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left) since 2008 and Anticapitalistas (Anticapitalists) since 2015. He was part of the Advisory Council of Viento Sur, where he published numerous articles.

Daniel collaborated with different newspapers and magazines in the Spanish State and also published several books, including *Del Moncada a Chiapas* (1994), one written with myself, *El caso Pinochet y la impunidad en América Latina* (2000); *Argentina rebelde* (2003) and *Mercenarios, guerreros del imperio* (2007).

His autobiography, *Memorias de un militante internacionalista* (2014), summarises in its very title what Daniel Pereyra was: a class-conscious internationalist revolutionary militant from a very young age, consistent, coherent until the end of his days.

Rest in peace dear compañero and friend, goodbye Gallego.

*Roberto Montoya*

*9 February 2023*

*Translated by David Fagan from [Viento Sur](#).*

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[1] In 1991, the LCR fused with the MC, a group with Maoist origins, to form Izquierda Alternativa (Left Alternative). The fusion was short-lived and resulted in the dispersion of the trotskyist forces.