

## *Education and Power*

### Questions about Power and Social Change

*G. Guevara-Niebla:* My reflections and my questions are directed toward what would be the key points in a theory of power.

In reading the main works of Freire, we notice that he was able to achieve a break with a very long-standing theoretical tradition that preached pessimism in education. In other words, Freirian thinking surpassed the theories and explanations that related any exercise in education in an automatic and fatal manner to domination. Education was destined only to serve domination and the reproduction of the forms of domination. Instead, in Freire—and it seems to me that this has been his fundamental contribution to universal Latin American education—we discover a horizon and an optimistic perspective from which education can be recovered as an instrument of liberation, as a means of questioning the established forms of power. When examining this revolutionary idea, it is natural that some basic questions should immediately arise: how is social change, that is, revolution, perceived within this new perspective? This is the axial problem in Paulo Freire's proposal. In reading his work and becoming acquainted with some experiences related to his propositions, such

as the literacy campaigns during the Goulart period and the popular culture movement in Brazil, we realize that the practice of education revolves around the teacher-student relationship, as an interchange, a bringing together of particular subjects, and on a wider scope, an encounter of the educator or educators with a community.

What is meant here by social change? Two different kinds of questions arise. Is it possible to achieve or hope for a global change in society born of a particular pedagogic exercise, be it at the individual level or on a community level? In addition, is it possible to imagine social change arising from this single sphere, the educational sphere? In any case, how can the practice of social change in education be linked with the activity of change that operates or can operate in other spheres of society? At any rate, who is the subject of social change? In other words, in the Marxist critical tradition, the subject, as we all know, is identified with the social classes; in the case of modern revolution, with the proletariat. We ask ourselves which is the subject of social change within Freire's thinking, and from the perspective of carrying out social change, we arrive naturally and logically at the problem of the political party. Is it possible to imagine revolutionary action within society on the fringe of what traditionally have been the structures of political power, such as the parties? Is it possible to conceive of the development of a revolutionary change without the political parties? And finally, the last question that comes to my mind at this time is in relation to the case of the state and the concept of political power within society.

At first instance, we always try to relate Freire to Gramsci. Gramsci postulated that every pedagogic relationship holds a hegemonic relationship; a pedagogical relationship involves a relationship of power, of

domination, but a domination conceived of not exclusively as coercion, not only as an external exercise of power, but also and basically as a consensus, as a conquest of the active will of the subordinated classes or of the masses.

From the perspective of Gramsci or if we try to join this Gramscian proposal with Freire's postulates, we will necessarily ask ourselves what is the project of intellectual and moral reform, what is the conception of the world proposed by Freire in exercising or putting into practice a revolutionary pedagogy, in establishing a liberating pedagogic relationship. So, these are the general problems that are implicated.

#### Pedagogism in Freire?

*P. Freire:* I will attempt to give a speech, which probably is not very well organized. I shall try to ponder some of the main points that have been exposed. I do not think that I answered your questions correctly with my reflections, but I shall try to express what I am thinking and I will probably repeat some things that have already been expressed in my papers or texts published from 1978 to 1981. I believe that an interview that I gave in 1973 had something to do with the questions that you raised; nevertheless, I will probably say something that I did not write, that I am writing now, but as I am alive it is legitimate for me to say something today for the first time; it would be wonderful and it would be my right because I am alive. You are talking about something with which I agree completely: that I proposed a certain optimism in relation to the task of education. But the fundamental problem is to know what kind of optimism this would be, because in proposing an optimistic, hopeful

point of view toward education I could also lapse into a certain “pedagogism”—that is, a naive optimism as concerns the practice of education.

Within the “pedagogistic” perspective, you would change or reduce all transformation to pedagogy, and this has something to do with one of your questions: I think that I did not lapse into pedagogism, which to me would be regrettable, yet some of my critics say that I made that mistake, that I have reduced revolutionary transformation to education. In other words, they mean to say that I made a mistake when I considered education to be the lever for revolutionary transformation. Even Francisco Weffort says this, in his preface to my first book, *Educación como practica de la libertad* [Paulo Freire. *La educación como práctica de la libertad*. Mexico, Siglo XXI Editores, 1969.] which is really a very naive book, but in its naïveté pointed out some criticisms. I think that certain critics are mistaken when they are not capable of perceiving the dialectics between naïveté and “criticity,” when they cannot perceive certain naïvetés.

This was one of the texts that I wrote in 1977, and I either rewrote or added things that were not originally included, for example, among others, an old university thesis that I had written in 1958 or 1959, because I was never inclined to believe that education could be the lever for revolution, precisely because I was absolutely convinced of something that in the 1970s seemed very well defined, very much emphasized, which was the reproducing role of school, of systematic education, the reproducing role of the dominant ideology, the ideology in power.

### Education and Social Reproduction

But my optimistic position is nowadays more clearly defined in the following: I am also absolutely convinced

that the main task of systematic education is the reproduction of the ideology of the dominant class, that of reproducing the conditions for the preservation of their power, but precisely because the relationship between systematic education, as a subsystem, and the social system, is one of opposition and mutual contradiction. Therefore, when talking about reproduction as the task of the dominant class, there is the possibility of counteracting the task of reproducing the dominant ideology. So it seems to me that we see what happens, the level or grade of education is unimportant; whether it be preschool or the university or postgraduate school, we clearly perceive a permanent movement, very dynamic and contradictory, between the task of reproduction and that of counteracting the reproduction. These two tasks are dialectic: one is the task of the system, the other is ours; therefore, it is determined by the system but not requested by it. The system believes that it obtains from education one of the fundamental instruments for the reproduction of its power, and so dialectically, necessarily, must create its antagonist; its antagonistic opposite, as a revolutionary task, belongs to us.

### Transformation and Institutional Space

Now, it is important to know how and when we occupy the institutional spaces in order to fulfill the task of counterattacking the reproducing role of systematic education. Obviously, it is easy to perceive that it is quite simple to fulfill the task established by the system. To reproduce dominant ideology is the same thing as swimming with the tide; to assume the role of counterattacking the reproduction of dominant ideology is to swim against the tide. Therefore, to use the space in favor

of reproduction is one thing, and to use the space against reproduction is quite another. It seems to me that another very important point is being brought up here, which is the power relationship, since it is not possible to think of education without thinking about power. I think this point is central to any consideration concerning the task of reproduction and the task of counterattacking the reproductive task itself, of those whose political dream is the transformation of society and not the reproduction and preservation of bourgeois society.

The task of counteracting is proposed to those who humbly accept it, knowing that this is not the lever, and from here I come to a proposal made by Gilberto Guevara: the issue of the critical and dialectic comprehension of the relationship between practice and strategy.

From my point of views an educator whose political option is the transformation of bourgeois society in favor of the interests of the popular working social classes, but who does not think of devoting a his or her time, through his or her own experience, to ponder on the manner in which practices and strategies are related, cannot function correctly.

If you take strategy, for example, aware of the place where you are putting your dream, the possible dream that is not yet materialized, I think that what we have here is still a dream that is yet to come true—that of the transformation of the present time. If your dream is in your strategy, the purpose of your struggle, you have to find the ways that will make the materialization of your dream possible, and those ways are precisely the tactics, the means, which you even have to create.

Furthermore, the issue which has been brought up is that of the eminently historical nature of these means. On the one hand, these means, these practices, have to

be related or tuned into the strategy, to the dream; in other words, I cannot have a dream of liberation and use a means of domestication, not in my opinion. And it seems to me that this is one of the most serious problems that we have as intellectuals, not being consistent or coherent, frequently not living in coherence between discourse and practice; we make a speech in behalf of our dream, of an eminently revolutionary strategy, but our practice is reactionary. For example, with the students and the people, we declare ourselves the proprietors of science and of the revolution, and we denounce the lack of conscience of the working class, and yet we say that we have the conscience of a class to which we do not belong; this is slightly crazy and cannot be.

The relation between practice and strategy cannot always be the same. For example, it is one thing to work, to create your own working tactics at a lower level, such as the one that we are talking about, and another thing to do it at a higher level, in a political party, for example, but this is quite different for Mexico from what it would be for Brazil. The fact that a certain procedure has worked well in a given society does not give me the authority to say that if transplanted to another society, sometimes to another time, it will be the same thing. It is necessary to make a historical reading of the texts; we must read Lenin, but we must situate him in time and in space, the space and the time in which he wrote. This does not mean that you have to change everything completely, but you have to lend your time and your space.

### The Revolution is Pedagogic

This issue is absolutely fundamental if one does not lapse into pedagogism, if one does not accept that

education is not the lever for transformation. Nonetheless, there is a space, however small, in the practice of education, in the educative system as a subsystem; there is a minimum space that we must use to our advantage.

I return to the same issue as you did, Gilberto, when you were asking if it is possible to consider a global, radical transformation of society through education. I have already seen that it is not possible, but we must think a bit more; education is not the lever of transformation, of revolution, and yet revolution is pedagogic, and I am not playing with words. There is a pedagogic testimony in the practice of social transformation; it is the process of mobilization which is automatically also a process of organization. There is no mobilization without organization, so to differentiate one from the other seems to me naive; it is not dialectic, since one does not first mobilize and subsequently organize. The essence of mobilization itself contains organization; the process of organizational mobilization is profoundly pedagogic.

For example, in Brazil, during the so-called direct elections, we held the first meeting for elections in January 1984, and the political leaderships of the parties were not very convinced that the popular masses would respond in a positive manner to the invitation to go out into the streets and the public spaces to discuss the need to have direct elections. Nevertheless, 300,000 people were present at the first central meeting, and the leaderships, even those of the Workers Party, to which I belong, did not expect this; it was an extraordinary and complete challenge.

In April of that year during the last popular meeting before the elections, 1,700,000 people gathered in the streets of São Paulo, singing the national anthem, joining hands. Newspaper releases stated that they did not



damage even one flower; 1,700,000 people went out into the streets demanding direct vote, and they spoiled nothing. The city remained just as before or even better, because it was impregnated with the people.

This mobilization process was highly pedagogic, and yet there was no previous curriculum, no established schedule; it just happened, without being “spontaneistic” either, because there was a political leadership that invited the masses to demand. This fact in itself is political, and because it is political, it is pedagogic. There is a “politicity” in education, in the same way that there is an “educat-ability” in that which is political; in other words, there is a political nature in education, just as there is a pedagogic nature in political action, and this, to me, is quite impressive. During one period I no longer spoke about it; for example, in *Educación como práctica de la libertad*, there is no mention of the political aspect. Some time ago, I started talking about the political dimension of education and I state that there is no political dimension, that there is no politicity in education; in other words, education itself is of a political nature, just as politics in itself is of a pedagogical nature. The point is to know in which direction the political aspect of the education that you practice is headed, the direction of the education contained in the politics that you establish in the streets, in other words, that which is proposed by your party, whose side your politics are on, at whose service or against whom your work as an educator, and therefore as a politician, is directed.

I have thought a great deal about this during the last three or four years and I was asking myself: could it be that there is no certain specificity of that which is pedagogic, of that which is political? Recently a Brazilian professor, a young Gramscian philosopher, said: “Education seeks to convince and politics seeks to win, therefore in any

educative action there is conviction and in any political action there is victory, and therein lies the specificity of one and the other." I do not agree. For example, for a left-wing party, the moment of victory must pass through the moment of convincing the popular masses; obviously a left-wing party does not intend to convince the dominating class. For this reason, the left-wing party does not need to educate the dominating class unless it is indirectly, but a left-wing party must have a pedagogic relationship, and therefore one of conviction, with the popular masses. A right-wing party cannot convince us, and in my opinion, does not intend to convince the popular masses, through the knowledge of reality, which cannot be seen naked by the masses unless the right wing, and therefore the dominating class, takes a very great risk.

But this dimension of manipulation is also pedagogic, because if you accept that education is education only when it is liberating, then you lapse into a certain purism, and I confess that it is hard for me to admit that a manipulating pedagogy should be called education, that a manipulative practice should be called education, but I do consider it as such.

### Educative Manipulation

There is no liberating education without some measure of manipulation; there is no such thing as angelical purity. The important thing is to know which is the predominant space between liberation and manipulation; that is the issue. Continuing our reflection on specificity and when we think of ourselves, when you are in a seminar, discussing with the students, you are obviously in the perspective of convincing, but this act

of convincing that you carry out as a pedagogic task in the university transcends the walls of the university, as a function of your political option within a political society. In reality, when you work toward convincing the students, your effort is in relation to a political victory that takes place outside of the university. Your act of convincing seeks to obtain support for your greater dream, not simply to be a good professor. If you accept that your teachings do not go beyond the walls, in my opinion you are making a mistake, that of elitism. You will be a Marxist who only knows Marx through books and who restricts Marxism to the classroom, outside of which he claims to be only an academic. This is denying Marx and denying education itself.

Another issue that you have pointed out in relation to this is the role of the parties, which also includes the role of the vanguards, for example, as regards the comprehension of what the vanguard is. Because there are different ways of understanding the vanguards, and also the leaderships and the relationships between the political relationships, which are also pedagogic, as well as their relationship with the working class, with the popular masses. You can have an authoritarian approach to understanding the role of leaderships, or you can have a democratic approach. I think that as men and women of the left, we must not fear the word *democracy*, as if it were inevitably linked to the bourgeoisie or to social democracy.

### Democracy and Knowledge

It is obvious that without organization, without theory, without discipline, without effort, without reflection about permanent practice, there can be no revolution. I have

always said that revolution also is closely related to epistemology. Revolution is not guessing, although there is a guessing dimension within revolution. Revolution is something very serious, precisely because it involves the issue of power, and the party is a fundamental vehicle for mobilization, for putting into practice the revolutionary dream. Just thinking out loud, without trying to make any categorical statements: one thing that began to trouble me during the 1970s when I was in Europe, in relation to the parties, was the sometimes chaotic and sometimes overwhelming surfacing of popular social movements of rebellion.

I recall that in conversations with some fellow friends of the left in Europe during the 1970s, talking for example about the women's rights movements, the gay and the ecologists' movements, I said that in my opinion, there is something new, historic, which is beginning to appear, and that this will be related to a new way of understanding the role of the political parties. Some of my comrades said that it was foolish to think that, because these movements do not speak of class struggle. I myself felt that Marx must be understood in a Marxist manner, that is, we must not immobilize Marx; that would be profoundly ant dialectic and antihistorical. Furthermore, in the world today one should not try to reduce everything that happens, even drinking a cup of coffee, to class struggle. One should understand the different moments in which class struggle manifests itself in the city, but in a dual manner, and in my opinion those movements of this decade are going to bring something into our politics, which is going to demand that we reformulate, or at least find a different, more historical way of thinking of the role of the parties. At that time I used to say that it was necessary to look beyond, and discover in the intimacy and the dynamics

of those movements, the appearance of a new popular education. To a great extent the new popular education, the politics of this education, are being born in those movements, and not in our seminars or in our books. I said at that time that the left-wing parties should come closer and closer to those movements, but without trying to take them over.

### The Reinvention of Power and the Popular Movements

Today, if you observe what is taking place, for example, in France, the ecologists contributed 1,500,000 votes toward Mitterand's election. I do not wish to discuss if they now regret it or not, that is another issue; what the ecologists did in Germany.

In my opinion, the critical comprehension of these popular movements faces us today as a fundamental task for a political scientist and for an educator in this position. It is evident that those popular movements are not yet the means to obtain political power; they need the parties, which in turn must realize that the movements will continue to be legitimate means to reach power.

If you analyze the political situation in Brazil today, you will find two new situations, very recent in the political history of Brazil. One of these new situations is the ecclesiastic base communities. If one does not fully comprehend Marx's fundamental criticism of religion, I think that at this point in history it is not possible to understand what is happening in our societies. I do not mean by this that we should change the Materialists, the Marxists, and that they should all become converted now to Christianity, nothing of the sort. But what is fundamental is to comprehend, historically, the historicity of religion, and not in a metaphysical sense. We must

understand in a Marxist sense, dialectically and not metaphysically, the role of the ecclesiastic base communities, which have presented an extraordinary challenge to the Brazilian military government. The second situation is that of the union struggles, born precisely of the workers.

Today, if the Workers' Party, approaches the popular movements from which it was born, without trying to take them over, the party will grow; if it turns away from the popular movements, in my opinion, the party will wear down. Besides, those movements need to make their struggle politically viable.

I will leave with you one of my concerns for which I have no answer, and I bring it forth here as a challenge that I feel and that you probably feel as well; perhaps later on one of you will delve into it more deeply. This challenge emerges at the level of politics, of praxis at the end of this century, before those of us who pursue a revolutionary transformation of bourgeois society in order to install a socialist society. In my opinion, one of the basic themes of the end of the century is not the issue of taking power in itself, as much as the reinvention of power, and this includes the dialectic comprehension of the role of the political parties.

What I mean to say by this is that for me the most important thing is not to seize bourgeois power, in spite of all that means in terms of power. Regardless of the question of whether the bourgeoisie consciously or unconsciously elaborated its own ideology during centuries of experience, bourgeois power was transferred from one society to another according to a practice well rooted in the institutional structures of bourgeois society. But suddenly a revolution arose, to seize this power, and in doing this, without inventing it, people think magically

that the simple fact of an infrastructural transformation will decree a noble conception of power. To me, this is mechanical and not dialectic, and here we come to another issue, another problem that has to do with the end of the century, in the sense that there is a return not to pre-Hegelian idealistic subjectivism nor to a different objectivist subjectivism, but instead to a comprehension of the role of subjectivity in history, in its dialectic relationship with objectivity.

With this I propose not only the issue of seizing power, but that of the reinvention of power as one of the fundamental themes for a critical left, which cannot be afraid of thinking about what it is going to do with the power obtained, not even at the most difficult moment of revolutionary transition, when the revolution comes to power and is faced with an entire apparatus that was created before the revolution, obviously by the bourgeoisie.

### Revolutionary Education

At this stage of the transition, if one considers only the content of education, in the societies that I visited I encountered an invitation to put revolutionary processes into practice. In other words, the revolution that reaches power needs to create a new society, which cannot appear by decree but rather appears before History; it needs to create, to assist in the birth of the new society, and this process of birth of the new society has in revolutionary education, once the revolution is in power, an indispensable, fantastic aid. One thing is our work today, against the bourgeois system, and yet another will be our work in a revolutionary corps, to create through education. See how different things are, because if in the bourgeois system education has as its main task the

reproduction of bourgeois ideology, with the revolution in power our task is precisely that of creating a new ideology, a new foundation. To the extent that we are not idealists in the philosophical sense, we believe that the latter kind of education cannot be decreed if the new society that is in accordance with it does not yet exist.

In the transition stage there is no new society; there is only a society of transition. The new, revolutionary education does not yet exist, and cannot exist. At this stage, bourgeois education is no longer acceptable, because it has nothing to do with the formation of the new revolutionary society, but you still do not have the new education because you are as yet lacking time in space for its creation. This for me has to do with the question of power, because if we make any mistakes we run the risk of immobilizing the revolution, in a certain sense.

### Pedagogy of Transition

*G. Guevara-Niebla:* I think that we can reach a new development in our meeting. It is evident that the problematic involved in the relationship between education and power is a very broad problem that we could not cover or discuss completely in a minimum working session such as this one. But perhaps we could use it to maximum advantage by directing our meeting toward some problems that we consider of relevance to all of us. A first aspect that derives from the position that we just heard is that it implies a descent from the more general level to particular aspects. For example, in relation to the last part of what Paulo was saying to us, about the nature of political power in society and the need of conceiving a "transition pedagogy," so to speak, one asks



oneself if this transition is already formulated in the proposals that have been made within the pedagogy of liberation, or if it is just beginning to be built on the basis of these proposals, or if this transition pedagogy should be elaborated a posteriori, in the future, to be generated in the moment that follows the takeover of political power.

In essence, the implicit problem is a strategy of revolutionary change: that of the role that would be played by education within this revolutionary strategy. In my opinion, this necessarily involves breaking away from some of the academic premises—in some cases abstract; in others, metaphysical—that maintain that there exists a body of rigid, closed concepts, which have been named a priori “revolutionary education.” I would sincerely say, in relation to this science of education that has been proposed by the Soviets through their well-known manuals (the so-called Marxist pedagogy), that the problems of revolutionary pedagogy have been reduced to a body of abstract concepts that up to now have never offered us the possibility of a real intervention in the sphere of education. This idea may be a bit unexpected, and it has been expressed deliberately and in a slightly provocative sense. Naturally, I would like it if someone here would express the opposite point of view as regards this issue, but believe that there are real and concrete political problems that we have gone through in the university and that we are currently experiencing, in relation to this problem: either we propose a pedagogy of transition, situated in a concrete and historic temporal dimension, or else we must resort to an arsenal of rigid, closed, nontemporal concepts, such as those that we have received in these manuals.

There is another problem, or countless problems, in this same line of thought. I should like to establish a

connection between Paulo Freire's words and the specific problematic that exists in the university today. I think that the proposals that have been made open up a perspective of intervention that has not always been evident: the possibility of a revolutionary education is not confined to the boundaries of a nonformal education; it is possible to elaborate an intervention program to change (and counterattack) the fundamental tendencies in formal education institutions toward the reproduction of the structures of domination.

This presents a series of operative problems. If Paulo Freire was able to collect his experiences in the field of nonformal education in order to formulate and theorize them in terms of a revolutionary pedagogy, this theoretical formulation immediately opened up, at least in a conceptual sense, a new universe of intervention—that of formal education. And yet, what is the program? What are the methods, the techniques, the procedures, by means of which the socialist or revolutionary forces, those who militate in the institutions education to bring about a revolutionary change in society, can carry out their work within these institutions?

### Cultural Organizers

The problem acquires a much more relevant dimension in terms of the university or what would be the peak of the educational system, to the extent that if we follow Gramsci's thought, the role of the university is specifically that of the formation of intellectuals. And according to Gramsci, the role of intellectuals is that of cultural organizers, capable of intervening in the construction and practice of domination.

Intellectuals, as cultural organizers, would be a crucial and decisive component in the organization of a

council, in the creation of domination. In consequence, revolutionary intervention in the university acquires a crucial, decisive, and fundamental significance.

How to act within the university? What type of intervention should be used? Is it possible to conceive a university for the formation of intellectuals, or not? Or, following Gramsci, organics of the working class, or in Freire's language, the popular masses. Is it possible to conceive and put into practice a program of this nature? It seems to me that these are some of the problems that arise from the proposal that Paulo Freire has made.

I think that at this moment we could open our dialogue to those of the audience who would like to intervene.

#### Conservative Utilization of Freirism?

*E. Margolis:* I would like to ask a question, a very old one, in my opinion, about Paulo Freire. I do not know to what extent you are familiar with the manner in which your language, your words, have been used in Mexico. My point of view is that Freire has been too institutionalized in Mexico; I mean, we even see that Freire's visits to Mexico have been organized on one hand by the INEA [Instituto Nacional de Educación para Adultos, National Institute for Adult Education], which is actually a quite bourgeois organism that is never going to allow a literacy campaign to reach all the Mexicans who need it; and on the other hand, the university is no longer popular, or never has been, according to many people. Those are Freire's visits to Mexico, and I am not talking about Nicaragua or Cuba, where Freire's method is used in a revolutionary manner and with a totally different perspective; therefore, my fear is that the more that Freire is used in Mexico, the more he is manipulated.

*P. Freire:* Look, in the 70s I tried to be intensely preoccupied with this problems at that time, it was closely associated with the word *conscientization*, and it was something incredible: wherever I went, I would find word associated with my project, which was, to a great extent, objectively reactionary, regardless of its sometimes being subjectively naive and sometimes clever. What I mean to say is that sometimes one is objectively reactionary, and yet, naively or cleverly so when one knows oneself to be reactionary. So, at that time I said to myself, there are only two ways to face this: the first is that what is the use of using the word *conscientization*? (And after 1987, you will no longer find the word *conscientization*; I participated in a seminar with Ivan Illich in Geneva, during which he once again used the concept of *descholarization* and I the concept of *conscientization*. It was there that I used this word for the last time. Naturally, I never abandoned the comprehension of the process which I had called conscientization, but I gave up the word).

The second thing that I had to do, and I think that I did in texts and in interviews, was to try to clarify and define the most naive and obscure concepts of my previous works that lent themselves to objectively reactionary uses of my ideas. I was also partly to blame for this. All of us, when we write, sometimes leave a margin for the misuse of what we say, and at that point I began to worry about this.

What has been happening since then is that I have been misused and misunderstood, especially by the right, and by the liberals too; and sometimes by some representatives of the left, who say, for example: "Paulo Freire is a serious intellectual, he is a man who is trying to make things over, but he has not as yet said that the class struggle is the moter of history." Therefore I say this,

although when I say it I am not creating, but I must write. This is the magic of the written word. This the magic of the written word, which I reject.

Now, in relation to Mexico, obviously up to now there are two institutions that have brought me here, but I would come as well if any other institution invited me. One thing that people criticize me for, when I go to the United States, for example, is the fact that the universities sometimes charge a fortune to those who wish to participate in a seminar with me. I charge \$500 or \$600 for a weekend. But now I do something in the United States that I want to propose to you as well: I cannot pay my ticket to go abroad, although I probably earn a little more than some university professors, probably more than most university professors, because of the fact that receive some money for the books that I have written, but I cannot finance my own trips. So I always tell the groups who are interested in a more radical and popular discussion that they should take advantage of my visit, which has been paid for by those who have the money to pay for my ticket, my work, and my stay. In turn, I devote part of my visit, free of charge, to working with these other groups. For example, in the United States, I worked with ten groups that participate with the popular bases, without charging them anything; the universities paid my trip and on my part I gave approximately twenty days to those groups.

Eliás Margolis speaks directly of the INEA; perhaps you are asking me why I came here on an invitation of the INEA, frankly admitting that my ideas could be or are distorted when put into practice. I came because for my ideas to be distorted, it was not necessary for me to be here; I have many examples of this, and in this place I was already being used, my name is already mentioned.

By coming here I thought that I would have the opportunity to answer to this in the intimacy of the institute, to say what I am now saying, and I actually did hold this discussion with all the groups. I came here twice, and besides holding these internal discussions with the groups, I publicly expressed my ideas. So, what happens is that you have two possibilities, the first is that your ideas are distorted, and you stay far away, with a “clean hands” attitude; you do not defend yourself, you do not get involved in certain politics, because you have to keep your hands clean—this, to me, is ethicism, moralism, but not moral. The second possibility is that you come and see how you are being restricted, to do this within the institution itself and clearly state what you think. You could tell me that it would be impossible, anyway, for the institute to do at least 70 percent of the things that I propose. Now, I ask you: could it be that from the starting point of a 20 percent, for example, of the use of a certain political space, you can or cannot perhaps expect to go any further than that 20 percent? If you refuse completely, you are adopting a position that is also respectable, but there is a risk involved. Both positions—that of accepting the 20 percent or that of refusing completely—involve a risk. In the first, you risk being even more restricted; in the second, you can still be restricted but without the possibility of saying that you are; you are limited without the possibility of protesting.

This is how I would answer, and I will also tell you something that I have learned through my personal experience: that there is only one way of not being restricted, and that is to do nothing, to stop doing. For example, I can imagine how many people from reading one’s books end up doing exactly what one has not proposed, and yet say that they are doing it in one’s name,

because this does happen. What you have expressed seems absolutely legitimate to me, and more than that, I think that it is a political preoccupation that we should all share; we should be permanently measuring the spaces, the limits that we have, and the risks that we run.

But you were very right in saying that on one hand you run the risk of being recuperated, whether you come or not; on the other hand, there is no risk, but the joy of being “authenticated” by a revolution such as the one in Nicaragua. I am exposed to both situations, but anyway I thank for your great concern.

### Reflections on the Revolution

*B. Solares:* Professor Freire: I understand that the problem that you have treated in your writings and in your talks is the problem of the revolution, that is, you are making a proposal as to how we are going to make a revolution from the starting point of the democratization of education.

*P. Freire:* No, I do not think that pedagogic practice could do that; however, in the process of the proposal, the problem consists of how to make the revolution, or how we are going to carry it out.

*B. Solares:* In the way that your concept of education has been developed, I find it very closely related to the manner in which Marx develops the concept of education in the Thesis, understanding it as a political education, and also understanding that this concept of political education is highly developed by Marcuse in the '60s, especially in his text on revolution, in which he explains education as a process in the institutions fundamentally,

through which we advance and from which we acquire the conceptions of everything that we seek.

For me it is very important to keep in mind the time in which Marcuse was situated—precisely in the '60s—when on one hand, apparently after an experience of the workers' movement, based on social-democratic participation, and on the other hand, all the stabilization process, new alternatives for change were proposed, alternatives that are above all external to the directly productive process. The movements appear in feminism, in proletarianism, in the universities; but it seems that the revolution or the revolutionary subject mentioned earlier, is a subject that is no longer proletarian, but another kind of subject, one who is, once again, outside of the productive process. Besides, this new subject even doubts Marxism, especially when the labor movement is once again immersed in the capitalistic process, which absorbs it and provides benefits. At the same time, Marxism is discredited among the socialists, and no longer seems to be the strategic weapon that Marx thought could be used for the subject's liberation; it is just another theory. I am concerned about the same thing in the discourse as Elías. It may well be a discourse in which the problem of the revolution is posed; it can be used either by representatives of the bourgeoisie or by a school where the goal is the reproduction in society. At the same time, it can be a discourse that provokes enthusiasm toward working in a literacy campaign or that encourages the Latin American socialist revolutions, because this discourse can be so ambivalent that it may be used in one way or another. While reading one of your books [*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*], I tried to see exactly what the essence of the discourse was, to see what exactly was the essence of the revolution that you were proposing,



in order to find out why it could be used by one tendency or another, mutually antagonistic. And the problem that I found was that this pedagogic theory of the oppressed that you have elaborated is difficult to apply, precisely because this student-educator, this feedback that you propose, would require many conditions to actually be put into practice. I mean, to the extent to which the student is an alienated subject, as you also postulate in your books, it is difficult for this same alienated subject to start the revolution.

Marx also had this problem—that is, when he proposes the proletariat as the subject of the revolution, but a subject constantly absorbed within the capitalist process.

### A Liberating Education

This would be my first version; the second is that I am aware that education can be understood in two ways: either as an education for the reproduction of the system, which is the one that is practiced in the contemporary system of education; and on the other hand, the education that you propose, a liberating education. The problem that presents itself to the pedagogues is how to practice a liberating education within institutions that have oppression, and not liberation, as an objective. In addition, in order to confront the problem of education for liberation, these pedagogues do not necessarily have to prepare their students for the work process, but rather on the fringe of this process, in their criticism toward that work process.

Therefore I ask myself if you would accept that pedagogy, as you practice it, has a limited or restricted sense.