

PHOTO-ESSAY

## Images of the Itinerary of the Group *Cine Liberación* and “Third Cinema”

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Figure 1. Fernando Solanas works on his writings after *The Hour of the Furnaces*, c.1968–1969. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Victoria Solanas.



Figure 2. Octavio Getino during the filming of *The Hour of the Furnaces*, c. 1967. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Getino family.

*The Hour of the Furnaces* was shooting between 1966–1968 in Argentina and had its international premiere in June 1968, just a few months after Che Guevara's capture and murder in Bolivia (October 1967). Its total runtime of 4 hours 20 minutes is structured in three parts. The first, "Neocolonialism and violence," was conceived as an Essay-Film, which discusses the neocolonial condition of Argentine and Latin American dependency throughout 13 sections. The well-known images of Che Guevara's corpse and face appear at the end of this first part of the film (Figures 3 and 4) to call to continue struggles in Latin America.

The political-ideological perspective of the whole film combined a historiographic revisionism that contested the liberal version of Argentine history, the main issues discussed in the Havana Tricontinental Conference (1966) and an uncompromising Fanonian-rooted third worldism. In many exhibitions, a sign with the quote borrowed from Fanon, "Every spectator is either a coward or a traitor," hung below the screen (Figure 5). This phrase refers to the idea of the *film-act* (the construction of a *film event* during the screenings) and the explicit call for the spectator to continue the film through a collective discussion and a transforming praxis, that appears in intertitles also in the second and third parts of the film.

The second part, "Act for liberation," is subdivided into two large periods: "Chronicle of Peronism" (about Peronism government, 1946–1955) and "Chronicle of Resistance" (1955–). The last one included images that also made a strong impact in those years, mainly referring to workers' struggles, especially the occupations of industrial factories. These historical actions were integrated into the agitation plan of the General Labor Confederation of Argentina (1963–1965) that carried new features for the time: their mass character, national scope, centralized direction and planning, and common program. The film incorporates this workers experience from newsreel footage, press photos, and testimonies. (Figures 6, 7, and 8)

Facing the military dictatorship of the time (1966–1973), the film was shown in clandestine screenings in Argentina. During 1968–1970, that activity was carried out in coordination with the Confederación General del Trabajo de los Argentinos (better known as CGT de los Argentinos), the combative workers union guided by the graphic worker Raimundo Ongaro. There converged many political activists, artists groups, and intellectuals, such as the well-known writer Rodolfo Walsh. All appear in Figure 9. While Walsh directed the weekly newspaper *CGT* (the union's press) between 1968 and 1969 (Figure 10), some members of the Cine Liberación group—Getino, Gerardo Vallejo, and Nemesio Juárez—made a newsreel: "Cinema Reports of the CGT."

The last image (Figure 11) shows the cover and first page of a political magazine organized by the group Cine Liberación in 1972 with a screaming face on

the cover, the iconic image that was used for the promotion of *The Hour*. This magazine (a single issue that appeared in August 1972) expresses the journey traveled in a first stage of the Group Cine Liberación and marks the beginning of a new stage linked to the return of Peronismo to the government (which happened in 1973).



Figure 3



Figure 4

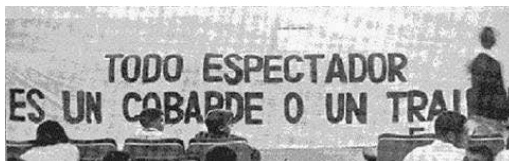


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

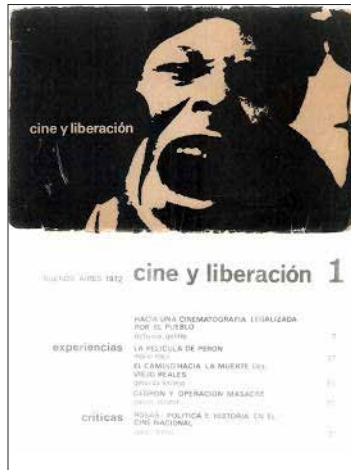


Figure 11

The images of Che Guevara at the end of the first part of *The Hour of the Furnaces* had a great impact. Before the last fixed image of the face of the dead Che (front-on, in extreme close-up) that remains for several minutes addressing and challenging the viewer, the camera travels over Che's body, laid out on the stretcher, tracks it from feet to head, pauses, and introduces a montage of just a few shots of the face. A shot shows Che's cadaver on the large concrete sink, pausing there, freezing, emphasizing the presence of a photographer standing at the middle of the sink on which the body is lying, as though hovering over it in order to photograph it. That footage, from TV newsreels of the time, was captured during the international press conference in Vallegrande, Bolivia, where reporters arrived to confirm Che's death. That was the objective of the Bolivian government and the U.S. agents there, who provided air transport for the journalists, photographers, and cameramen, in order to convey the failure of revolt in Latin America. One of them, the Bolivian photo-journalist Freddy Alborta, took many images there, among them this one similar to the footage used by Solanas and Getino in the film. (Figure 13)

In the second half of 1968, when *The Hour* began to be distributed, Cine Liberación contacted Juan Perón, exiled in Madrid (Spain), to interview him. Perón's brief testimony (5 minutes) was incorporated by some Cine Liberación groups in Argentina to exhibit it together with *The Hour*. (Figure 14) A few years later, Octavio Getino (Figure 15) exchanged letters with Perón to get a more extensive interview with the leader, which Cine Liberación would finally carry out in 1971.

In 1973, when Perón returned to the government in Argentina the film could be exhibited for the first time in regular movie theatres. (Figure 12)



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15

*The Hour of Furnaces* reconstructs episodes that allude to the historical events during the CGT's (worker organization) "agitation plan" from 1963 to 1965: 11,000 establishments occupied, three million workers involved, as mentioned in the voiceover. Among many images of those workers' actions, the film incorporates a well-known graphic poster by the political artist Ricardo Carpani, titled "Basta" ("Enough"). (Figure 16) The poster was created for the "National protest week" (between May 27 and May 31) that started the CGT "agitation plan." Carpani's work was not only recognized for its "emotional and ideological content" and its "rebellious and revolutionary message" (as the press mentioned) but also for being one of the main symbols of the labor and popular claims in demonstrations. The poster appears in the second part of the film with the purpose of appealing the recent memory of the spectators that had already seen the image, whether in the May 1963 issue of the CGT's bulletin, in other political or working-class journals, or maybe on the walls of many cities where workers were protesting.

Years later, on May 29 and 30, 1969, the largest popular uprising of the period (a big strike and street protest), known as the *Cordobazo* took place in the city of Córdoba (Argentina) led by workers and students. The images captured by the cameras of Argentine television brought into people's homes the violent irruption of the protest. Yet from the very moment of recording, the images captured by the TV cameras were turned into disputed representations. In their immediately following appropriation by the political cinema, these images were re-signified by the films' soundtrack, which included the voices and testimonies of the protagonists of the protest. For its material and symbolic importance, the *Cordobazo* was considered a point of inflection in the struggles of that period. Most of the militant films used the same fragment of TV footage to represent that historical moment and proclaim that anti-dictatorial protest would spread and the lower classes would make a qualitative historical leap. The TV fragment included in most Argentine militant films lasts only a few seconds and shows the demonstrators moving through a street and hurling stones at the mounted police who, in an abrupt and disorderly way, turn around and retreat. (Figure 17) Inserted in the most varied ways in both documentary and fictional films, and generally giving a defining epic tone to the narrative, these images sought to symbolize the people's advance over the military regime. Evidently, *The Hour of the Furnaces* (remember, 1968) couldn't incorporate this footage from 1969. (The film incorporated it in a new version of the first part when it was legalized for exhibition in film theatres in 1973.) In any case, this episode of the popular struggles had an important impact in the first years of the organization of clandestine distribution of the film in the country (1969–1970).





Figure 16



Figure 17

After its premiere at the Pesaro Film Festival in June 1968, *The Hour of the Furnaces* was included in the catalogues of the main noncommercial and/or militant distributors in many countries, such as Third World Cinema Group / Tricontinental Film Center and Third World Newsreel (US); MK2 (France); Cinéma d'Information Politique–Champ Libre (Canada–Montreal); El Volti (Spain); Collettivo Cinema Militante, San Diego Cinematográfica, and Centro Documentazione Cinema e Lotta di Classe (Italy); The Other Cinema (London), among many others. (Figure 18) The use of *The Hour of the Furnaces* (and other militant films) by collectives of political cinema demonstrates an aspect very often overlooked in the textual and historiographic analyses of this type of film: their political use in the militant circuit to generate discussions and actions. These experiences, around the social intervention of the films, are the ones that, in the last instance, define the so-called militant cinema and are fundamental when evaluating the value and meanings associated with the films in each place and historical moment. This is what happened with *The Hour of the Furnaces*.

A few political films of those years incorporated images from the Argentinean film. The French political fiction film, *Comrades/Comrades* (1970) by Marin Karmitz, included it in a scene (recorded live) that shows the screening by a French union committee of the famous fragment of the “factory occupations” (ten minutes) from the second part of the *The Hour*. In the “Factory Occupations” section, Solanas and Getino present the testimonies of workers at two factories, both in Greater Buenos Aires, in two of the most mobilized industrial sectors in the 1960s workers’ movements (metalworks and textiles), that show some of the central topics for radicals at the time: how the workers prepared to defend themselves when the forces of repression arrived, how the neighborhood came out in solidarity to support them, how the production continued at the factory under worker control. In Karmitz’s film, the French workers watching the projection of the Argentinean film draw on their own experiences of strikes and occupations in the Renault car factory and others in France. (Figure 19) It is an important scene in the development of Karmitz’s film since it is situated at a key moment in relation to the problem of consciousness-raising of the protagonist in relation to class solidarity. Karmitz put on the screen precisely the experience of a militant use of *The Hour* in France that was taking place in similar circumstances among other groups in those years in this and other countries.



Figure 18



Figure 19

*The Hour of the Furnaces* arrived at the Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema di Pesaro (Pesaro Film Festival) in June 1968, for its international premiere. One scene recurs in the stories about that film's historical moment: the viewers, after the screening of the first part of the film, moved by its expressive force, stood up to shout and raise the filmmakers on their shoulders. The strong reactions to the film in Pesaro were indicative of the cultural and political concern of the European Left for that Latin American great moment and the radical cinema it produced. In the coming years, this concern would become apparent through the repercussion exerted on Third Worldist films in Italy and Europe by this film and the theory of the Third Cinema. The critics and the memories of the participants about that premiere meshed with the contemporary '68 outbreak through the streets of the city of Pesaro: the confluence of those attending the festival's function with other protesters in the Pesaro Square, which ended with clashes with fascist groups and the police, and the detention of militants and filmmakers. The film had become a political act, just as Solanas and Getino had hoped would happen in each of the screenings.

Others Argentinean political filmmakers or critics were there. Figure 21 shows some of them together, around 1968 and maybe in that Pesaro Festival: Getino, Solanas, Gerardo Vallejo, Edgardo Pallerio from Cine Liberación group—and Fernando Birri and the critic Agustín Mahieu, linked to the group at that moment.

A few days before the meeting in Pesaro, the venerated and prestigious festival of Cannes (France) had been occupied by critics, filmmakers, and students and closed without the award ceremony in May. In this framework, the Pesaro Festival director, Lino Micciché (Figure 20) and his team had established the *autocontestazione* (self-protest), recognizing that the Film Festivals were in a historical crisis. In this way, they accepted the functioning of a permanent assembly of the assistants run in parallel to the exhibition of the films and proposed to review its organizational structure, to expand its working model to a "self-management" model in contact with cultural, artistic, and political groups, and extend the projections to an incipient urban circuit and to suburban worker zones (where, among other films, *The Hour* was projected).

Goffredo Fofi, director of the *Ombre Rosse* magazine and cowriter of the Student Movement radical manifestos for the Festival, took Solanas with the cans of the film to the city of Trento to present it at the University occupied by the students, as well as at other universities in northern Italy. (Figure 22) In February 1969, the powerful *Colletivo Cinema Militante* screened all three parts of the film in Turin, in the presence of the Argentinian filmmaker, and it was also exhibited in Perugia and Milano in those weeks.



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22

In September 1968 *The Hour of the Furnaces* had a Latin American premiere during the First Exhibition of Latin American Documentary Cinema in Mérida (Venezuela). The Festivals and Filmmakers Meetings in Viña del Mar (Chile) in 1967 and 1969, and this one in Venezuela in 1968, are some of the main milestones of the regional organization of the so-called New Latin American Cinema, together with Festivals organized by the weekly *Marcha* and the activities carried out by the Third World Cinematheque in Uruguay.

During the second Latin American filmmakers meeting in Viña del Mar, October 1969, the Argentinean film was projected with impact, but there were lots of polemics among the political filmmakers from many countries who had arrived there. (Figure 23) Solanas and Getino had an active participation in those discussions. (Figure 24)

*The Hour of the Furnaces* incorporates in its first part some “filmic citation,” an original resource consisting in the inclusion of sequences of what they regard as a “culturally valid ‘testimony-cinema.’” One of them came from the well-known Joris Ivens film *Le ciel, la terre* (*The Threatening Sky*, 1965). Ivens, probably the foremost world political film documentarist of the twentieth century, attended the Viña del Mar 1969 meeting to support the New Latin American Cinema movement. The Argentinean filmmakers found him again in other encounters in the following years, as in the Spanish Benalmadena Film Festival of 1977. Figure 26 shows them together with the director of the meeting, Julio Diamante, among others.



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25. Octavio Getino c. 1971. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Getino family.



Figure 26

In 1971 the Group Cine Liberación decided to become more strongly involved in the Peronist movement. They contacted directly the exiled leader, Perón, and filmed the interviews with him in Madrid, which were to serve as the basis for the two feature-length documentaries *La revolución justicialista / The Justicialist Revolution* (in which Perón talked about the history of his government in Argentina between 1946 and 1955) and *Actualización política y doctrinaria para la toma del poder / Doctrinal Update for the Taking of Power* (where he analyzes the Argentinean conjuncture and introduces his ideas for that moment).

It could be said that hands-on experiences screening of the brief 1968 interview (and other sequences from Part II of *The Hour*, including Perón's historical discourses) made the Cine Liberación group realize how an extensive interview with the ousted former president could serve as a means of communicating with his followers in Argentina. Its emotional impact probably justified the lengthy film interviews with Perón during encounters with him in May and September of 1971. Figures 27 to 30 show Solanas and Getino (also Gerardo Vallejo, another key founder of the group) with Perón in his residence in Puerta de Hierro (Madrid).

Although these films are not nearly as well known as *The Hour*, they were equally important to the history of Cine Liberación because they pointed to the group's alignment with Peronism and were even used in the campaign to allow Perón to return to Argentina, a goal ultimately achieved in 1973.



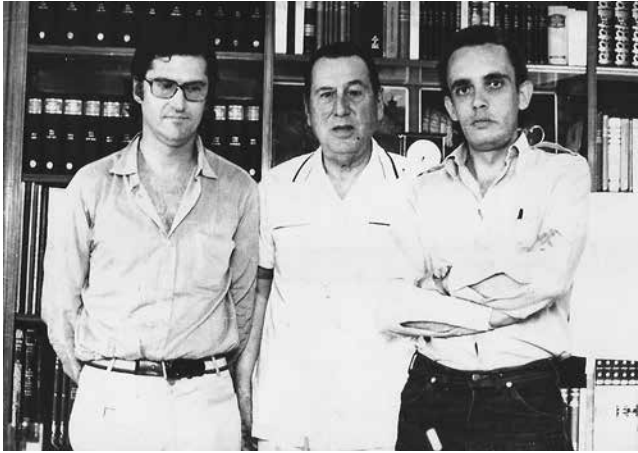


Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30

After the film interviews with Perón in Madrid and the edition of the two documentaries from them in 1972, a new stage began in the Cine Liberación history, as Getino explained in the 1979 document, “Some observations . . .” translated in this issue. In the one issue of the magazine, *Cine y Liberación* (in August 1972), they explained the political alternatives for the return of Perón to Argentina in the following months. They also hoped for the exhibition of their films and those of other militant filmmakers (prohibited during the military dictatorship) in the movie cinema circuit and began new film projects in this way. In this framework, at the beginning of 1973, they compiled their writings and manifestos, and edited them in the book *Cine, cultura y descolonización*. (Figure 34)

The Peronist party returned to the government in Argentina in May 1973 when Héctor J. Cámpora (representative of Perón in Argentina) was elected president (the military had banned the candidacy of Perón). A few months later, after new elections in September, Perón returned as President, winning 62 percent of the votes. During three months of the second half of 1973, Octavio Getino served on the Ente de Calificación Cinematográfica, a government commission at the National Film Institute that approved and rated the films, and at the same time planned some of the national film policies and the projects of law. (Figure 31) He faced this task with intellectuals, worker representatives, and filmmakers. (Figures 32 and 33) In this framework, he tried to transform the official institution in a “national” revolutionary way as other Latin American cultural workers from government communication institutions were doing in those same years, both in leftist socialist projects (such the UP during Allende, 1970–1973) and nationalist revolutionary ones (such Velasco Alvarado in Peru, 1968–1975). Solanas and other Cine Liberación group members, such as Edgardo Cacho Pallero, or linked to it, like Humberto Ríos (Figure 35) or Nemesio Juárez, helped him in this task. In any case, the rejection of the film corporations of this project forced Getino to leave his institutional position at the National Film Institute in December 1973.



Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35

The Manifesto “Towards a Third Cinema” appeared first in the October 1969 issue of *Tricontinental*, based in Cuba. As the name clearly indicates, the journal reflects the hopes emanating at the time from the Third World—and many in the First and Second—to end colonialism and neocolonialism, and even overthrow capitalism. Cuba, from Latin America, led this ideological, and at times military, battle. The simultaneous publication of each issue of *Tricontinental* in Spanish, French, Italian, and English, whatever the irony of the origins of those four languages, obviously sought an international audience for the journal (Figures 36 through 39). Of all the manifestos and writing about political film during those years of decolonization, only “Towards a Third Cinema” found a venue aimed specifically at a worldwide audience, devoting its pages both to political and cultural work.

The inquiry from *CinémAction* included in this issue of *Framework* documents responses from a broad array of filmmaker-critic-scholars from Africa, Arab countries, Latin America, Europe, and the USA. They speak of their first encounters with the Manifesto and the film *The Hour of the Furnaces*. Most readers of the Manifesto maybe did not read the Manifesto in *Tricontinental*. As noted in the dossier, film journals republished the Manifesto in many languages. The radical film journal *Afterimage* published the Manifesto in the issue illustrated here (Number 3, Summer 1971), where “Third World Cinema” dwarfs the name of the journal. (Figure 40)

As Guy Hennebelle, editor of *CinémAction*, recounts, discussion of the film and Manifesto received copious attention in French film journals, and not only the political journals. Screenings of the film at its release drew large crowds in many venues, a phenomenon that drew the attention of even the bourgeois press. At times, journals could not contain the debates over the film and Manifesto in only one issue, as the discussion spilled over into multiples issues. The image from *Cinema Politique* (number 7, January 1977), with the graphic illustration literalizing the famous claim in the Manifesto that “the projector [is a] gun that can shoot 24 frames per second,” is the cover of one of multiple issues printing the debating about the film and the Manifesto. (Figure 41)

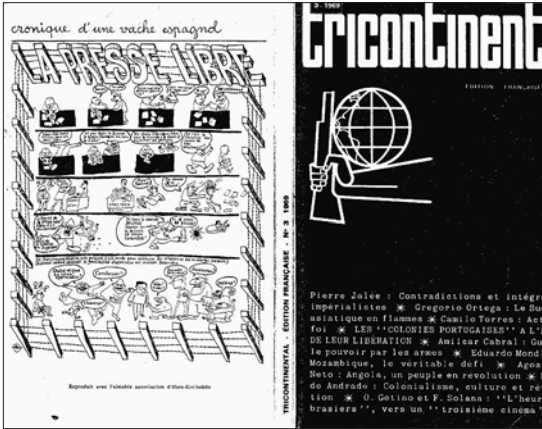


Figure 36



Figure 38



Figure 37



Figure 39

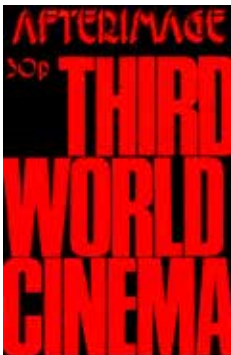


Figure 40



Figure 41

*The Hour of the Furnaces* and the Manifesto “Towards a Third Cinema” were presented and debated in many political film meetings during the 1970s. One of the key stops of this journey was at the *Rencontres Internationales pour un Nouveau Cinema* (International Meeting for a New Cinema) in Montreal, June 1974, probably the largest meeting of intervention cinema worldwide during those years (Figure 42). Organized by André Pâquet (Figures 44 and 45) and the Comité d’Action Cinématographique of Quebec, the event gathered over 200 filmmakers, critics, producers, and distributors of political cinema from Europe, North America, Latin America, Black Africa, and the Maghreb. Photos 47 and 48 show Fernando Solanas talking with the founder of the Carthage Film Festival and member of the FEPACI (Pan African Federation of Filmmakers), Tahar Cheriaa, the Mauritanian filmmaker Med Hondo or the French communist critic Jean-Patrick Lebel (Figures 47 and 48).

The debates that took place in Montreal in search of a political-cinematographic international alternative were varied, but the theory of Third Cinema and the Solanas talk there took on an important role. In fact, the organizers used, as an epigraph of the meeting-program, a paragraph from “Towards to Third Cinema” that connects the struggle of the peoples of the Third World with their “equivalents” in the First World (Figure 43). At the same time, the polemic that followed Solanas’s speech (on Third Cinema, Cine Liberación group, and Peronism) was long and heated, and included the participation of important personalities of Latin America and International political cinema (Figure 46). The role of African and Latin American filmmakers (i.e., those from the Third World) during the conference was also an important success. In this framework, several critics proposed the event as ongoing project for an *Etats Généraux* of Third Cinema, a sort of widening to militant cinema worldwide of the notion originated in France around 1968 (*Etats Généraux* of French Cinema). The French critic and activist Guy Hennebelle wrote that in order to appreciate the significance of the Montreal Conference, it was imperative to understand the basics of Solanas and Getino’s theory of Third Cinema.



Figure 42



Figure 44



Figure 43



Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48

Guy Hennebelle was a tireless supporter of Third World cinema practice and theory through many initiatives and projects, since the beginning of his career as a critic in Algeria and France (1963–1964) and in Algiers (1965–1968), where he wrote a page on cinema for *El Moudjabid*; in 1978, with Monique Martineau, he founded the group CinémAction, the name of the left journal that published issues on a wide range of topics before his death in 2003.

Hennebelle defended and promoted *The Hour of the Furnaces* from the beginning of its presence in France. In March 1969, for example, he denounced that, although screened at the French Cinemateque and at the Locarno Festival (Switzerland), the Argentine film was prohibited, and, consequently, it had been impossible to screen it during the fortnight organized by the magazine *Positif*. A little later, in May, the film was screened within the Critics week in Cannes (sparkling a “diplomatic” scandal) and was distributed in Paris and other French cities. Hennebelle met Fernando Solanas for the first time during the Montreal meeting of 1974, whose film was considered by all—according to Hennebelle—as the “archetype of militant cinema of the time.” After those days he would become Solanas’s friend and from then on a “propagandist” for the manifesto, as he also said and as the 1979 *CinémAction* dossier would demonstrate.

The images of this section show some encounters of Guy Hennebelle and Fernando Solanas during the ’70s (Figures 50, 52 and 53) as well as Hennebelle’s activities in institutions and with personalities of the Third World cinema, such as Halim Mokdad in *El Moudjabid* around 1967 (Figure 49), Guy Hennebelle with Monique Martineau-Hennebelle and Boudjema Karèche at the Cinémathèque algérienne, during the spring of 1975 (Figure 51), with Tewfik Salah during the Semaine du Cinema arabe (Figure 54), or interviewing Youssef Chahine (Figure 55).





Figure 49



Figure 50



Figure 51



Figure 52

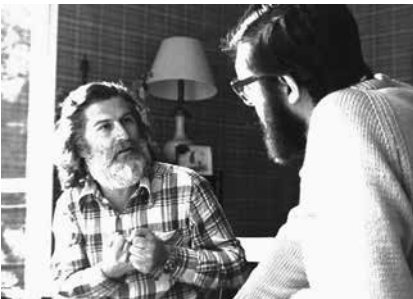


Figure 53



Figure 55



Figure 54



Figure 56 . Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas.

## CREDITS FOR PHOTO-ESSAY

Images of the Itinerary of the Group Cine Liberación and “Third Cinema”

1. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Victoria Solanas
2. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Getino family
13. Photo by Freddy Alborta. Leandro Katz archive (From the book *The Ghosts of Ñancabuzú*, 2010)
15. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Getino family
22. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Victoria Solanas
24. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Getino family
25. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Getino family
26. Courtesy Pablo Guallar and Getino family
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