

Pseudo-left pays tribute to Peruvian ex-radical Hugo Blanco

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Numerous pseudo-left and corporate media outlets internationally have published glorifying tributes to Peruvian ex-radical Hugo Blanco since his death on June 25 at the age of 88.

The Stalinist Communist Party of Peru (Patria Roja) praised his “example of simplicity.” The Socialist Party (formerly the Unified Mariateguista Party), which belongs to the pseudo-left bourgeois coalition Nuevo Peru, organized his funeral rites. *Prensa Latina*, the publication of the Cuban Castroite government approvingly cited him saying: “I used to fight for the peasants and workers; today I do it for the human species.” *Jacobin*, the magazine associated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), praised him as “one of the greatest socialist fighters in Latin America during the 20th century.”

Most effusively, the International Workers League published a biographical sketch days before his death that begins by citing the IWL’s founder and Blanco’s closest collaborator for decades: “Nahuel Moreno used to say that Hugo Blanco was the greatest Trotskyist mass leader after Trotsky. That holds true today.”

The obituaries speak to the nationalist political calculations of their authors, who are dedicated today to providing a “left” cover for the ruling elite’s attacks on living and working conditions and its turn to war and dictatorship.

Blanco abandoned any pretense of an association with Trotskyism and socialism decades ago. He embraced the post-modernist rejection of the revolutionary role of the working class, advocating instead broad-based social movements founded upon the lowest common denominators of bourgeois environmentalism, indigenous nationalism and identity politics. He glorified the 1994 Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, and became a supporter of Evo Morales, Hugo Chavez, Rafael Correa and other bourgeois nationalist governments.

Much of the sympathy of the pseudo-left groups today for Blanco derives from their having themselves discarded any genuine left-wing politics, paying lip service to “socialism” solely to deceive the working class.

One particularly revealing obituary was published by the Argentine pseudo-left Partido Obrero, which is currently working to form a coalition with a section of the ruling Peronist party. Before claiming that Blanco “was always a militant fighter” and indicating that the PO “collaborated many times with his struggle,” the obituary polemicizes that Hugo Blanco should have never been advised against building the Left Revolutionary Alliance (ARI) in 1980, “an electoral alliance that brought together 90 percent of the Peruvian left,” as described by the PO.

ARI was composed of several Castroite, Maoist, Stalinist and other petty-bourgeois nationalist groups, and Blanco was photographed leading several ARI rallies with images of Trotsky next to Stalin and Mao. Even outside of the ARI, Blanco, who had received the most votes nationally (12 percent) in a Constituent Assembly election in 1978, was working with these forces to divert the working class upsurge that erupted after a general strike in 1977, which brought down the military dictatorship of

Gen. Francisco Morales Bermúdez.

Blanco, who would soon become a legislator and liquidate the Pabloite Socialist Workers Party (PRT) into the bourgeois Mariateguista Unified Party, spurned the ARI based on opportunist calculations. However, today, as Argentina enters an historic economic and political crisis, the Partido Obrero is promoting the legacy of the ARI to justify its formation of an Argentine version of Greece’s Syriza, a thoroughly capitalist and pro-imperialist party. The PO had already called for “refounding” the Fourth International with Russian Stalinist supporters of the Putin government.

Blanco is mainly known in Peru and internationally for organizing peasant unions and leading land seizures by indigenous peasants against the semi-feudal landowners in the northern valleys of the Cusco department in Peru, between 1959 and 1963. Just two years earlier, as a college student in Argentina in his mid-20s, he had entered politics by joining the tendency led by Argentine opportunist Nahuel Moreno.

While formally belonging to the Trotskyist International Committee of the Fourth International, by the mid-1950s Moreno had turned his group Palabra Obrera into an appendage of the movement led by bourgeois nationalist general Juan Domingo Perón, whose government had been overthrown in September 1955.

As demonstrated by numerous letters and Hugo Blanco’s own account in his book *Tierra o Muerte*, Moreno and his associates in the so-called Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism (SLATO) consistently pushed its small group of followers in Peru, including Blanco, to maintain an orientation to the peasantry as the “vanguard” of the Peruvian revolution and to prepare an insurrection largely modeled after Fidel Castro’s guerrilla movement in Cuba, which came to power in 1959.

By 1961, SLATO had focused its work and resources in Cusco and sent three experienced Argentine members to support Blanco’s peasant unions once they had gained a mass following and as land seizures spread.

No systematic work was carried out in the fast-growing Peruvian working class, and work in the cities was limited to building a “Revolutionary Front” or FIR, which was oriented to the petty-bourgeois activists who had recently broken with the bourgeois APRA party and the Stalinist Communist Party based on Castroite conceptions. As indicated by Blanco, FIR was dedicated to preparing bank robberies to arm a peasant insurrection.

Discussions within SLATO were limited to questions of tactics and timing, on whether to prioritize building peasant unions, launching FIR as a peasant party or technical preparations for a peasant uprising by forming guerrilla groups or militias. The rejection of the basic tenets of Marxism and adaptation to Castroism and the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR (“friendly states”) by Moreno was summarized in a letter to the SLATO members in Peru in March 1963:

All triumphant revolutions in the post-war period have

demonstrated that Marxist revolutionary parties are not necessary for the victory of revolutions but they have also unequivocally shown the following: First, armed action can only be launched by parties and leaders of a great power acknowledged by the mass movements of their countries, while being totally disciplined and centralized. Second, armed actions can only be initiated with the support of certain social classes or the distorted expression of those social classes: friendly states.

A second bank robbery in April 1963—ultimately signed off on by Moreno—led to the arrest of most FIR militants and the pursuit of Blanco, who responded by attempting to establish a guerrilla group before being captured in May. A death sentence by a military tribunal was only overturned thanks to an international campaign and strikes and protests within Peru in his defense.

The following month, in June 1963, the Reunification Congress took place between the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the Pabloites. The Pabloites' divergence from Trotskyism had only deepened in the decade since the SWP led the struggle against Pabloism in 1953, leading to the formation of the ICFI. Pablo's call for liquidating Trotskyist cadre into Stalinism and other counterrevolutionary and nationalist forces found concrete and even more reactionary expression in reunification documents which concluded that "a blunted instrument" like Castro's guerrillas sufficed to establish a workers' state and socialism. Moreno and numerous Latin American groups followed the SWP into the new United Secretariat.

The Socialist Labour League in Britain waged a principled struggle against Pabloism and the betrayal by the SWP, maintaining the continuity of the world Trotskyist movement under the leadership of the ICFI.

In *Tierra o Muerte*, published in 1972, Blanco defends his political actions in Cusco, his promotion of Indian nationalism and his use of guerrilla warfare as a tactic. The only "lesson" he draws is that a political party should have been built based on the peasantry to avoid "the isolation of our peasant movement."

The politics of the Peruvian Morenoites during 1958-1963 can be summarized as a variant of nationalist opportunism, which took the form of peasant radicalism. This was not different in fundamental aspects from Russian Narodism, which based itself on terrorist tactics, land seizures and "peasant self-governance." It was precisely in opposition to Narodism that the Russian Marxist movement was built in the 1880s.

The insistence by Moreno and Blanco that the conditions in the backward countries called for the building of a party based upon the peasantry as a substitute for the working class was addressed by Trotsky in his analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy's betrayal of the Chinese Revolution in 1927. This struggle remains a basic resource in the education of Trotskyist cadre in Latin America.

The Chinese Communist Party was ordered by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Moscow to enter and subordinate itself to the bourgeois Kuomintang party, which proceeded to slaughter the Communists. This was preceded and prepared by Stalin's call for establishing "worker-peasant parties like Kuomintang" across Asia. Trotsky wrote:

Marxism has always taught, and Bolshevism, too, accepted, and taught, that the peasantry and proletariat are two different classes, that it is false to identify their interests in capitalist society in any way, and that a peasant can join the communist party only if, from the property viewpoint, he adopts the views of the proletariat... Those organizations which in capitalist countries label themselves peasant parties are in reality one of the varieties of bourgeois parties. Every peasant who has not adopted the proletarian

position, abandoning his proprietor psychology, will inevitably follow the bourgeoisie when it comes to fundamental political issues.

While their actions may have accelerated the dissolution of the brutally oppressive landed estates in the northern corner of Cuzco, the politics pursued by Moreno, Blanco and the SLATO undermined the struggle for socialist revolution.

The entire outlook of these tendencies was based upon a thoroughgoing rejection of the ABC's of Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution, which takes as its starting point not the national conditions in a given country, but their context within world economy and world political relations. Trotsky insisted that the uncompleted tasks of the bourgeois revolution, and in particular the land question, in countries with a belated capitalist development could be resolved only by the independent revolutionary struggle of the working class, leading the masses of oppressed peasants behind it. Achieving power, the working class would be compelled to carry out measures of a socialist character. Moreover, the social revolution in a given oppressed country could survive only through the extension of the revolution into the advanced capitalist countries and, ultimately, throughout the world.

Instead of fighting for the independent political mobilization and international unification of the working class, Moreno, Blanco and the Pabloite tendency of which they were a part played a key role in sowing political confusion among workers and radicalized youth across Peru and Latin America. They facilitated the growth of suicidal Castroite guerrillas and the influence of bourgeois nationalist movements, which ultimately served to further subjugate Peruvian workers and peasants to imperialism.

Moreover, their policy handed the political influence over the peasantry to the national bourgeoisie *against* the working class. This culminated in the 1969 agrarian reform under the military dictatorship of Gen. Juan Velasco Alvarado, which dissolved all hacienda estates with compensation, including forcing those already seized by peasants to pay their previous owners. Freed by Velasco, Blanco opposed becoming a poster boy for the reform and its concessions to landowners, which led to Blanco's expulsion into exile. However, the Morenoites had already helped block the only alternative: the independent struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie. This situation was exploited by the Stalinist and Maoist Communist Party factions, which rapidly increased their influence in the sierras and openly backed Velasco.

Rampant inequality and misery still characterize the rural Andean sierras. These are overseen today by an indigenous farmer and commercial bourgeoisie along with the mining corporations. They have the highest poverty rates of any geographical region in Peru, with 86 percent living under or on the verge of official poverty. Meanwhile, the ongoing political disenfranchisement of the rural and urban masses has been confirmed by the repeated military dictatorships and coups as factions of the ruling elite compete to serve the interests of imperialism and its mining and agro-industrial transnational corporations.

Today, all pseudo-left and Stalinist forces that hail Blanco, along with the trade union bureaucracies they control, are hostile to mobilizing the key sections of the working class against the fascistic regime of Dina Boluarte, which has used lethal force to crush widespread protests against the overthrow and arrest last December of elected president Pedro Castillo.

Instead, at a time when 80 percent of Peruvians live in cities, all nominally "left" forces insist on handing the initiative to "Takeovers of Lima" by the indigenous population from the sierras, leading to several marches to the capital. Today these indigenous forces are politically controlled by the local bourgeois factions, which were the chief base of the Castillo administration, and are merely attempting to extract greater

concessions from the central authorities and the mining transnationals.

Drawing the lessons of the betrayals committed against the working class by Morenoism and other variants of Pabloism in Peru and internationally has never been more urgent. Above all, this means building sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in Peru and across Latin America to lead the independent and international mobilization of workers for socialist revolution, leading behind it all other oppressed layers of the population.



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