

Nahuel Moreno

Peru: Two Strategies

The peasant rebellion headed by Hugo Blanco and the
polemic with putschism (1961-1963)



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Other Papers



Annex:

Hugo Blanco and the peasant uprising in the Cusco region (1961-1963)

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Foreword

Miguel Sorans*

Nahuel Moreno and his fight against putschism in Trotskyism

The triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 had a tremendous political impact. The leadership of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara put enormous pressure on thousands and thousands of fighters. A generation of Latin American revolutionaries joined the rural or urban guerrilla actions.

In almost all major political organisations of the continent, both bourgeois and as in the Communist parties and the entire left in the 1960s pro-Castro wings emerged and splits occurred. In Peru the Rebel APRA (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) emerged; in Venezuela, from Democratic Action was formed the MIR (Revolutionary Left Movement); also within Peronism in Argentina there were Castroist sectors. This influence and the rupture processes also came to Latin American Trotskyism.

In Peru, as part of the continental uprising opened by the Cuban revolution in late 1959, began a massive peasant uprising, concentrated especially in Cusco and the valleys of La Convencion and Lares, in the middle of the Andes. The peasants massively took the land and large landowners began to organise to defend it violently. Hugo Blanco will become the undisputed leader of this process, promoting the taking of land, the establishment of peasant unions and mass unionisation.

This process of mobilisation and organisation had nothing to do with the orientation then proclaimed the Cuban leadership and especially Che, with the guerrilla “focus”. This was opening a political clash between two conceptions or two strategies for the Latin American revolution.

The texts of *Peru: Two Strategies* are a faithful testimony of the living and initial character of those debates. It was a pamphlet published in 1964, with a low circulation and quickly exhausted. In it were reproduced several letters by Nahuel Moreno, sent between 1961 and 1963, to Hugo Blanco, and other Peruvian Trotskyist leaders, particularly the Argentine Daniel Pereyra. His goal was to argue with the rise of guerrillaist focus, following the emergence in 1961 of a putschist deviation in the ranks of the POR (Workers’ Revolutionary Party), the Peruvian party related to Moreno’s current.

Ediciones El Socialista is issuing for the first time in English that pamphlet. We accompany it with fragments of SLATO’s resolutions and other letters by Moreno, Hugo Blanco and Daniel Pereyra (and some answers), concerning issues related to the problems of money, whether to buy or not arms and other aspects a lot more internal of the debate. These texts were first published in 1999 in Part 3, Volume 1 of the work *Workers’ and Internationalist Trotskyism in Argentina*, coordinated by Ernesto Gonzalez.

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To facilitate understanding of the context in which these processes and these discussions took place and the political and social framework of Peru then, we add to this edition an essential reading paper by historian Hernan Camarero: “Hugo Blanco and the peasant uprising in the Cusco region (1961-1963)”, published in the magazine *Periferias. Journal of Social Sciences* No. 8, November 2000.

The peasant rebellion led by Hugo Blanco and the disaster of putschism

Hugo Blanco had been won to Trotskyism and Moreno’s current in Argentina, as a student at the University of La Plata, in 1957. The next year he returned to Lima and joined the POR. Blanco was a native of Cusco and since childhood spoke Quechua, the language of the peasants. He had to resettle in Cusco forced by a repressive situation. Nahuel Moreno convinced him of the importance of the peasantry and to give himself to this mass task to promote mobilisation and formation of the party. Blanco recalled that “the theoretical contributions of Comrade Nahuel Moreno, in particular, helped us a lot to become aware of that importance”.¹

Consistent with the application of the Marxist method of always starting from the reality of the class struggle, Moreno broke through the supposed schema of Trotskyism that only the working class could be the protagonist and vanguard of a revolutionary process. He characterised that in Peru a process of agrarian revolution was opening up and that revolutionaries should turn to it, and from there seek unity with the proletariat and the urban masses. At the meeting of the Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism (SLATO)² on April, 1961 it was resolved that the axis for the current was to turn to the Peruvian revolution in progress. And every effort, beginning with the Argentine party, *Palabra Obrera* [Workers Word], had to turn to Peru. From there the Argentine party gathered contributions on the basis that many militants auctioned their personal property to support the fight. Moreno travelled periodically. In June 1961 Daniel Pereyra, Jose Martorell and Eduardo Creus went, from Argentina, to live in Peru, to support the work of Hugo Blanco and strengthen party building.

The first chapter of the book *Peru: Two Strategies*, is a letter from Moreno to Hugo Blanco written on 24 April, 1961, in which he developed the overall policy towards the peasants’ mobilisation. It is a paper that gives a precise characterisation that the revolution in Peru had begun as an agrarian revolution, not as a workers’ revolution. He thus shows its pros and cons; the inequality between rural and urban areas and the need to develop a program and slogans trying to unify, looking for a dynamic to develop a dual power. The key slogans he launches to develop the revolution are: 1- Land and vote for the peasant, 2- Slogans to join with the urban areas and 3- To build the revolutionary party.

But regrettably, when after the unification with another group the POR was transformed into the FIR (*Frente de Izquierda Revolucionaria* – Revolutionary Left Front), from the end of 1961 this line began to be challenged as in the direction of the Peruvian party a putschist deviation was being incubated, led by militants from Argentina. Influenced by the vision of Castro and Guevara, Daniel Pereyra, Martorell and the Lima group began to argue that the axis was to create a striking “political fact” like the attempt to seize the Moncada Barracks in Cuba in 1953. So, they resolve to prepare the assault to the Gamarra Barracks in Cusco before the presidential elections in June 1962. The result of this deviation derived also in a quick pursuit of money for “a good organisation” via “expropriations”, raiding banks. None of this had been discussed nor was the orientation approved in SLATO, which they threatened to ignore.

1 Hugo Blanco: *Tierra o muerte. Las luchas campesinas en Perú* (Land or death. The peasant struggles in Peru). Mexico, Siglo XXI editors, 1972, p. 7.

2 Since the early 1950s the Fourth International was divided between the International Secretariat headed by Pablo and Mandel, and the “orthodox” International Committee (IC), headed by the American SWP. *Palabra Obrera* [Workers Word] was part of the IC sector. SLATO was the body gathering the Latin American Orthodox groups: Argentina, Chile, Peru, among others.

From there a debate began that would then take dimensions of political tragedy. Just as this deviation occurs, at the end of 1961, the peasant mobilisation was becoming stronger and Hugo Blanco was already a mass leader recognised throughout Peru. In November, at La Convencion, 40,000 peasant demonstrators gathered to protest the presence of a minister from the national government. On 15 December, the Lima group carried out the “first test” of their orientation, raiding the Magdalena branch of Banco Popular.

Nahuel Moreno opposed this adventurer course since its inception. This debate against putschism and in defence of mass revolutionary politics will be the centre of the letters that were part of the publication in 1964 of *Peru: Two Strategies*. Dated 5 January, 1962, Moreno sent two letters, one to Hugo Blanco and another to Daniel Pereyra. The latter is reproduced as the second chapter. Moreno was trying to convince Pereyra that he had a wrong orientation, without reaching a breaking point, starting by recognising the merit of his efforts to build the Peruvian party. The chapter title says it all: “Putsch or dual power?” In this extensive letter Moreno began to develop his first polemic elaboration against the wrong foquist orientation that schematically sought to transfer the Cuban experience to Peru or any other country.

The axis for Moreno was to prove that an insurrection is not a “mere technical problem”, but rather it must arise from the development of the reality of this mobilisation and that the central theme is not to buy weapons or have a “specialised technical group”, but to launch the correct slogans to mobilise and develop the rural dual power. He opposes to the arming of an isolated group the slogan of “armed peasant militias.” This slogan was not a propaganda abstraction but it was already beginning to emerge from the own mobilisation with the taking land and its defence against the attack of the “*gamonales*”, the landlords. He strongly warned about the grave danger of isolating the revolutionary vanguard from the actual process that existed in the peasantry and it was led by a Trotskyist leader like Hugo Blanco.

In the personal letter to Hugo Blanco of 5 January, 1962— which we have added in this edition as “Other Papers”— Moreno warned about the dangerous course of the new orientation, which had been decided besides without consultation, he ratified the direction voted in SLATO and he appealed to this instance in an attempt to reverse the deviation within a framework of collective debate: “The predicament does not justify orders among leaders who have not discussed and even less to follow orders that go against what was resolved among us all. We, in these grave times where we are about to give our all, believe more than ever in the collective development”.³ Hugo Blanco always recognised this struggle begun by Moreno: “The merit of having first recognised and of having begun a serious struggle against this deviation corresponds to comrade Nahuel Moreno”.⁴

In February 1962, Moreno travelled to Lima. Although he managed some positive and general resolutions, including stopping the project of assaulting the Gamarra barracks, he could not avoid the putschist course. On 12 April came the second assault, this time at Banco de Credito of Miraflores in Lima, which would end in complete failure. One of the militants was recognised by a fellow student when leaving the bank with what was stolen. A great police persecution ensued. Moreno helped organise the escape of the “expropriating team”. But unfortunately, when reaching Cusco, on 28 April, they were discovered, arrested and tortured. From the moment police knew who they were politically, a persecution against the Peruvian group and against Hugo Blanco was unleashed. Moreno had already travelled to La Paz, where he was arrested and accused of being the “mastermind” of the raid. The party was in disarray and a great part of it was arrested. All this disaster led to a further weakening of Hugo Blanco in Cusco. The section “Other papers” and the article by Camarero expand on these events.

The fact had a major national impact. Some years later the journalist and writer Ignacio Martinez wrote the book *Warn all comrades, quickly*, which was later made into a film.

All subsequent letters will show Moreno insisting obsessively on resuming the line of promoting and organise the peasants and supporting Hugo Blanco, who was in an increasingly

3 See page 56 of this edition.

4 Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit. p. 77.

difficult situation facing with arms, together with the peasant vanguard, the violent repression of the regime and the landlords. Hugo Blanco will finally be arrested on 15 May 1963 and then he would be sentenced to death. A worldwide campaign by Trotskyism that had great impact and all kinds of support finally got the penalty commuted to 25 years in prison and he managed, years later, an amnesty.

Daniel Pereyra 50 years later

Peru was the first expression of the early influence of Castro and Guevara in the ranks of Trotskyism and particularly in the current led by Moreno. Later on would come the split of Angel “Vasco” Bengoechea (1964). In 1967, the split would occur in the PRT (Revolutionary Workers Party). A sector, headed by Roberto Santucho and accompanied by Daniel Pereyra, proposed the Guevarist theses. Nahuel Moreno sector was opposed, and in 1968 formed the PRT (*La Verdad* – The Truth). Santucho headed the PRT (*El Combatiente* – The Fighter), encouraged by Ernest Mandel and the majority leadership of the Fourth International reunited in 1963-64, who drove a guerrilla deviation for Latin America.

Daniel Pereyra was a major player in the pro-guerrilla sector, to the extent he was the delegate of the PRT (*El Combatiente*) to the Ninth Congress (1969) of the Fourth International. The majority leadership, with Mandel and Livio Maitan at the head, gave full support for the putschist orientation, recognising the PRT (*El Combatiente*) as the official section, while the PRT (*La Verdad*) remained as “sympathiser”. Later Santucho would break with the Fourth International. But the Mandelist current continued its support for Castroist and guerrillaist leaderships. To the point of supporting the Sandinista government with Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua in 1979 and approve of the expulsion of the Simon Bolivar Brigade fighters. Daniel Pereyra remained an active member of Mandelism from his exile in Spain, where he settled permanently. So it was that he followed all the revisionist courses of this current in support of reformist leaderships of the left.

In his autobiography—*Memoirs of an internationalist militant*— published in 2014 by Editorial RyR, 50 years after the events of Peru, Daniel Pereyra ratifies this path, to the point of vindicating, for example, the government of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. Throughout this autobiography there is no critical assessment of the Cuban leadership. But on the failed experience of Peru, extraordinarily he seeks to distance himself from the accusation of “putschist”, saying the criticism by Moreno back then was “unjustified”. He pretends to deny that for his entire career since the early 1960s he was linked to the putschist positions of the Latin American guerrilla. It is worth mentioning that he is the author of the book *From Moncada to Chiapas: History of armed struggle in Latin America*, where he presents a vindicating description of those guerrilla movements.

But the saddest thing is that 50 years later he launches a defamatory libel against Nahuel Moreno. In his recent autobiography Pereyra makes a series of moral attacks on Moreno without providing any basis and supported by quotes from historian known as little serious and for his fables, Osvaldo Coggiola. Pereyra quotes him to show the alleged immorality of Moreno, because he would have used the bourgeois press in La Paz, where he was jailed and with a request for his extradition to Peru, to absolve his responsibility for the assault on the bank of Miraflores. When in reality, “Moreno, publicly, and in accordance with the decision of the SLATO before the assault, had to deflect all responsibility for the facts”.⁵

But the worst is that Pereyra makes the serious moral indictment that Moreno could have kept the money from the assault to the bank. On page 163/4 he says: “Without a doubt Moreno [...] should have clarified [...] what use had they given to this money. But he never has and it has remained the great unknown”. It is unbelievable that Pereyra for the first time and after 50 years writes this baseless slander to dirty Moreno’s name and try to hide the political debate on the balance of putschist orientations of the 1960’s and-1970s. Pereyra should explain how it is that for 50 years he has never mentioned this serious allegation, nor has he, or the PRT of Argentina, submitted it

⁵ *Workers’ and Internationalist Trotskyism in Argentina*, op. cit. p. 249.

when he returned to the country in 1966, or any leader in the Mandelist current, to which he has belonged since. Pereyra should also explain why neither Hugo Blanco, nor any Peruvian Trotskyist leader ever raised this serious accusation. Why neither Mandel nor Livio Maitan, nor Bensaid, nor Krivine, nor any leader of Mandelism has ever made this claim? There were all kinds of political debates with Mandel and his current, but they were never mixed with moral attacks or defamation. Pereyra has crossed a line from which will be difficult to return.

Che Guevara, for his misconception, ignored the agrarian revolution headed by Hugo Blanco

Of the defeat suffered by Hugo Blanco and the agrarian revolution that had begun in Peru also have great responsibility the mistaken role of Che and Castroism. Despite all the political evidence of the development of the peasant mobilisation, land seizures, unionisation and the outline of peasant militias being formed, Guevarism and Castroism ignored this reality. They continued their schema and their plans of guerrilla focus

This was recognised by Hector Bejar, former leader of the CP and later commander of the National Liberation Army (ELN) of Peru: “Hugo Blanco was and is a disciplined Trotskyist militant. This posed the left with a serious problem. Had not they said for years that Trotskyists are agents of imperialism? [...] Political prejudices, still remaining, prevented him from giving Blanco the collaboration he deserved”.⁶ “In early 1963, after the meetings in Pucyura, alone and abandoned, Blanco fell to the police. A result in which the left in general and particularly the revolutionary left, had serious responsibility”.⁷

There were all kinds of political attempts from Moreno’s current to seek the support of Che Guevara and the Cuban leadership. But nothing was achieved because they had another project. Also contributing to this practical boycott was Stalinism, the Peruvian Communist Party, which had influence in the unions and in the Peruvian workers’ central and fought from the outset the growth of Blanco and his movement.

Nahuel Moreno himself arranged a meeting with Che in 1961, taking advantage of the presence of Guevara in Punta del Este, for the Summit of the Americas. They had the meeting but it was a formal meeting, without reaching any agreement. In July 1962, the leadership of *Palabra Obrera* decided to send “Vasco” Bengoechea to Cuba to request material help from the Cuban leadership to prevent Hugo Blanco being surrounded by the forces of repression. But that help never came. The “Vasco” delayed for a year his return to Argentina when it was a trip for a few months, and during that period he was won by Che for the foquist conception and the project of launching guerrilla groups in Peru, Bolivia and Argentina. Without taking into account at all of the process that Hugo Blanco headed. Che, for his misconception, ignored the situation.

At a time when Hugo Blanco was arrested in Cusco, in May 1963, Guevarism launched from Bolivia small groups to start guerrilla “foci” in Peru and Argentina. The ELN group led by Hector Bejar Rivera, in late May, would be annihilated as soon as they enter Peruvian territory. Bejar fell prisoner. In turn, the People’s Guerrilla Army (EGP), of the Argentine Jorge Masetti, entered Salta to launch his guerrilla focus, together with the action plan of the urban group of “Vasco” who had already taken distance from *Palabra Obrera*. Lamentably the EGP was annihilated by the gendarmerie in March 1964, in the jungle of Oran. Masetti’s body was never found. And in July Bengoechea died due to an explosion in an apartment on Posadas Street, Buenos Aires.

The discussion on guerrilla warfare and especially the conception of “guerrilla focus” of Ernesto Che Guevara cut through politics of the 1960s and 1970s throughout Latin America. Nahuel Moreno, the main leader of Latin American Trotskyism, was a key protagonist of this debate. Moreno had the political courage and the historic wisdom of going out to battle against

6 Hector Bejar Rivera: *Peru 1965: Notes on a guerrilla experience*, Editorial Sandino, p. 47.

7 Ibid. p. 49.

the wrong method of Guevarism. He did so from a revolutionary socialist stance, recognising the revolutionary character of Che, and opposed to the criticism of him made then by the Soviet bureaucracy and its satellite Communist parties that preached the reformist vision of “peaceful road to socialism”, proposing governments of class collaboration.⁸

Nahuel Moreno always claimed that only the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses could defeat imperialism and its bourgeois regimes and impose socialism. In this insurrectionary path of masses the armed struggle would be a necessary component under the forms provided in each situation. What he questioned was Guevara’s dogma that development of the socialist revolution was only possible via the guerrilla war started by a small group of heroic revolutionaries installed in a rural area (the “focus”). This dogma discarded the importance of analysing the reality of the class struggle in each country, of the program, the slogans, of the reality of the working class, the mass movement, their organisations and the building a revolutionary Marxist party.

Those controversies were not a mere intellectual or academic exercise, but a lively debate on the direct intervention in the class struggle. These letters by Nahuel Moreno are a school of revolutionary politics and the application of the Marxist method. Thus they are a must read to help in advancing the central tasks still raised today: the mobilisation of workers and the masses and in building revolutionary parties, in the perspective of the triumph of the socialist revolution. §

8 Refer to the document debating with Che Guevara in 1964, *Two methods for the Latin American revolution*, in www.nahuelmoreno.org, replying to the tremendous pressure of Castroism and the split of Angel Bengoechea from *Palabra Obrera*.

Peru: Two Strategies

Nahuel Moreno

CHAPTER I

The peasant mobilisation is the engine of the Peruvian Revolution

At the time this letter was being written, the now recognized leader of the Peruvian masses, Hugo Blanco, was already hard at work in the task of peasant unionisation in the valley of La Convencion and the taking of land began to lead the way would lead to the armed mobilisation of tens of thousands of indigenous workers. In April it was held in Buenos Aires the meeting of SLATO, where it was decided the relocation of Daniel Pereyra and other comrades to Peru to strengthen the work. The Peruvian delegates participating returned with this letter to give to Hugo Blanco.

Buenos Aires, 24 April 1961

My dear friend (to Hugo Blanco),

You tell me distressed that you do not see with clarity how the transitional slogans are combined in this stage of the revolution in your country. Your distress is justified because there is no problem more difficult than to define the stage a country is going through and the revolutionary tasks that correspond to it.

In general we all agree that our countries have in their agenda two major historical tasks: national liberation and agrarian revolution. The problem is to see how both historical tasks are combined and materialised.

I think you have the merit of having seen before anyone else that in your country the agrarian revolution has already begun. This means that if we raise at this time the national liberation on an equal footing with the agrarian revolution, we would be dissolving the specific process of the Peruvian revolution, which has begun as an agrarian revolution, in a very correct abstract form: the two great historical tasks in our Latin American countries are the agrarian revolution and national liberation. If we were to do so, we would forget too that each country and each revolution has specific laws in its revolutionary process. The hard part is not to know and master the general laws of the revolutions in the abstract: dual power, combination of tasks, permanent character of the revolution, etc., but to discover what is specific to each revolutionary process, how these general laws combine to give the specific and what is even more difficult, what is the new, unique, concrete, specific law of this revolution and whether it is a new general feature, a new general law of revolutionary processes. In other words, whether what is new applies only to this revolutionary case or it rises to a new general law.

Your revolution has a specific feature: it has begun at this stage as agrarian revolution and not as a workers' revolution or of the whole people against imperialism. It has as its vanguard the peasantry of an area, Cusco, who raises the land problem, while the proletariat of the cities and mines remains at the rear, on the defensive. The Bolivian revolution was the opposite: it began as workers' and anti-imperialist revolution due to its objectives and its combination of classes, to become agrarian after the triumph. The vanguard of the Bolivian revolution was the proletariat

of La Paz and the mines, together with the people of La Paz, who posed as immediate tasks the imposition of a nationalist government and the nationalisation without compensation of the mines.

We verify thus, that the Peruvian revolution has as revolutionary vanguard, at this stage, the country's most backward area and social sector, as opposed to the Bolivian revolution which had as vanguard the most advanced class in the areas of greatest capitalist development. Both the Peruvian and the Bolivian revolutions differ, in turn, from the great Cuban revolution. The latter had at its vanguard, initially, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois youth, including some of their underclass sectors, to lean on the peasant movement that never rose to an organisation and mass mobilisation and it rather served to support the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie. What is curious is that the Cuban revolution also had specific objectives, different from the Peruvian and Bolivian revolutions, since it was essentially democratic in its beginnings: to eliminate Batista in order to achieve democratic freedoms. It is a question of clarifying what are the most important and urgent historical tasks of the class and region that has begun the process of permanent revolution in Peru, in order to extend and combine them with the most urgent and important tasks of the other classes and across the country. These tasks and this combination of tasks and objectives would be the specific program of the Peruvian revolution.

The big problems of the Peruvian peasantry in general and of Cusco and Puno in particular are two: land and the democratic right to vote. In Peru, the peasantry and the poorest sectors of the cities do not vote because of their illiterate character. In Bolivia the masses have given the example by imposing the vote for all people, without distinction of any kind. We have the obligation to claim the same right for the poorest masses of Peru, especially the peasantry. The fact that the Indians do not vote is a reflection of the semi feudal exploitation they suffer and of racial discrimination. We are champions in the fight for democratic rights. The two most important are: 1) the right to choose their representatives by the people as they are, clarifying that this status is a result of what the exploiting classes that have dominated the country have made of them: illiterate and literate, fluent on Spanish or Quechua, barbarous or civilized, with or without land; 2) the right to education and to have the official language they want, what they choose.

The major problem that arises is how we combine this struggle for land and the vote for the peasantry (which is a struggle of specific interest to the rural masses) with the problems that afflict or concern the urban masses and especially the working class of Lima, the coast and the major mining centres. Specifically, how we combine the current, present tasks of the most revolutionary class in this stage of the Peruvian revolution, the peasantry, with the working class and the urban masses, of potentially greater revolutionary possibilities.

If we consider this issue, we must start by pointing out that the big problem the urban masses will face will be next year's elections. In general terms, the urban masses vote in opposition to the peasant masses. Our involvement in the elections is to bring awareness to the working class and the urban masses, about the current stage of the Peruvian revolution; specifically, of the agrarian revolution in progress. It is about revealing to the urban workers that there is an agrarian revolution underway, which they are unaware of. Given the nature of urban workers, who come from the countryside and are closely linked to agriculture by family and social relations, this proposal is not at all difficult.

The question is, with what tools do we participate in the elections? With the totally disorganised, although with the best traditions, group of comrades that make up the POR (*Partido Obrero Revolucionario* – Workers' Revolutionary Party), or with a much more viable, useful tool? Castroism in Peru, as in the rest of Latin America, has led to the emergence of revolutionary tendencies in the different parties and movements that claim to be of the people and the working class. We have the Rebel APRA, the social progressives, Leninist communists, Communist Youth, the former revolutionary APRA members who are not part of Rebel APRA and who are scattered throughout the territory, etc. They all reflect the healthy purpose of making the Peruvian revolution with revolutionary methods. They all want to be inspired by the Cuban revolution and to make a revolution that will lead us to socialism. Of the union of this vanguard the great tool that the

present Peruvian revolutionary movement lacks will emerge: the revolutionary party. It is precisely the absence of the revolutionary party the biggest obstacle we have to unite the agrarian revolution of Cusco to the other areas of the country and the agrarian revolution to the urban and of the working class revolution.

Thus we have before us three combined, irreducible tasks to develop the revolution in Peru. Namely: first, the development and organisation of the process of agrarian revolution with the slogan of land and the vote for the peasant. Second, combining the agrarian revolution with the working masses and urban struggles, bringing these to the condition of allies, and later leaders of the peasant masses. There's no better way to achieve this than to participate in the elections denouncing them as fraudulent for denying the vote to the majority of the population. Third, to unite the Castroist revolutionary vanguard, as a viable tool to fulfil the other tasks. The urgency of the Peruvian revolution forces to put forth as a propaganda slogan, for all this stage, the single party of the Peruvian revolution, the unity in action, democratically, through a single revolutionary party, of all the revolutionary groups around a clear revolutionary program. The slogan "Single Party of the Peruvian Revolution", the slogan of unity of the revolutionary groups, thus becomes a slogan of historic and fundamental importance to the development of the Peruvian revolution.

With fraternal greetings

CHAPTER II

Putsch or development of dual power?

The following letter, written after the first assault in December 1961, is an effort to alert the leading vanguard of the Peruvian revolution on the tremendous and nefarious pressure of theorists and groups encouraging the “revolutionary” putsch, whose arguments can be summarised as follows, in order to better understand the attempt by Nahuel Moreno:

1) With money to buy weapons the Peruvian revolution is guaranteed.

2) In Peru the revolution will be like the assault on the Moncada Barracks in Cuba in 1953, without any involvement of the mass organisations. Only after the barracks have been taken would the final stage of the agrarian revolution begin: the occupation of lands and the creation of a revolutionary party at national level.

3) Land occupations and peasant armed militias to defend these lands are a political crime because they alert the oligarchy and its armed forces and prevent surprise, as the basis of the success of the assault on the Moncada barracks of Peru.

4) There is no time to make or develop any revolutionary party in Peru. This will be organised as a result of armed action and not before, thanks to the emergence of a triumphant insurrectional “focus”.

In pages 52-55 we reproduce fragments of another letter by Moreno on the same date, addressed to Hugo Blanco, where he makes reference to issues and discussion of a more internal kind.

Buenos Aires, 5 January 1962

Dear friend (to Daniel Pereira),

You know that whenever I have to do a major criticism of an excellent comrade, I begin by highlighting his positive aspects. This is my habit, and the fact that you know it inhibits me to structure this letter, because if I start to congratulate you, and then I point out to you the two small tactical criticisms I have to do, I can give the impression that I’m using my well known method. Anyway, I have resolved to approach the problem head on, assuring you that in this case, the ponderings are what is essential and the criticism much less than secondary.

I will quote myself. When I informed some friends in front of Jose about your activity, I said: the performance was so brilliant and correct, that the history of Peruvian Trotskyism has a stage clearly marked by your arrival, just as before it had another after the arrival of Carlos, who initiates the creation of true Trotskyism. It will be said “before and after your arrival”, as they say “before and after Carlos”. From iron and coal you made steel. Specifically, you organised the party. This is your historical merit that your countrymen are the first to point out.

I think there have been two tactical errors. One is in connection to the united party. You have transformed a strategic objective, the united party, into a tactical objective, and have opposed it to the tactic of the united front, when the strategy must be linked to the tactic. The united party and the united front, concrete, immediate, revolutionary, are not contradictory, but complementary. By

the track of united fronts, we will arrive at the united party, and I'm telling you tactic of united front for immediate revolutionary tasks, begging you to not forget that there is a strategy and a general theory of the revolutionary united front, through whose correct application we will overcome the crisis of leadership of the revolutionary movement at continental and global scale, and the realisation of which is the United Peruvian Revolutionary Party.

The other error is in relation to the distribution of forces: you tended to cover the entire south and all of Cusco. I think the right thing is the inverse method, because we must focus our efforts and achieve cadres of worth who make their experience in common. If when we proletarianised ourselves here we had covered half the republic or all of San Miguel, many of our best cadres would have been lost. The fact the situation there is revolutionary does not change this experience but rather forces us to develop it more carefully and quickly. The faster we concentrate our efforts and future middle cadres, the faster we will be able to expand. In other words, between concentration and expansion there is a dialectical relationship, and without prior concentration, there is no possibility of expansion later. Let's concentrate on the bastion (Cusco) and from there expand.

Let's make an effort to be clear and to discuss

These two small observations and conversations with some friends have convinced me that it is necessary to begin the theoretical-political study of the Peruvian revolution, its stages, tasks and slogans. We have to make time in our daily activity to think, discuss and reach agreement on these issues.

Your opinion, like the opinion of all the other leaders of the Peruvian movement, has a great importance, although we disagree completely with it. Mine possibly, because of the distance, is completely wrong. Anyway it expresses the general opinion of all of us, and if we are wrong, we want you to make an effort to convince us without appealing to any kind of ideological terrorism.

We understand the situation and the revolutionary urgency you all are experiencing. But just as important as them, is the need for political clarity, as the revolutionary situation can drag you into an empirical performance. There are plenty of questions that may be left unanswered or left to chance or to the easy answer of "favourable objective conditions". You need to tell me if they had been raised and answered by you all, with the proverbial honesty that characterises you.

Let's suppose hypothetically, that, just like you suppose a putsch. takes place happily similar to the one Fidel attempted on Moncada, and that the reaction, in response, calls for a national unity cabinet with Belaúnde, Odría and Haya,¹ which resolves to initiate land reform in Cusco. That this cabinet adopts a resolution that every community or union that goes against the revolutionary putsch can now divide the land, and those who do not accept this situation, will be strafed, bombed and their fields burned. Wouldn't it be possible that the peasants, pressured by the *gamonales* and some of their Belaundist Odríalist and APRAist leaders, could adopt a neutral attitude and even unfriendly towards the coup? The question is fitting because counter-revolutionary war manuals are clear. The counter-revolutionary war to succeed must start from a premise and only one: to solve the most distressing problems of the population, keep them happy, satisfied.

But in the previous question I started from the premise that the coup was lucky. What if instead in that case a squealer warns of the entire military plan that the putsch will be based on? The revolutionary tendency that attempted it may lose absolutely everything.

The lack of answers to questions of this kind concerns us because there are thousands of them and they cannot be ignored.

1 **Fernando Belaúnde Terry** (1912-2002), leader and founder of the Popular Action Party, and later constitutional president of Peru between 1963 and 1968 when he was deposed by a military coup. **Manuel Arturo Odría Amoretti** (1896-1974), Peruvian military man and politician who became President of Peru between 1948 and 1956. **Victor Raul Haya de la Torre** (1895-1979) a Peruvian thinker and politician; founder of the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) and its historic leader. He is recognised as one of the most important political ideologues in Latin America and a key Peruvian and American political figure. [Translator's note.]

How we need to study the problem

We all agree that the slogan “land and vote for the peasant” has the same importance in the Peruvian revolution as the slogans “constituent assembly” and “peace” in the Russian revolution. With this slogan we have taken a big step forward, but we have not solved the organisational and political problems that its application implies.

In the Russian Revolution “constituent and peace” was permanently linked to the slogan “All Power to the Soviets”, and the October 1917 insurrection to the military organisation of the Soviets. In China the struggle against the Japanese and against Chiang Kai-shek was combined with the organisation of the revolutionary army and the peasant militias. The Cuban revolution was linked to the development of the 26 July Movement and the Rebel Army.

This is where the great problems of the Peruvian revolution begin. When in Peru we say “Land and vote for the peasantry”, the question arises: by what means and through what organisations will we achieve it? Through the guerrillas? The insurrectional putsch? Peasant and workers unions? The constituent assembly? If we opt for the insurrectional putsch, do we do it against the army or turning it in favour of the insurrection?

These problems cannot be solved in an astrological-tactical way around a date, saying, for example: “Everything must be done before the elections, it cannot be later”. It is not necessary to appeal to astrology for this, since it would be enough for a simple and correct tactical reason: the best time is before the fraudulent elections, denouncing them as such. There might also be another reason: the delay could mean that we beat them to the punch.

But these reasons can only be accepted as tactical reasons, and as such, subordinated to the strategy. In no way as a beginning date, because it would transform us into astrologers and not strategists of the class struggle.

The revolutionary situation may lead many to say: “land and vote for the peasant”, “before the elections should be the insurrection (not the guerrillas) because otherwise they beat us to the punch”. We, who believe more in revolutionary strategy than in astrology, let ourselves put forth to these comrades: please leave aside the dates until we clearly determine the stages, the strategy and the organisational-political slogans that will lead towards the insurrection.

Historical examples in relation to the rise of the mass movements and the open struggle

We all agree that in Peru the open struggle is in the immediate agenda. The problem is how it starts: Cuban style or like the Chinese Revolution? Or, perhaps, by an insurrectional coup in the Bolshevik style, as in the Russian revolution?

These questions cannot be answered unless we take into account the relationship between the open struggle and the class struggle, and the workers’ and peasants’ mobilisation. Because Cuba, as before China, has shown that the open struggle (one of many methods, but the most forceful and important of the class struggle), is not only reserved for the highest stage of the class struggle. It can be a good method in primary and even defensive stages. Let us study first, in the three successful revolutions, the relationship between the mass movement and the open struggle. In Russia (the most perfect and less costly revolution) armed struggle was used in a bloodless way in the last revolutionary stage, relying on the soviets (Military Committee), i.e. on the proletarian and peasant organisation and mass mobilisation. In China the open struggle begins with guerrilla tactics caused by the complete defeat of the proletariat at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek. This tactic was completely defeated in the South, and the communist party and army had to move to northern China. The open struggle in this revolution is doubly defensive, and not based on an organisation and mobilisation of the peasantry, but on the contrary, it tries to create it. The open struggle begins in China with workers in total defeat and as a defensive tactic.

Something similar happened in Cuba. The guerrillas began as an act of desperation amid the passivity and submission of the workers and peasants to Batista. As in China, the Cuban guerrillas achieved the support of the mass movement in last months, and that is why they only supported the army revolutionary, but without getting to create soviets and peasants' and workers' unions. The masses did not go further than supporting the army, and failed to create their own organisms.

If we compare these three revolutions, we find that the Russian used the open struggle as crowning of the mobilisation and organisation of the masses. The Chinese and Cuban used it to actively self-defend, but without any prior mobilisation of the mass movement; hence the defensive, evasive movement, of always receding guerrillas. When they militarily arise they reflect the class phenomenon on which they are based, i.e. the backward movement or defensive situation of the masses.

In Peru we believe there are very different from conditions from those of Cuba. When Fidel came out of the mountains there were no peasant unions, nor land occupations, or anything of the sort. This leads us to believe that in Peru, the open struggle arises in conditions more similar to those of Russia. In both revolutions there is massive organisation and mobilisation of the workers, especially agricultural; the masses are on the offensive.

The open struggle in Peru, as a result of what we say, cannot be an abstraction or a replica of the Cuban or Chinese, as this open struggle must take advantage very especially of the differences, and use them in the struggle itself, because a leader must know how to use all the favourable elements at his disposal. What kind of revolutionary leader would be the one who puts forth the open struggle and ignores the fact that in Peru the masses are on the offensive and organised?

That the Russian and Peruvian situations are alike does not mean they are equal. There are three bulk differences. The first is that in Russia the revolutionary vanguard was the proletariat, and in Peru is the peasantry. We must learn from the art of Lenin and Trotsky, who tended to avoid the insurrectional struggle until the countryside followed the city.

All previous European revolutions had failed because of the divorce between city and countryside. Couldn't the great danger of the Peruvian revolution be in reverse, i.e. that the city be used by imperialism and don't follow the countryside?

The other difference is that the democratic revolution (February 1917 revolution) did not stay in half-measures in Russia, but rather it was carried out through a popular uprising led by the working class, creating a dual power regime. In Peru neither a popular revolution has taken place, or an open, frank, dual power regime.

The third difference was that in Russia existed a formidable revolutionary party, whereas in Peru it does not.

Regardless of these important differences, the diagnosis for both revolutions is the same: the open struggle arises when the masses are on the rise and with a great development of their grassroots organisations.

Historical examples in relation to the revolutionary stages

We must be aware of two major problems that have to do with every revolution carried out so far: the peasant-worker, socialist triumph (Russian October's revolution) is not possible bypassing the democratic revolution (Russian February's revolution) and dual power.

These two stages of Russian revolution and of dual power, can take place in a distorted way, combined or abbreviated, but always have taken place in every revolutionary process.

The Cuban and Chinese revolutions have a combined way to fulfil these stages, but they fulfilled them. You know as well as we do the classic consequences of the Russian revolution. An ideological stage of creation of leaders, of programs. A political stage: the February insurrection,

dual power and the July Days (defeat of the bourgeois counter-revolution) and the October Revolution (politically socialist).

Thereafter it takes place: a stage of economic socialist revolution (nationalisation of industry and foreign trade); a military stage (civil war); a stage of economic and cultural construction and reconstruction after 1921.

The Chinese and Cuban revolutions began with the civil war, reversing the order of the Russian revolution. Civil war is a geographical expression of dual power, which in its development led to the triumph of the democratic revolution, transforming the geographical and military dual power into political dual power. The essential difference is that before the Cuban democratic revolution (defeat of Batista) civil war and dual power already existed, which tremendously facilitated the socialist-political revolution that opens with the political displacement of Urrutia.

The essential theoretical problems arising in Peru are two. What stage are we living? What is the best way to serve it? To be more precise, can we be or are we at the stage of the “February Revolution” and dual power? Have we already been through it? Is it posed a “Cuban style” civil war before the “February Revolution”? This forces me to get into the fundamental issue: the general character of the stage that we live in Peru and Latin America.

Character of the current stage of the Peruvian revolution

Regarding the democratic revolution I lean towards a bold thesis. We are already living this revolution, but through stages, and not in a single hit. Peru’s democratic revolution resembles the way the German revolution of 1918-19 lived its “July Days”. The current stage of democratic freedoms is the beginning of the “February revolution”, with the peculiarity that is a “February revolution” (democratic) made from the top, Bismarck’s style. I believe that all Latin America is living this Bismarckian stage of the democratic revolution led by the hand by Yankee imperialism, which pushes from the top to make formal democratic concessions to the mass movement as the best way to channel and control its revolutionary rise. This democratic revolution is a half democratic revolution, because it is not based on a popular insurrection that has crystallised into organs of power.

But just as we live a half democratic revolution, the same happens with dual power. The fabulous rise of the mass movement, essentially the peasantry, has only caused molecular embryos of dual power through communities and peasant unions that take possession of the land. We must be aware of this phenomenon: the stage we are experiencing is a sketch of dual power, we must develop it to the fullest until it acquires a fabulous development. The better and more intensely we achieve this the more easily we will reach the insurrection and our “October”. And there is no other way to get to the development of dual power than to push with all our might its most important and obvious manifestation: the seizure of land and the transformation of the lands taken into state, government, ownership, of the bodies that the peasant masses have already taken up, the peasant unions. This is the preparatory task of insurrection that is most important to us. If we fulfil it, the insurrection will be a cinch, and without major complications; it will be a tactical variant of enormous importance, as it was in the Russian revolution, but nothing more.

Along with this we should not rule out the possibility of a joint movement of the popular parties to complete the “February Revolution”. It is an arduous task that will force us to call on Belaundism, on Odriaism and even on APRA, to meet general and formal tasks: vote for the peasantry, call to a Constituent Assembly, etc., which will force us to intervene in the elections (in a positive way running in them, or boycotting them). A joint movement does not mean that we necessarily have to join the bourgeois parties, but on the contrary the specific and delimited in action agreements will surely lead us to increasingly move away from these parties. But the mere fact of presenting ourselves to elections, for example, means a certain unity in action.

It is very possible that if Haya de la Torre does not win the presidential elections, a Frondizist² first stage would open in Peru of some concessions to the mass movement and constant pressure from the *gamonales*. If we do not boycott the elections, this variant would help the mass movement, mainly in the cities, to make their experience with the role of the opportunistic leaderships carried by the hand by us.

Specifically, it is a matter of finding in the Peruvian reality by what means we can achieve that the masses, mainly urban, go beyond the stage of formal democratism, and of opportunistic leaders, parties and programs. I think we should use the elections to overcome that stage, and that we have a wonderful opportunity. Thus we would complete the “February Revolution”, exposing at the same time the opportunistic leaderships. Thus, we will move seamlessly to the worker’s and peasant’s revolution.

Will we be able to do it? I do not know, but those are our tasks and they take us out to the real insurrection. If this is the stage we are living, we have two combined tasks: to develop the dual power and to complete the democratic revolution to advance towards the worker’s and peasant’s revolution. We have to see how we combine these two intimately linked tasks with the open struggle. We can already start from a premise: of these two tasks the main one is to develop the dual power.

Dual power and open struggle

The Peruvian comrade reading us will say: “Everything is fine, but the army already clashes with the peasants and we sit on our rears”. Lamentably we cannot say, “Let’s reply to all provocations and repressions with insurrection”, but rather something much more modest: “Let’s not fail to respond to the provocations, but let’s be aware that the conditions for insurrection are not yet ripe; that is what we are preparing”.

This does not mean we should sit back. Let’s defend ourselves from repression, defeat it everywhere, let’s not fear to openly confront it, but let’s not yet call to the insurrection, to the struggle for power, until this is not ripe. That the army is mobilising to crush the peasants who legitimately took land? Let’s mobilise the peasants to resist the army!

It’s curious, but this approach means that we are for nothing less than the immediate realisation of open actions. But we consider these military actions necessary as part of the development of the molecular, atomised, dual power; i.e. as part of the takeover of land by the peasants.

To put it in other words: we are against joint actions, *coup d’états* and regional putsches, but we believe it is essential the immediate armed struggle to develop and consolidate the outbreaks of dual power and we will insist *ad nauseum* in taking land. Thus, all that leads to the strengthening of dual power (read takeover of land) we consider it formidable and anything that leads to abort this process we consider it an adventure. We must not do anything that is not properly accompanied and defended by the organisation or massive initiative of the peasantry. With a clarification: we must do locally everything the peasants and unions want, although at regional or national level they do not yet want it.

Guerrillas or peasant militias

There are comrades who believe the insurrectional problem is a mere technical problem: preparing a group of 50, 100 or 500 guerrillas. It would be a question of liberating an area as quickly as possible to develop a revolutionary force. The mass movement is less important, in this perspective, than the geographic or technical factor (prepared men and arms). For this reason the differences among these comrades are about the quantity, type of instruction or weapons required.

² It refers to **Arturo Frondizi** (1908-1995) a lawyer, journalist and Argentine politician, who was president of Argentina between 1958 and 1962, when he was overthrown by a military coup. His rule was characterised by an ideological shift towards a developmentalism oriented towards heavy industry as a result of the installation of multinationals. [Translator’s note.]

We disagree completely with this perspective. We are against organising guerrilla groups in Peru. We believe in developing, as opposed to guerrilla groups, peasant and partisan (or of the Revolutionary United Front) armed militias. The difference between the latter and the former is simple: the guerrilla is isolated, he prepares independently of the class struggle; militias instead are part of the union and political life, they do not leave it for a single minute. A comrade who belongs to the party union militia is still working in union or party activities and his membership in the militia is part of his union and political work.

I think I have to dwell a little more on this issue of differences, because it may give the impression that we depart from the open struggle. Unfortunately, the Chinese and Cuban revolutions have led to transform open struggle and guerrilla warfare into synonyms. We are against considering the guerrillas and the open struggle in Peru as a strategic objective, like the comrades who say: "If we achieve a great feat of arms, the masses, that are revolutionary, will run to us". We disagree with this prophecy. Therefore we favour, for example, that each trade union take land and defend it, or that in La Convencion Valley for the peasants to already impose their authority, with their militias, led by the Federation. But we are against calling it a "liberated zone" or that a government or army of liberation be constituted there. Specifically, we will develop the dual power and will defend to death its development, but we will not exhaust it. The Peasant Federation of La Convencion will have its radio, by hook or by crook; but the radio will not tell you that it belongs to a new government or a new army, but it will leave things as they are nationwide, while calling for the occupation of land and a land policy and vote for the peasant. The open struggle is part of the mobilisation of indigenous and peasant masses. These masses have voted to take lands or the radio, because they don't broadcast in Quechua, for example. Possibly, they won't even take the radio, but demand a minimum amount of programs or management of them. The open struggle thus becomes a means of land occupation and dual power. Open struggle to defend the occupation of land and the peasantry, yes! As a goal in itself, no! The party has the need to be highly tuned to the needs of the open struggle. It is like saying that the party has as its main task to publish a paper because the stage is agitational. If this were the case, the party should mount a brutal technical-agitational-human apparatus.

If we have entered the stage of development of dual power (land occupations) with its immediate consequence (open struggle), the party must do the same thing as when it faces an agitational or propaganda activity. That is, it must organise and adapt its apparatus. However, organising an apparatus does not mean that this apparatus is a strategic end by itself.

In all other cases, and especially in times of mass uprise, the party as a whole and its apparatuses must be placed at the service of the development of this uprise.

The militias, the unionisation and the peasant conference

To the slogan of guerrillas we have opposed another just as concrete, which is: peasant and partisan militias. But neither have we solved all problems with this new slogan. Will the peasant militias take power?

We believe not, we believe it is still raised to develop the peasant unionisation and the general slogan of Departmental and National Peasant Conference, for only then to raise the taking of power or to liberate a zone.

The immediate slogan, agitational and preparatory to the insurrection is: peasant, take land right now, unionise and form militias to defend your lands and your unions. And the propagandist slogan is: agrarian conferences!

This propagandist slogan is of fundamental importance because it means transforming the atomised, molecular, in general, regional or national dual power. It is for this reason a slogan for action in stages: every peasant federation of a valley or a region should call to a Conference to impose in their areas centralised militias, the taking of land and other more general or political

forms of dual power (control of radio stations, schools and other government institutions). By this means the propaganda slogan will continue to be enriched until it transforms into agitational, i.e., until the call to the general insurrection.

To complete the democratic revolution we take part in the elections

The argument that the Indians do not give any importance to the elections is very dangerous, because it takes a true fact in order to simplify a much more complex process: the democratic revolution and the exhaustion of the formal-democratic electoral experience.

The Indian does not vote and must vote; this is a very correct formal-democratic proposal. But it is linked to several others: on the one hand to the housing problem, the dual power; on the other to the development of formal democracy, i.e. the “February revolution”. I say “February revolution” because you know the theory and history of the revolutionary movement. By “February revolution” I understand the formal-democratic revolution, taken to its maximum expression. This raises again the issue of the formal-democratic experience, which has great importance for us as the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the working class have not overcome it yet. The people in general believe in strength in numbers against the interests of the exploiters. (It is formal-democratic because in it primes the formality of numbers). I do not think the urban masses of Peru have overcome the democratic fetishism, and what is worse, I don’t think the peasant masses have overcome this fetishism either. Ignoring is not overcoming; the peasants’ ignorance of the formal-democratic problem is a double-edged sword; because this fetishism (through lawyers, doctors, merchants, popular leaders, and students of the towns) can infiltrate the peasant movement. Specifically, I do not believe the peasantry have overcome these characters of the vote and that so far they were turning to the urban population, but from now on they will turn to the peasant movement. This battle is not yet won for us, because the peasantry has not yet overcome its formal-democratic stage. It is possible that the peasantry won’t live this stage or live it with unusual speed, but it is necessary to note that it has not yet lived it.

By the indirect route of the bond with their town or the provincial capital, the relationship between the peasant and formal-democratic revolution is restored. The petty bourgeois-democratic movement, with all the characters who believe in formal democracy or take advantage of it, will be projected towards the peasant movement. We must anticipate it.

When the peasant is unionised and takes land, he enters the path of revolutionary democracy, which is opposed, that is to say that is in contradiction with formal democracy. But this contradiction must be overcome and not ignored, making the urban and rural people to realise their ultimate experience on formal democracy.

Our Bolshevik approach cannot be any other than to develop until exhaustion the experience of the urban and rural masses with the formal democratic revolution, while at the same time we develop (closely linked to this experience) the revolutionary democracy, i.e. the outbreaks of dual power.

Nowadays, the above means that the urban vanguard, embarked on formal democracy, may overtake this and surpass itself. This task is of fundamental importance, because it is an indirect way of overcoming the bourgeois democratic stage (“February revolution” in the Russian calendar) among the peasants themselves.

As you see, I don’t dare to say “prevent”. Indeed, if we accelerate the urban overcoming of formal democracy, and at the same time we develop the embryos of dual power, it is very likely that the peasant will skip the bourgeois formal-democratic stage, since we will prevent the pressure of the city petty bourgeois on him.

If this is correct, it is essential to carefully combine urban with peasant work, electoral with insurrectional work (peasant unionisation, seizing of land and peasant militias).

The sectarian proposal is to confront and not develop the contradiction. Such is the case, for example, of those who say that the peasant unions that despise elections and the petty bourgeoisie of the cities are formidable, and others who say they are crap. After talks with Peruvian comrades, it seems that they have already decided without doubt for the “optimal” variant: to boycott the elections. None of the comrades has told me: “We are for the boycott”. However, the inflexible position of “insurrection before the elections” has an inevitable and logical electoral sequel: the boycott. You cannot prepare and calls for insurrection against the elections, and at the same time speculate with them. To date it has not been invented how to sit on two chairs, or how to eat with two spoons.

This policy, if it exists, goes against our criteria that we consider necessary to take part in the elections in order “to denounce them as fraudulent because the peasant does not vote”. Changing this strategy must be done with much more care, after a comprehensive analysis of the relationship of forces between urban and rural masses and of us with them.

You, as far as I know, have not thoroughly analysed the reasons for the shift of APRA (Rebel) from the insurrection to the electoral presentation against the united revolutionary front. Nor have you thoroughly analysed the campaign against Hugo Blanco. The explanation that the two phenomena are due to our strength is correct, but leaves us halfway. It is very possible that the two events are intimately related to class phenomena: formal petty bourgeois democracy wants to make its electoral experience and tries to wipe us out, who put roadblocks. That is the Rebel APRA (MIR)³ and Stalinism, when going against us are perhaps reflecting the vanguard of the formal-democratic petty bourgeoisie.

The two facts can prove that the electoral process, at least in the cities, is strengthening petty-bourgeois democracy. Let us think coldly on the balance of forces within the city of Cusco, between Stalinism, Rebel APRA and *Frente de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left Front – FIR). The Rebel APRA has approximately the same strength, and Stalinism is still much stronger than the FIR. In such a city could the insurrection be made or could it be applied, for example, the theory of the taking of the barracks? Would you be sure of a provisional win? Couldn't it be a tactic to help the insurrection much more, to call for the formation of an electoral front between the peasant's and workers' federations, the Communist Party and the Rebel APRA based on our program? Shouldn't we study what we do with Odriaism, Apraism and Belaundism to provoke a crisis in their popular grassroots? Don't you think this tactic will strengthen the insurrectionary possibilities much more than the stratospheric press releases on whether Hugo Blanco is a provocateur polemising against Stalinism? Don't you think this tactic is worthy of thought, on the basis of the methodological answer the following questions?:

- Whether we ignore the petty bourgeois urban masses and their parties?
- Whether we ignore the enormous weight these have on the peasantry?
- Whether we ignore the fact that operations such as those proposed by supporters of repeating the Moncada cannot be made in cities with a population against or in neutral position?
- Do we ignore all these factors, or otherwise we give them a great importance in the preparation of the insurrection?

To patiently educate the vanguard and fortify the party

Taking of lands, unionising the peasants, organising their militias and completing the democratic revolution are the very difficult tasks you have on the agenda. Who will call to carry them out and who will perform them? Why cannot it be any force other than a revolutionary party?

3 **Revolutionary Left Movement** (Spanish: *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* – MIR) was a Peruvian guerrilla group inspired by the Cuban Revolution, whose highest leader and founder was Luis de la Puente Uceda and his group APRA Rebelde, a splinter group from the APRA. [Translator's note.]

How do we achieve it in the short time we have left? Before or after the insurrection? Will it be our party?

We believe with you that the strategic line of united party and the tactic of revolutionary united front have given a programmatic response to these problems. Specifically, we don't believe that our current party, by itself, is capable of leading the insurrection. But we do believe in the revolutionary united front as the first stage of the single party and of development of our own party. The important thing is to nail down the character of the united front clearly defined in its objectives (which have to be ours) and in its organisation. Beware of ambiguity, since the revolutionary united front is the tool for the insurrection. We need to think very well the form and the program that we give to the revolutionary united front in order for it to serve as a party. This means that before calling for insurrection, we give a frontal battle in the mass organisations against centrist and opportunist currents; we must wipe out the opportunists of the mass parties before calling for the insurrection.

We should not believe that this is already achieved by the sympathy that the new leaders have towards our positions and leaders. The peasant masses must learn to distinguish the revolutionary united front, for its program and leaders, from the centrist currents. Organisationally this work will be safe when the revolutionary factions, perfectly organised and disciplined, have penetrated and triumphed in grassroots organisations, in the peasant unions; and the same revolutionary situation allows us to accomplish this in the short term. For this we must send agitators, propagandists and organisers to the peasant unions, to develop our slogans, our party and the revolutionary united front, sweeping all opportunist influence. Our leadership positions are useful only to the extent that they help this process in the grassroots. Therefore, as important as the other slogans to prepare the insurrection, is this: let's organise the party and the revolutionary united front in the grassroots.

But this is not all. Just as there is a danger of ignoring the urban for the peasant work or the electoral democratic for the insurrection, there is another just as serious as the previous one: allowing that the revolutionary vanguard become isolated in the popular, worker and peasant grassroots level.

The Cuban hurricane has raised among the best elements of the vanguard a possibility: the guerrilla war. These comrades are dazzled by this prospect. If we do not respond clearly to their ideas, we run the risk that they take distance from us, and go out on their own way, i.e., with their own guerrilla.

The revolutionary era raises in the masses the desire for home ownership, and the Cuban rise has caused a similar desire in the vanguard: their own guerrilla. This is correct, but the point is that while trying to recruit this vanguard we don't forget the mass movement, because it is not a question of going with the vanguard wherever they want to go, but rather to take it wherever we want and have to go. And this point of arrival is none other than the mass movement and mass organisations.

Any comrade who wants for open struggle, let him join the peasant and partisan militias. But let's not make a special body; let's not make an army separate from the class struggle.

If the comrades of the vanguard do not understand it, let us educate them. Let us establish the alliance between them and the mass movement and its organisations, patiently. Only this path will strengthen both, instead the other path separates the vanguard from the massive experience of the workers, and confuses the learning of the vanguard with the learning of the masses. Hence the slogan could not be simpler: let us recruit the vanguard so that they help, fortify and direct the development of dual power, and we prevent them from acting in an independent and adventurer way.

Moreover, time works in our favour, allowing us to reactivate Lenin's famous slogan of educating patiently the masses and the vanguard. By this path we will strengthen the party, the vanguard and colossal Peruvian masses.

My dear friend,

The tone of my letter (which I do not have time to correct), may seem controversial. If this is the case, it is wrong. I have no intention or motive to argue with anyone, least of all you.

Many of the positions that I fight, I present them as working hypotheses and not as definitive positions. It is only to alert against empiricism and putschism posing a number of problems and the methodology to address them. These problems are as follows, based on premise that already there are objective conditions to start an open struggle:

- Need to clarify the current stage of the Peruvian Revolution.
- Need for a general slogan to develop the embryos of dual power.
- Need to link the urban petty bourgeois movement to the peasant struggle.
- Need to link the electoral and democratic campaign to the insurrectional struggle as a means to expose the opportunist leaderships to the urban masses, and by this means, to the peasant masses.
- Need to link the revolutionary vanguard to the real struggles of the masses.

I again stress that we may possibly be confused, but we want to discuss it as soon as possible. We recognise that the magnitude of the problems posed is extremely serious. If this letter serves for us to agree only on that, I would feel very satisfied and, last but not least, if it also reminds you of our respect and admiration for your work.

A fraternal embrace.

CHAPTER III

Developing and centralising the agrarian revolution

Angel Bengochea, from the leadership of *Palabra Obrera*, travelled to Lima after the first raid, and returned pessimistic about the situation of the Peruvian party. Another meeting with Moreno in Lima was prepared, for which he wrote again to Pereyra.

28 February 1962

Dear friend (to Daniel Pereyra),

As usual I follow with the utmost attention the events in your country. I think you have the honour of leading the mass movement in our continent, with the exception for the undisputed leadership of Fidel and Che. When I say our continent I mean South America and not Latin America.

It occurs to me that with the beginning of the occupations in the Centre as well as the continuation of those already made in Cusco, my line of land occupations is fully confirmed. So I'm glad you recognise the error of your previous letter. The interesting thing is that you realise the methodological reasons that caused your mistake, because I believe that our discussions will continue, as our differences with regard to methods do not change by the fact that you've changed your position about the occupations of land. That you keep considering of secondary importance turning to the peasant areas, that you haven't learned Quechua. The fact that you do not realise that the problem of armament and money for the militias is resolved by you turning to organise the party, trade unions, militias and land occupations. The fact that you do not understand the initiative of the masses, centralised and used by a revolutionary party, is much richer in possibilities than a gathered group of geniuses. All these lead me to the conclusion that you have not yet understood the profound differences between us. Moreover, this is reflected in the overall conception of the Peruvian revolution. You keep considering that it will follow the general guidelines of the Cuban revolution in the Moncada variation, or at most, in the Sierra Maestra variation, and in this, we keep having profound differences.

Your acceptance of land occupations is due to a tactical retreat caused by reality, but the fact that in your previous letters you have not mentioned even in passing the workers' and peasants' organisations of the Peruvian masses, that they and their actions did not enter, not even formally, in your revolutionary schemes, says it all; at least for me. Anyway, I believe necessary to continue this dialog, which we will find useful.

The objective situation in your country shows signs of a change. The agrarian revolution intensifies and spreads. The fact that Hugo Blanco— the greatest revolutionary of the peasant masses, leaving aside that he is our comrade and friend— has become the great leader of the peasantry around Cusco and not only in the valleys of La Convencion and Lares, as well as of the Peasant Federation of Cusco, is the symptom of the ripening of the conditions and the extent of the agrarian revolution.

We note also that it extends throughout the country. In Puno, the emergence of a strong peasant unionisation with a Central, and some land occupations taking place. At the Centre, we also find land occupations by the communities, and this quantitative development, enables a qualitative leap since the arriving of the movement to the communities of the Centre connects with the mining proletariat of the Centre, which is an inseparable part thereof. Thus the peasant movement can encourage entry into action of the most centralised and militant working class in the country, which touches the most important imperialist and capitalist interests: the Cerro Pasco Corporation and the national miners.

This is how the revolutionary process can reach a new stage, leaping and combining the agrarian and democratic revolution with the workers', anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist. Everything seems to indicate it. May it be so! May it be that the revolutionary vanguard joins around a correct and clear program to provide awareness to this process and to encourage it! Otherwise, there is danger of delay it and its frustration.

Those are the fundamental facts of the present correlation of forces in the revolutionary camp, in the Peruvian working masses. But there are other important facts to keep in mind, that have to do with the electoral process and the urban masses, that are not part of the essence of the situation, but are worthy of consideration. Let us pause first on the essential factor.

Developing and centralising dual power in the countryside

If I had to define in a single sentence which is the fundamental, essential characteristic of this stage of the Peruvian revolution, I would not hesitate a moment: the development of dual power in the countryside. Indeed, land occupations are characterised fundamentally for causing this development.

You know as well as I do what dual power means. In Peru we find the highly revolutionary phenomenon of a molecular, atomised dual power, which is making giant strides, that of the peasant unions and communities occupying land and actually ruling in their communities and farms. The central power and of the landowners, is in fact, stirred and supplanted.

The revolutionary tasks cannot be other, given this panorama and this diagnosis, than two: developing the dual power in the countryside, trying to penetrate into the cities, and trying to centralise it. Extension and centralisation of dual power. In agitational language, it is a matter of developing peasant unions, peasant armed militias and land occupations by unions and agricultural communities.

The centralisation of this dual power by areas, localities, unions, forces us to raise the slogan of urgent departmental conferences of peasants, primarily where there is a vigorous process of agrarian revolution. These conferences should provide a central leadership to the dual power and the revolutionary process. This task is to be carried out immediately. If I raise departmental conferences, is due to the federative nature of your country, which consists of a series of diametrically opposite regions, with no racial, economic, language, etc. unity and only united administratively. (This is reflected in the lack of revolutionary unity). Either way this federative nature does not prevent a unity, a bond from region to region. Therefore throughout this stage we must educate the rural masses in a slogan: peasant power to centralise it nationwide, albeit in propagandist form, due to the inability to implement it immediately. Either way it is a slogan of fundamental importance.

These slogans have to do directly with the most urgent need of the peasants: land. But in any case, the peasants live in Peru, and the solution to their problems will not come only from their own action and the centralisation of this action, but from the progress of the class and political struggle throughout the country. In short, the Peruvian agrarian movement cannot be and is no stranger to Peruvian politics.

The great political problem we face right now is the elections. The peasantry, or its enlightened vanguard, we as revolutionary party, cannot fail to have a political response to this problem;

a response that helps answering the question of the agrarian revolution and the process of the Peruvian revolution. Our slogan and main task given the elections is to denounce them as a fraud, to the extent that the peasantry do not vote. It is a national shame that the majority of the working people, the peasantry, do not vote. Until they do so, every choice, for us, is fraudulent. Hence our slogan for elections is: *land and vote for the peasant. Down with fraud.*

This electoral problem raises the need for very careful tactics, because through it, we are addressing the very serious problem of linking the revolution in the countryside with the urban masses; precisely because they are, in a significant percentage, those who vote. How we combine our activity in the elections to bind ourselves to the experiences and the development of revolutionary consciousness among the masses is the great problem before us.

Fighting against the two frauds: the small and the large

We know we must fight for land to the peasant and the vote; we also know that elections are fraudulent as the Indians and peasants do not vote, and we denounce them as such. But this position is abstract, principled. It's a matter of knowing how to intervene in the elections to combat fraud and how we achieve unity with the urban masses. It is here that clearly emerges that there is going to be two types of fraud: the big, institutional fraud against the peasant by not allowing them to vote, and the small fraud, which the government will commit, along with its ally, the APRA, against those who can vote.

This is palpable, felt it, known by the urban masses of your country. It's no secret that the APRA and the government are a tiny minority, as it will be shown by the fact that the Coexistence (the alliance of APRA with President Manuel Prado Ugarteche) will lose by a great margin in the large cities; and if it wins, it will be thanks to the scandalous fraud in rural populations. Along with this, the APRA will use semi-fascist terror methods, through their famous "buffaloes"¹ which have transformed from the best of the Peruvian people into a bunch of bureaucrats and "lumpen" of the worst kind. We must therefore understand this small fraud and be the champions of free speech for the Peruvian urban people. Our slogan cannot be other than: *unite to prevent the fraud of the Coexistence.* This front against the small fraud should be an electoral tactic, since our strategic line is still attacking the elections as a whole as a gigantic fraud against most of the population.

How do we combine those two fights against these two frauds? Here is the crux of the matter. It occurs to me that we have two clearly specified lines. On the one hand, as historical line for this stage: land occupations, unionisation and peasant militias, along with departmental agrarian conferences where we will put forth the slogan of land and vote for the peasant and the fraudulent nature of the current elections. On the other hand, we still denounce these elections for their fraudulent nature in favour of the Coexistence and we propose a united front of everyone, Belaundists, Odriaists, the National Liberation Front, to defend against "buffalo" attacks and the fraud of the APRA government.

Our line has to be to invite these united fronts against the small fraud and the worker organisations to the departmental conferences of the peasant movement, where the definitive electoral tactics of the Peruvian mass movement will be resolved, mainly of the large masses and of its vanguard. In particular, we must fight for holding departmental Peasant Conferences and that from them a policy emerges against the elections that hold the greatest resonance among the urban population. Our immediate goals: to be the champions for the achievement of these peasant conferences, and make all those who are against the small fraud, even in urban areas who vote, attend these conferences to submit to its discipline, mainly the workers' movement with its organisations.

1 "Buffaloes" is the name attributed to paramilitary squads connected to the APRA Party in Peru, originating in the 1930s. Buffaloes were used to intimidate leftist trade unionists and intellectuals. The groups also organized local protection rackets. In the coastal plantation areas, buffaloes engaged in violent strike-breaking. [Translator's note.]

Our proposal in these peasant conferences should be: demand from the government a constituent assembly with vote for the entire population over 18 years, for it to finally solve the problem of land and vote for the peasant as well as the nationalisation of the major mining operations and public services, including the banks.

This is how we can combine the most urgent democratic tasks— land and vote for the peasant— with the most important democratic historical tasks for the country: Constituent Assembly, nationalisation of banks, public services and the most important mining operations.

There can be no insurrection without revolutionary party

The most impatient friends, seeing the revolutionary process in your country, its massive and extraordinary character, are quick to draw a conclusion: let's make the revolution now, let's hurry, there's no time to lose. These comrades confuse their impatience— caused, as we shall see, by deep social causes— with reality. For this purpose they have developed a theory: that military, armed action creates everything: the party, the cadres, the leaders, the revolution itself. Huge mistake. All of this is created by the action of the masses.

The historical example is the Cuban and Chinese revolutions. There, according to them, the action of a small revolutionary group created everything. I've never seen a more dangerous and risky false statement (although unfortunately encouraged by the very leadership of the Cuban Revolution). Cuban and Chinese revolutions were initiated on their guerrilla way by formidable, for their tradition and strength, organisations. The Chinese Communist Party, although defeated by Chang Kai-shek thanks to its mistakes, was a formidable apparatus and party closely linked to the masses when it began its great march northward, besides of having the support of the USSR. The 26 of July Movement was also a colossal movement of displaced sections of the large landed bourgeoisie and of the entire urban petty bourgeoisie that politically had inherited the movement of Eduardo Chibas. Castro was a great leader of the urban masses before launching the attack on Moncada. Needless to say what he was after. Without this prestige and this previous support he could not have done anything.

Here, as always we have to look at our old mistakes, and their nuances. Our old assertion that without a revolutionary Marxist party the revolution cannot be made has proven to be false, absolutely false. But the conclusion that a mass party is not necessary to make it or start it, it is neither correct nor it is a necessary conclusion from our self-criticism. They are two completely different issues. That a revolutionary party is not indispensable to begin the insurrection is a correct statement; that no party is needed and that it is enough with a committed group is totally incorrect. At least the historical experience proves it. There has not been to date any insurrectional struggle that has not taken place on the basis of a great mass party and the support of large social sectors from the beginning, mainly from the beginning, which is the hardest moment.

Peru lacks precisely this strong revolutionary party, of masses, with known leaders. But the funny thing is that there are exceptional conditions to achieve them, that you are determined not to see. It is pitiful. Nor do you see that time works in our favour and not against us. Structuring this party is a possibility we should exploit and achieve to the maximum before any insurrectionary action. Moreover, given our influence and clarity the conditions exist to achieve that this party have the characteristics of revolutionary Marxist, i.e. of highly developed revolutionary consciousness, which will allow a less expensive insurrectional process, not empirical.

The revolutionary united front, the revolutionary united party, and the two vanguards

To achieve this party to prepare and unleash the revolution, it is essential to unite all revolutionary tendencies. We should be the champions of this unity. The FIR is a magnificent

example. We must be aware that it should become the united party, and that without it, disciplined, revolutionary, and with prestige in the mass movement, we cannot unleash any insurrectional process. We can achieve it in the short term if we are not sectarian and develop the revolutionary united front with all the currents flourishing at this time.

Here a very dangerous problem arises. These revolutionary currents occur primarily within the old APRA militants of 30-40 years of age, frustrated by APRA, but without losing their enthusiasm and revolutionary perspectives and linked to the superstructural political movement, the student movement and small sections of the workers' vanguard. Due to their social location, urban and half-classless, they push the most for the theory of the "committed group" capable of doing the insurrection alone, and do not give any importance to building the indispensable tool which is the party. But most importantly right now, as a result of the explosive revolutionary situation, a whole new vanguard is emerging, which does not connect with the revolutionary tradition of your country. This new vanguard is the revolutionary indigenous and peasant or worker activists of the new process initiated with the land occupations, the peasant unionisation and the worker unionisation. This new vanguard is politically virgin, given that the old vanguard, except for two or three pioneers such as Hugo Blanco, has left them to their own experience, too busy arguing and dividing about how and where to make the insurrection.

I categorically state that the future revolutionary party will get its best cadres from this new vanguard, and that the old vanguard coming from APRA and the student movement will only fulfil a role— enormously positive— if it links itself to the new vanguard, to educate it, to bond with it and, at the same time, to learn from it.

This is our great historical task: to build the party politically linking ourselves to this new vanguard and turning out back, if necessary, to the old vanguard, if not useful for this task. But to do this we must understand the agrarian revolution, and be the champions of it.

With warm greetings

CHAPTER IV

The revolutionary rise will put everyone in their place

On 12 April, 1962 the second assault took place, and on 28 April Pereyra, Martorell and other participants were arrested. Moreno had travelled to La Paz and on 5 May he was arrested. He returned to Argentina and in July was jailed again until December. In late June the leadership of *Palabra Obrera* sent Bengochea and other comrades to Cuba to request aid for Hugo Blanco. We have not found the particular recipient of this letter.

La Paz, 15 June 1962

My dear friend,

Here we are confused by the madness and irresponsibility that some of the FIR's best leaders committed. It's incredible to see the irresponsibility that some fabulous revolutionary Marxist leaders, like Daniel Pereyra, are led to when due to revolutionary desperation they leave the most elementary principles of our methodology. At first glance the fall and prosecution of the best FIR leaders has caused us a crushing defeat. I think that, on the contrary, this is a defeat of the putschist wing, linked to the lumpen elements and that as such, with many disappointments and personal misfortunes, painfully, forced by circumstances, dawns a correct methodology, as well as a program and appropriate revolutionary action.

Specifically, I consider it an appalling disgrace, but with luck. Hugo Blanco, forced by circumstances and without the pressure of underclass revolutionaries from the tenements of Cusco (who never saw a peasant of La Convencion or learned Quechua) will be forced to give free rein to his intuitive or empirical methods, and this will give him and will give us the triumph. In other words, Hugo Blanco, to hide from the police and to avoid getting a police provocation, will have to appeal to the peasant movement, will have to begin and develop land occupations, will have to defend himself, even in armed form, from police attacks and will have to seek support from the unions and peasants in the area. In deplorable conditions, without preparation, without anything, he will be forced to confront the reaction with the methods of the class struggle, developing dual power in depth. He can only survive if he uses these methods. I believe so much in the class struggle that I'm sure he will avoid falling into the hands of the police, precisely because he is the only one who has not been involved with putschist and insurrectionary speculation, and has always been doing the agrarian revolution. This revolutionary politics will now pay off and will force him to increasingly appeal to these methods, particularly at this moment when he is pursued.

It is pitiful that the adventures of our putschist, adventurer friends have prevented a careful preparation of the political, organisational help to the process of agrarian revolution headed by Hugo Blanco, and that is how this colossal leader of our movement and the agrarian revolution will find himself isolated from help when he most needs it. And this despite all the help we sent for the movement and for him. But unfortunately, on the pretext that such aid was too little to make the

insurrection according to plan “X” or “Z” prepared in a cafe in Cusco, or some tea rooms or luxury apartment in Lima, never came to him, despite that it was very important.

In any case I think it was beneficial for Hugo Blanco to be left free to his own fate. In this case “free” has two meanings: free to the driving forces of the agrarian revolution, to the only support of the unsuspected forces of the mobilisation and initiative of the agrarian masses of La Convencion, Lares valleys and Cusco, and afterwards to those of all Peru; free also from the lumpen, intellectuals, international or Latin American café revolutionaries, stratospheric revolutionaries tied to the characterisation of the Latin American revolution, or that there is a revolutionary situation in Peru, without ever really linking with the organisations or understanding the language and the problems of the masses. Having been freed of these “honest and fabulous revolutionaries”, who were sending messages to their comrades to prepare to be in government in the short term of a few months, was fortunate for Hugo Blanco. Reconciliation took place; the divorce was completed. The Peruvian revolution found its natural course, which is the revolutionary rise of the masses with their grassroots organisations and their undisputed leader at the helm: Hugo Blanco.

We must help Hugo Blanco and his vanguard movement with full awareness that he will become an undisputed leader of masses of the entire South American continent and in that capacity he will exceed even Juliao, the leader of the peasant leagues of north eastern Brazil. We must bear in mind that Hugo Blanco is a complete and conscious revolutionary, well above what once were Fidel Castro and Che, to what is added he is ours. You, still impressed by the disaster of the adventure made, do not realise how the process is going to unfold. I insist: Hugo Blanco, in three or four months becomes an undisputed leader of masses, known throughout Peru and throughout the continent, separated from his putschist friends, as he will be forced to use the methods that we have been advocating without success for months: to develop the agrarian revolution, responding to armed actions with other armed actions; to defend himself but in an armed way. This policy will be explosive and within months will capitalise on the prestige of Hugo Blanco, who will become our first leader of Latin American masses.

This is a historical fact and we must prepare to help this process as much as possible, mainly before it is too late. We have to send all possible help before it becomes almost impossible due to the development of the struggle. Within two months, no later than three months such help must reach him if we do not want it to arrive late.

Our immediate goal should be to immediately help Hugo Blanco and his movement. By this means we will demonstrate in facts that our revolutionary conception is coherent and possible and not the irresponsible of “action for action sake”, separated from the movement of the masses. We will show thus to our friends, the Castroists, that the heroic movement of them, only serves to sink us, discredit us, and burn out the best Latin American cadres in adventures separate from the mass movement. The immediate aid to Hugo Blanco, I consider it a fundamental, decisive problem, as important as at a given time to vote for or against an insurrection. So you must understand this.

This problem of immediate help, before it's too late, to Hugo Blanco, raises another problem, the place of Bolivia. Saying place, I refer not to its geographical place, but to our characterisation of the country. I do not know whether because I am linked to Bolivia by indestructible sentimental ties (for twenty years now I have had friends and am intimately linked to everything Bolivian), the truth is that I believe that Bolivia has a socialist revolution unfinished, and to me is the most progressive country in South America. This gives us enormous possibilities to achieve from that country propaganda support to the Peruvian Revolution, and if necessary, also for Argentina. Moreover, the Bolivian revolution will be launched by encouraging these revolutions, given its nature of land-locked country. This overall conception, that gives great strategic value to Bolivia for its characterisation of most progressive country in South America, has great importance for any coherent plan. It faces, as strategy, against any café-made “plan” based on geographic or technical considerations, as for example, to consider Brazil (because of its advanced means of production) as an ideal vehicle for an intense propaganda in favour of the Peruvian revolution and Hugo Blanco, or tomorrow of the revolution in Argentina itself. We must put aside, once and for all, the revolutionary

speculation of café or “technical”, the ridiculous study of maps and of productions to look back to the mass movement and position, based on that look, the countries and the importance they have for us.

With fraternal greetings.

CHAPTER V

Deplorable and heroic: a putschist adventure

Although it is dated from La Paz, Moreno by then had spent several months in the Central Department of the Federal Police in Buenos Aires. Hugo Blanco was already isolated in Cusco. The “expropriating apparatus” was named the “group Tupac Amaru”, having adopted that name in order not to compromise the POR/ FIR. We have been unable to locate the Peruvian journalist’s name.

La Paz, 15 November 1962

Dear Sir,

I acknowledge receipt of your extensive, analytical and informative letter, as well as the valuable articles and newspaper clippings about recent events that shook your country carried out by the so called “red gang”. From the careful study of these materials I have formed an opinion about the facts, despite the distance and ignorance of the scenario and its main actors. I beg you to keep in mind the latter to excuse any appreciation or reference unintentionally chaffing or hurting the personality or political behaviour of Peruvian revolutionary militants or leaders whom I respect without personally knowing.

Nevertheless theoretical and political criticism must be relentless, and the revolutionaries we have no better way to learn than from our own mistakes, if we do not capitulate to the sometimes painful task of discovering them. The putschist adventure, personally heroic and politically deplorable, which dragged a sector of the best leadership cadres of the Peruvian revolution to an insurrectionary action to prevent fraudulent elections called by the Coexistence can only be understood if it is placed in the general frame of Latin America since the triumph of the Cuban revolution and the rise of masses caused by it across the continent, and consequently, to the varying degrees of assimilation by the revolutionary vanguard of our countries of their theoretical and methodological contributions.

This is a subject I have already developed in other works, and what you ask me has to do precisely with this last aspect, referring in particular and specific form to the Peruvian revolutionary vanguard. Let’s go then to the point:

Undoubtedly the extraordinary group of militants who make up the governing body of the FIR has played a historical role by providing the Peruvian vanguard with a correct revolutionary program and a political tool to carry it out. This program, summarised in the slogan of land and vote for the peasant, rests on two fundamental pillars: on one hand, the agrarian revolution through the peasant unionisation, the occupation of land and peasant militias to defend them; and on the other hand the demand of Constituent Assembly to legalise the peasant vote and incorporate to the political struggles of the country the seven million workers banned today, joining their struggle to that of the urban masses facing hunger and lack of housing.

The political tool, the FIR, has come to be, correctly, the immediate political step that, by programmatically uniting the revolutionary currents, will liquidate the atomisation and dispersion

of the vanguard and enable a single national leadership for the broadest sectors of the peasant and urban masses. This gigantic task, the most revolutionary for being the most correct, acknowledges its champions in the POR leaders, including the future putschists. They deserve, above anyone else, this truly historical merit, regardless that from their midst has emerged an adventurer current, the Tupac Amaru group, which with its disastrous conception of revolutionary action has dealt a serious blow to the organisational and political strategy of the POR and FIR.

Right now there is no more important discussion among the Peruvian revolutionaries than the in depth discussion that should be made about the social and political causes that made possible the emergence in the ranks of the FIR of this putschist and adventurer current, the Tupac Amaru group, individually heroic, but politically deplorable. First things first.

Building a revolutionary workers' party is a relatively easy task in Peru, if one takes into account the high degree of politicisation and radicalisation of the masses and their vanguard cadres. Claiming to be of the "far left" in Peru is almost the same as saying Peronist in Argentina or MNRist in Bolivia. But at the same time it is an extremely difficult task, if one considers that the Peruvian economy itself determines an industrial proletariat not very highly developed and of very diverse degrees of concentration. This is the "social base of education of the modern worker" and not racial factors or characteristics. But this consideration, far from being an argument to deny the possibility and necessity of the workers' party and leadership, forces us, in contrast, to a huge organisation, propaganda and political education effort on the cadres in close fusion with the actual and concrete course of the class struggle.

This was the extraordinarily positive step undertaken by the direction of the Peruvian POR, but unfortunately interrupted by the tremendous pressure of external and internal factors. The first we have already pointed out (Cuba, the rise in Latin America, etc.), and among the latter we emphasise now one of great theoretical importance: the critical point of the transformation of a tendency into a party.

Is this critical point a quantitative or qualitative issue? When does a tendency become a party? Can a tendency assume party tasks and fulfil them successfully? Was the Peruvian POR a tendency or a party?

We believe that the rise of the masses and the Peruvian revolutionary process did not give time to the tendency made set by the POR to take the qualitative leap, i.e., to establish itself as a party politically and organisationally.

It is in the context of this dramatic transition from tendency to party, in which the emergence of two diametrically opposed views takes place: one weak, in training, linked to the class and its methodology, which we call workers, and another adventurer and putschist. In Hugo Blanco and Che Pereyra both conceptions have taken shape. Hugo Blanco, leader of unionisation and occupation of lands, is proved impregnable after three military sieges of annihilation, protected in his "favourable zone" by 70,000 peasants who "listen and look" for him.

Che Pereyra, viciously tortured and currently imprisoned in El Fronton, seems to be the best speaker and leader of the second. His theoretical formation, his experience as trade union leader, his high political level that made him, as everyone agrees, the champion of the organisation of the POR in its first stage, did not prevent him falling victim to a pressure that he was unable to understand and dominate: the sweeping, undigested, unassimilated pressure of Castroism over vast sectors of the Peruvian and continental vanguard. No other explanation in the fact that Che Pereyra could, at some point, drag behind him a current, the Tupac Amaru group, which underestimated the class struggle, the necessity and possibility of the party and the experience and education of the masses, would vindicate above all the role of "creative action", supplanting the true revolutionary methodology by empiricism and typical petty bourgeois impressionism.

When Che Pereyra undertakes the task of preventing the fraudulent elections of the Coexistence through insurrectional action, he enters a dynamic that makes him lose all touch with reality. He ignores the role of Hugo Blanco as leader of the peasant revolution based in unionisation, land occupation and militias (not guerrillas), in short, based on the axis and engine

of the class struggle in the country; he confuses the contempt of the vanguard for the elections, with the overcoming of the same by the urban and peasant masses and he ignores the importance of the political tool which would tie together the vanguard and give the mass movement a single direction.

The global experience of putschism, from Blanquism to the latest versions of Latin American “Castroism” (Venezuela, Paraguay, Colombia) has already taught us what this dynamic leads to. It is easy to fathom, therefore, even at a distance, the inner maelstrom that usually surrounds an adventurer and putschist current.

The cult of “action” and “technical means” leads to the ridiculous. It believes the assault on the Moncada barracks is the revolutionary trigger at any time, and that insurrectionary masses line up behind the insurgent “focus” that is able to supplant the “hollow words” of the theoreticians by the compelling reasons of an armed group, and analyses the prospects of success not by the party’s relations with the vanguard and of this with the class, but by the money and guns available. Insensibly it supplants the political discipline of cadres, by a kind of ideological terrorism in a frantic effort to weld with saliva the cracks of the lack of political unity and heterogeneity of its elements. The political characterisations, based on objective facts of party militancy and tradition, give way to subjective ratings, especially in the field of courage, boldness, etc. The most primitive empiricism gives rise to a false command voice: “doing it the Cuban way”; and riding such horse, it leads to schismatic factionalism seated on personal and friendly relations.

What could be the social foundation of this current, and where can it find its breeding ground? There is only one social layer or sub-class both the more influential or numerous with the higher degree of chronic economic crisis of the regime: the underclass elements that the working class and the petty bourgeoisie, victim of unemployment and lack of prospects, thrust into field of revolution. Marx designated them with the name “lumpen proletariat”.

In Peru there is a high degree of urban unemployment and a poor petty bourgeoisie heavily radicalised. It is fertile ground for finding the desperate revolutionary who only brings his share of courage. Lamentably Che Pereyra and his group, pressured by the success of the Cuban revolution and the explosive misery of the Peruvian masses sought support and were callously nurtured by the “lumpen” layers in their tactical and strategic differences with the weak workers leadership of the POR, endeavouring to make a qualitative leap from tendency to party. Hence the total disaster, organisational and political, that the journalistic chronicle has taken care to inform us. This is the political explanation, and not this or that technical or conspiratorial “error”, although they existed and were aggravating factors of the case.

This is precisely why the putschist adventure is heroic and deplorable. Heroic by the sacrifice of their heads and magnificent cadres, and deplorable, politically speaking, for having struck a blow, almost mortal, to the true revolutionary workers’ leadership, which was structuring the party and implementing a national strategy, of which Hugo Blanco is the most conclusive expression and the most effective promise.

Now, this new and magnificent revolutionary leadership of the POR chaired by Hugo Blanco, bonded to the class struggle of the city and mainly the Peruvian countryside, must assimilate this blow and overcome the organisational and political disaster caused by the adventurers and putschists, restoring the transmission belt through which the POR and the FIR will extend throughout the country the effective and impregnable leadership of the peasant leader.

And the own Che Pereyra, hero and martyr of the putschist adventure, may also contribute to this transmission belt the crucial link of his self-criticism, which will help hundreds of revolutionaries in Peru and Latin America, not yet assimilated to authentic workers’ and revolutionary parties, to let go of Fidel’s illustrious beard, and melt into the struggle of the exploited classes, real and concrete, as they take place in our countries, with their virtues and weaknesses.

With best regards.

CHAPTER VI

Once again: let's urgently help Hugo Blanco

Although it has been dated in La Paz, Moreno, who had been released from prison on 31 December, wrote from Buenos Aires. Pereyra was imprisoned in El Fronton and therefore Moreno mentions him in the third person. The 11 November of the previous year had seen the first confrontation between the Civil Guard and Hugo Blanco's armed group, Pucyura, where a policeman had died.

La Paz, 23 February 1963

My dear friend (to Daniel Pereira),

Yesterday I had a chance to read two of your letters to a relative. In one of them, from several months ago, you raise that the Peruvian revolution is equal, identical, to the Cuban revolution. In the other, recent, you point out that the best way to help Hugo Blanco and his movement is opening a second front. Regarding your first statement, I am satisfied with everything that I told you by letter and personally, since I will not discuss further this absurd claim. The second is new and boggles my mind, although it responds to a strict logic consistent with your theoretical characterisation of the character of the Peruvian revolution. You keep raising the same thing as a year ago; the facts have not have left you, unfortunately, any experience.

It is no accident that the tone and the reports of your letters be the opposite by the vertex to the one by the comrades who near you agree with my characterisation. While you see nothing but success and that Hugo Blanco consolidates, is getting stronger, and is getting increasingly better, the comrades who agree with my analysis, indicate that Hugo Blanco is sick, some of his most intimate comrades leave him, his movement is weakened and he as well, the situation is critical and both his person and his movement require a very urgent assistance; in short, the situation is very dangerous.

At first glance either they or you are mad, as mor disparate reports, even with the same date, are impossible to find. The explanation is simple, though. Both are right, but each political conception gives importance to the reports according to its conception. It is no coincidence that you at no time in any of your letters, not by any chance, have you asked for help to Hugo Blanco and his movement. It's sad, but true. Instead, my friends of tendency, those who think like me, do nothing but ask for help, for solidarity with Hugo Blanco and his movement. They are two different conceptions. For you, Hugo Blanco and his movement consolidate when there are bank robberies ("zero hour of the Peruvian revolution"), attacks to barracks, land occupations, peasant unionisation, i.e. when actions of whatever type take place. For us only two kinds of actions consolidate Hugo Blanco and his movement. I insist, two types exclusively: the actions of the masses (land occupations and peasant unionisation), and the hard, slow work of strengthening the FIR and of structuring a single revolutionary party. Everything else brutally weakens Hugo Blanco because it subtracts magnificent vanguard elements from these two tasks.

As you see more and more individual and collective actions in Peru, you reach the conclusion that Hugo Blanco and his movement are increasingly better. These actions are a reflection of the rising revolutionary process: distorted in individual actions, direct expression in mass mobilisations. You do not care about checking how things are going at the other pole for Hugo Blanco to consolidate: the structuring of a revolutionary party that surround, support and direct the upward course of the Peruvian revolution, with Hugo Blanco and his movement at the head. Thus, you have not taken any notice of how badly Hugo Blanco is in every sense, nor you care to help him directly.

However the weakness of Hugo Blanco is a shriek, no longer a cry, it is the finger on the sore that tells us: the rise of the masses without a revolutionary party is steam released into the air, which is lost, since even its greatest leader is left without help, without direct support.

Of these two conceptions, two reporting systems, two diametrically opposed political lines arise. You propose to open a second front, like some of your friends linked to our known Che Pereyra. We disagree with the strategy, the tactics, and even the name of second front. This term means that Hugo is a first front. I don't know what justification you have to name first front what Hugo does. For us, what Hugo has is a great revolutionary movement of the peasant masses, without any of the characteristics of a first, second, or third front. If it is a matter of following on the footsteps of Hugo, we agree to open hundreds of fronts.

We do not want a dispute over names and labels. Specifically, if when you call to build a second front you mean to do what Hugo Blanco did, we are in complete agreement, we believe that this is what needs to be done. We have to unionise, occupy land, recruit peasant leaders for the FIR, edit a newspaper or get a radio to broadcast to all of Peru, we have to organise peasant militias of the FIR, efforts should be made to organise a united political party of the Peruvian revolution. If so it is, let's open as many fronts as valleys and rural areas are in Peru. Is this the second front? We know that it isn't, for you this is not the second front. What you want is a military front, or a group of magnificent petty bourgeois or lumpen revolutionaries, who studied theoretically and practically Mao and Che Guevara, who never unionised a peasant, who never stood by a peasant who took his land or fought his *gamonal*, who were always studying the opening fronts. With these elements it is a question of starting a military battle, guerrilla type, against the reactionary forces, supported by the peasantry. This is the second front that you prepare, which like all others, as the "zero hour" of the Peruvian revolution, zero to the nth degree, the subzero and post zero have all failed and will continue to fail.

Meanwhile, the only "no front", the only place without speculation on the revolution, where revolutionary activists mingled with the peasants, unionising, taking land, precariously organising militias, is the Cusco, La Convencion. And its leader, Hugo Blanco, continues the example and will continue without your direct help because you are too busy to help, opening the "second front", in training yesterday, the day before yesterday getting millions of soles, and the day before the day before yesterday getting the necessary weapons. Meanwhile Hugo Blanco is weakening as a person and as an organisation, because you are still discussing how to open the second front.

As for us, from here and from there, we tell you: enough of playing to the revolution, enough of being indeed political criminals; there is no task more urgent, immediate, and vital than to help Hugo Blanco in all areas. Enough of the speculations of café, of lumpen and petty bourgeois about second fronts, enough please! The facts speak for themselves, let's start helping Hugo Blanco to consolidate what has already begun and let's definitively help him by structuring the united party of the Peruvian revolution, the FIR or a new unitary organisation.

The second, third, fourth, fifth, and the thousand fronts that the Peruvian masses will open — not by the pedants, conceited heroes, the great organisers of small disasters, which we do not know why look over their shoulder to the everyday heroes who have the merit of not having directed any disaster to date— can only be consolidated just as Hugo Blanco would if we consolidate the revolutionary party, otherwise they will be left weakened even when the whole mass movement support them.

In other words, the current weakness of Hugo Blanco, among his apparent strength is due to a contradiction: the rise of the movement of the peasant masses, the inexistence of a Peruvian revolutionary party. This contradiction must be overcome as urgently as possible to save Hugo Blanco and his movement, to save all future Hugo Blancos. We cannot tell Hugo Blanco, leader of the agrarian masses, of the Peruvian revolution, to wait until we consolidate the FIR to save him. We must be aware of this historic necessity: only consolidating the FIR and building a revolutionary party will we avoid future distressing situations, as Hugo Blanco is currently facing. But right now, immediately, we must give all necessary assistance to Hugo Blanco, because his health, his freedom of action, his activity, already belong to the Peruvian masses and one defeat, a fall in any of these conditions is a colossal triumph of the reaction and a fabulous defeat of the Peruvian masses.

Therefore it is inescapable as a rallying cry for immediate action in the ongoing process of Peruvian revolution the following slogan: immediate, urgent, help to Hugo Blanco. Let's consolidate and structure a single united party of the Peruvian revolution, let's join the FIR and submit ourselves to the iron discipline of Hugo Blanco's organisation. Anyone opening a second front or any other alike tactical variation, outside the discipline of FIR is a traitor to Hugo Blanco and the movement, because they risk and endanger his future.

As you can see, my dear friend, we continue to disagree radically.

With cordial greetings.

CHAPTER VII

Without party (centralised, disciplined and with mass influence) there is no revolution

The letter is addressed to one of the members of the putschist sector, most probably the own Daniel Pereyra, who remained imprisoned in El Fronton, although he is named in the third person. Probably the “29 May” had been a group that claimed the guerrilla action in the city of Jauja which was led by lieutenant Francisco Vallejos, and which was quickly annihilated.

Buenos Aires, 25 March 1963

My dearest friend,

I received with much delay the FIR’s newspaper of December last year. I was tremendously impressed by the progress made by the only conscious revolutionary leadership that exists in your country. At the same time I found very useful to read the Manifesto of the Unified Movement of Tupac Amaru and 29 May. This reading gave me a deplorable, pitiful impression. It is a truly deplorable manifesto that does not clarify anything in any sense and that confuses everything. Woe be the militant of vanguard guided by this manifesto. He will only be led to disasters or at the most to casual successes carried by his own inspiration. I understand that a manifesto does not have to be the perfect expression of a thorough analysis of the objective situation. I agree that a manifesto of two or more organisations must express the commonalities and not the brilliant analysis of the most enlightened comrades. But for a manifesto to be useful, even lowering it to the level of the less enlightened or capable comrades and organisations, it must fulfil a fundamental requirement: it must put forth unequivocally the essential task or tasks facing a given situation. If your manifest gave us the essential tasks imposed by the current stage of the Peruvian revolution, I would approve of it, although its analysis or drafting were not very deep. What is sad is that, the manifesto, in my opinion, only raises generalities, platitudes and false or confusing positions in the best cases. Regrettable from every point of view. You will tell me that I use a lot of adjectives and prove little. I will try to prove the correctness of my descriptions.

A manifesto giving tasks without previous characterisation and not proposing tasks from its characterisation

After a series of generalities about the world, Latin America, and Peru, which have nothing to do with the current process of class struggle in your country, you categorically say that your movement “whose prestige has been earned in combat action, makes an appeal to all those who identify with our experience and our program and especially to the young peasants, workers and students, inviting them to contact us and swell our ranks, or to form combat teams in every estate, in every factory, every university, every city, town or neighbourhood, training and preparing for revolutionary action, attentive to the circumstances and requirements of this decisive hour, able to take action at any time, and ready to fight to the final triumph of our people”.

Shortly before it had said: “However it is not premature to consider now the need for unity of the revolutionary left that our people yearn, proclaiming our willingness not to skip any effort towards this end”. As much as we seek in your manifesto, there are no other slogans than those already mentioned. Specifically you propose: to swell your ranks, to form combat teams, and the unity of the revolutionary left. There is not a single slogan more throughout the manifesto. That’s your entire program for the Peruvian vanguard and masses. Or I should say, for the revolutionary vanguard the best solution you offer is to enter your ranks and form combat teams, and for the satisfaction of the people, to unify the revolutionary left.

Before finishing and as if self-criticising for a manifesto that does not say a word about the colossal struggles of the Peruvian masses at present, you let go of the following: “The peasant unionisation and the takeover of land are now the leading revolutionary action of the masses. The land, central problem of the Peruvian revolution, is also the weakest link in the chain that threatens our people. The peasant movement whose vanguard is in the Central Cusco and Cusco is getting ready to break it”. Not a word more, nor less, on the fabulous agrarian revolution and its leader Hugo Blanco, that for the authors of the manifesto do not exist, since not even by chance mentions his name. This is it. From this analysis emerges not a single slogan, a single task, needless to say, a program. Specifically, we find ourselves with a manifesto that pulls its “program” out of nothing, out of the programmatic aspirations of the authors and not of an analysis of this stage of the class struggle in Peru, and that from the rickety end characterisation of the class struggle does not draw a truly programmatic conclusion. What has this to do with Marxism? Absolutely nothing.

Marxism does just the opposite: it characterises what is fundamental and decisive, that is, it determines the stage of the class struggle is going through at any given moment, and only on that basis it adopts the essential tasks. The authors of the manifesto have proceeded in reverse: first they raise the tasks unrelated to the analysis of the stage of the class struggle that it is living, later, much later, at the end of the manifesto and modest as alms, they provide a characterisation in one sentence of the current stage of the class struggle in the country. But — God forbid! — without raising a single task from this characterisation!

A program for Peru or the Belgian Congo?

It could not be otherwise. A program that doesn’t start from the situation of the class struggle in your country at this time, which only takes into account your aspirations, your desires, your trajectory, your policies, can be applied to any country in the world more or less similar.

I’ve done the test, and I found the following: “Our Unified Movement Lumumba and 29 July, whose prestige has been earned in combat action, makes an appeal to all those who identify with our experience and our program and especially to the young peasants, workers and students, inviting them to contact us and swell our ranks, or to form combat teams in every farm, in every factory, every university, every city, town or neighbourhood, training and preparing for revolutionary action, attentive to the circumstances and requirements of this decisive hour, able to take action at any time, and ready to fight to the final triumph of our Congolese people”. And if the Congolese vanguard is dissatisfied with such a formidably empty and full of platitudes program, you can provide the final recipe: “However it is not premature to consider now the need for unity of the revolutionary left that our people Congolese yearn, proclaiming our willingness not to skip any effort towards to this end”.

You have achieved, in this age of standardization, the maximum: the unique revolutionary manifesto, perfect, useful for any country on earth. Only missing are the indications to be used as packaged foods like: “Keep in a cool place”. I can already imagine the instructions on the cover: First, the header is modified and the adjective that identifies the people added: Congolese, Andorran, Salvadoran, and is ready for use. Second, do not make the mistake of naming any organisation or mass leader of the country concerned because the manifesto stops being useful, it may cause controversy, cause problems and prevent revolutionary action. Third, the least specific references

to the situation of the masses of the country, much better for the usefulness of the manifesto. Fourth, in case of doubt it must appeal to an Spanish refugee in any of the neighbouring countries as advisor, since thus, there is a significant advantage to implement the manifesto — he does not know specifically any country in the world, including Spain, and he knows even less the country where the formula is to be applied, allowing him to withstand the troublesome pressures of the class of the country. With this manifesto and a Spaniard who has never been in the country in which it is to be applied, success is guaranteed.

As we see, the perfect revolutionary formula. Pity that it has one drawback: it only works to bring heroic comrades to terrible defeats.

Are a party and a program necessary?

Reading your manifesto a question assails us: do you give any importance to the party and the program? Because you are categorical when you say: “Our strength lies in our unwavering will to fight to the end, and in the growing and irrepressible revolutionary process that has begun”. This formulation is within the context of a manifesto that gives no specific program and what it gives is pitiful and doesn’t even mention the need for the revolutionary party. That is to say, this is not a drafting error, but rather an expression that bares the true thinking of the authors of the manifesto. For them whether to have a program or not, and whether it is correct or not, just like having a revolutionary party, is a problem of fifth importance, since their strength resides in the will of themselves and in the course of the objective situation.

Unfortunately, it is not so, nor can it be. Between the will, subjective factor, and the objective situation, there is a bridge, a unit, which is precisely the program with its flesh and bones: the party. If the program is incorrect or the party does not exist, a dynamic unity between the revolutionary will and the objective situation will not be achieved, but rather shock, friction and violent contradictions; specifically a death struggle between the will and the objective situation is established. If the program is correct and the party exists, by contrast, between the revolutionary will and the objective situation a dialectical, but harmonious, relationship occurs as the two poles, the objective and subjective are precisely joined by the program and the party, as both belong as poles to a higher unity. The fact that you have forgotten the intermediary between your will and the objective situation, believing that only the revolutionary will, without a revolutionary program and party, is sufficient to bind, to reach the objective situation has a name in terms of methodology: voluntarism and subjectivism; and another in politics: revolutionary sectarianism. Hence we say the opposite of you: your huge weakness is reflected in your lack of program and revolutionary party, within a fabulous revolutionary situation.

How we unite the revolutionary vanguard

Let me now turn to the two essential parts of your “program”, since we have to call it something. On the one hand, “it is not premature to consider now the need for unity of the revolutionary left that our people yearn, proclaiming our willingness not to skip any effort towards this end”, but on the other hand you “appeal to all to all those who identify with our experience and our program” to “swell our ranks, or to form combat teams”.

I am not afraid of you setting two immediate prospects: strengthening your organisation on the one hand, and the unity of the revolutionary left on the other. What worries me is, by what means will you achieve the unity of the left? You say that everything will be resolved by the course of revolutionary action. Like any general truth this is of little use. The problem is still posed: how and why do we propose the unity of the revolutionary left? Your manifesto— it isn’t one of its lesser faults— does not even answer this question. Here it slips again the problem of problems: the program and the revolutionary party. We can only raise the unity of the revolutionary left on a serious, responsible and useful for the revolution basis if we propose a minimum revolutionary

program, if we point out clearly what the revolutionary core tasks of this stage of the Peruvian revolution are. Any other unity, which does not start from this minimum program by and for revolutionary action, is doomed to failure, will be a spurious unity, without possibilities of success that will cause new divisions and adventures. On the contrary, a programmatic unity covering the essential aspects of revolutionary work at this time of the Peruvian revolution will be a big step forward. But to have a program of this kind it is imperative to make a general analysis of the current stage of the class struggle in your country. Exactly what your manifesto does not.

And what about self-criticism?

It is very possible that you will tell us: “we propose unity on the same basis as the incorporation into our movement” to those who “identify with our trajectory and our program”. You say very proudly that your “reputation has been earned in combat action”.

This statement is a half-truth, i.e. a doubly dangerous lie and therefore methodologically criminal. Because it is true that all the comrades who signed the manifesto are heroes and as such earned prestige, but this is a half-truth. The whole truth, i.e. the authentic truth, which the manifesto neither mentions, nor touches on, nor completes, is the following, even if it hurts us: your reputation has been earned in failed combat actions, comprehensively defeated by the reaction in combat actions that led to tragic defeats. If we do not say that, we are lying to the masses and the vanguard. That is the truth and we must say it, because from this truth and only from it we can draw some correct conclusions. Because your method is a little funny, if it were not unconsciously hypocritical.

The truth, dear and heroic comrades, is that the two groupings signatories of the manifesto come from suffering two colossal defeats at the hands of the reaction. Must we say it or not? Surely we must say it, because otherwise we practice the worst system of lying that exists, that of the semi truths.

In this particular case, behind all the sympathy aroused by your colossal heroism, hides the true result of this heroism: the total failure of your actions and the absolute success in them of the reaction.

It is therefore essential, if you vindicate your “trajectory and program”, a comprehensive self-critical analysis, without fear. You need to answer the question: why, if your path and program are correct, has the reaction won? What is the reason for such dramatic failures? I clarify that I am not a triumphalist. I do not believe in principle that because the reaction defeated you, you are not right and anyone who succeeds is. It is not our method of thinking to turn any discussion about the successes. But neither is the opposite method ours: not to take any account of the results of the actions and policies. On the contrary, our analysis begins with the results of the actions and from there rises to a full understanding of these results. So we completely disagree with your method of half-truths, of not determining the outcome of your actions and of having as only program of your manifesto to accept your “experience and program” without prior self-critical analysis of this “trajectory and program”.

The originality of the Cuban Revolution

You point out that in Peru there is an “obvious difficulty to build a genuine revolutionary leadership, as previous and necessary condition to the conquest of political power”.

“This explains, without idealizing it and at the same time giving its true historical significance, the originality of the Cuban revolution, whose example we intend to continue without servility, adapting it to the reality of Peru”.

This quote has an appreciable advantage, serves as a sweep off or a scrubbing, i.e. for any interpretation. In the best case it means that the revolution in Cuba was made without a

revolutionary Marxist party, Bolshevik in the strictest sense of the term. We believe that if so you are quite right, provided we are aware that the originality of the Cuban revolution is a repeated originality, since all the revolutions of the post war period have occurred on that basis, i.e. without revolutionary Marxist parties at their head: China, North Korea, Indochina, previously Yugoslavia, now Algeria and to some extent Bolivia or the Arab movement. Cuba shows the same phenomenon: successful revolutions without the direction of a revolutionary Marxist party. There is within these phenomena certain originality, since all these revolutionary movements have only been led by communist parties if they have been geographically close to Russia or China: Yugoslavia, China itself, North Korea, Indochina. In all the other cases, Cuba is the most relevant example: the revolutionary movements have been led by petty bourgeois nationalist or democratic movements, without any organic link with the communist parties and sometimes in a fight with the communist parties of their respective countries.

We have our doubts that this is what you want to say. There is a theory in vogue in the revolutionary movement, which makes the same formulation as you. This theory, encouraged and promulgated by the colossal leadership of Fidel and Che, is this: it is enough with an armed revolutionary group that takes action, and relies on the working population. By this fact it transforms in the course of actions in the armed revolutionary party that will lead to the triumph of the revolution. From your quote it cannot be inferred that this is your position, but neither can the opposite. Your acts, as well as the rest of the manifesto, would confirm that this is your position. Just in case we open the umbrella and clarify, in our opinion, what the originality of the Cuban revolution is, something you do not do.

All triumphant revolutions in this post-war period have shown that revolutionary Marxists parties are not necessary to bring these revolutions to victory, but have also demonstrated unequivocally the following: First, that armed actions can only be initiated by parties and leaders of great strength recognised by the mass movement of their countries and totally disciplined and centralised. Second, that armed actions can be launched only with strong support of certain social classes or of a distorted expression of these classes: friendly states.

Because if we say that the originality of the Cuban, Chinese or Algerian revolution lies in the fact that they were possible without revolutionary Marxist leaderships, we must also say that they were only possible thanks to those two minimum conditions. All examples show that these two minimum conditions: centralised and disciplined party with leaders of great influence, direct or indirect support of important social sectors and friendly neighbouring states were present in all cases.

If we start in Europe we see that the norm is met. In France and Italy, the guerrillas had the overwhelming support of the Allies at war, and were initiated by all parties and all social classes of these countries. Yugoslavia, which may seem an exception because it received almost no direct help from the allies in arms or food, as the Italians and the French, is a confirmation to the rule: the imperialist war and being supported by the Allies, (one of sectors at war) meant a colossal indirect aid, independently of the fact that the Yugoslav communist Party was a very strong party in Yugoslavia supported by the working class, middle class and the peasantry for its guerrilla warfare. Spain is a good example of demonstration by the absurd of this norm. Here all the guerrillas' attempts were made by groups of audacious people, without the support of any organisation recognised by either the mass movement or any friendly neighbouring or nearby state. The result is obvious: Franco still rules and the guerrillas did not even tickle him, although they existed.

China is the best example of what we are saying. The Communist Party of China, which was not an armed group but a powerful and colossal mass party, although it had just suffered a terrible defeat, had to survive in their guerrilla warfare because in the South it had been totally annihilated. That is, trying to develop its revolutionary army isolated from the Russian border condemned it to failure and extinction. Thanks to this direct contact with Russia it could survive and then succeed. We can say the same of North Korea and Indochina. Algeria in Africa proves the rule again; before beginning the armed struggle the MLN (National Liberation Movement) is already a powerful

armed organisation of a colossal party: the MNA (Algerian National Movement) of Messali Hadj and on behalf of this movement and this leader it starts the insurrection and armed struggle with the full support of Egypt and subsequently Morocco and Tunisia. Without such support, before and after, it would not have been able to do anything.

The Cuban revolution does not belie this rule. Its originality is nothing but confirmed by:

First: The 26 of July Movement and its leader Fidel Castro have strength and prestige before and not after Moncada, before and not after Sierra Maestra. This prestige has been earned by fully taking part in Cuban political struggles, including the elections. Fidel Castro had been a candidate.

Second: The 26 of July Movement was a colossal centralised and tightly disciplined party before and not after Sierra Maestra.

Third: The 26 of July Movement and Fidel Castro were undisputed leaders of the large petty bourgeois masses of the cities and allies and leaders of important sectors of the oligarchy and the Cuban bourgeoisie, before and not after Moncada and Sierra Maestra.

Fourth: The 26 of July Movement and its leader Fidel Castro had direct support from Venezuela, Costa Rica and important sectors of Yankee imperialism itself, the Latin American bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This is the cause of a neutral, hesitant policy on the part of yankee imperialism against the 26 of July Movement and the guerrillas.

Fifth: The 26 of July Movement and Fidel Castro raised the great historical task of the Cuban people at the time: the overthrow of Batista and achievement of a democratic republic, and to achieve these objectives tended to rely on the most exploited region and sectors of the population, i.e., eastern Cuba and the Guajiros [peasants].

Needless to say we are to death for these rules and we believe that where we can apply them we must do so expeditiously. Frankly we do not see where they are happening, and even much less that they happen in Peru. Because where is there a party and leader recognised by the masses in Peru, to call to the armed struggle? Where is there a tightly disciplined and centralised party? Where are the powerful national social classes that support the party and leader of the masses? Where are the neighbouring states that fully support this movement and can manage to neutralize Yankee imperialism? Where are the leaders and mass parties supported by colossal social forces to call to remedy the large and fundamental historical tasks posed for the masses of your country? Frankly, we don't see them anywhere. We do see a regional leader and some masses, the peasants of Cusco, but we see neither a party nor a national leader, and what is essential: we see no centralised party with its leader, its national class, program and its support in neighbouring states.

In other words, we do not see anywhere how you can apply without "servility" the originality of the Cuban revolution to the reality of Peru. We see the opposite, countless groups that claim to be of the revolution, without any weight or leader of masses at a national level, without any characteristic of great party and no iron discipline. Specifically, we see none of the conditions that enabled the 26 of July to start the guerrilla struggle. Instead of warning about these profound differences between the originality of the Cuban revolution and your country that make them totally different, without almost any similar trait, you say the opposite: you intend to follow their guidelines, but of course, without servility! For you the originality of the Cuban revolution is just one: not having party and providing direction to the revolution through armed struggle. Besides unilateral, this "originality" is false because the Cuban revolution, like all others, has demonstrated conclusively that without a party and leader recognised by the masses, strong, tightly centralised, potentially successful armed guerrilla action cannot be started.

But if this is not your opinion and you agree with my characterisation about the "originality" of the Cuban revolution, I propose an agreement: do not to call to any action, or prepare the revolutionary vanguard for an action until you have a party and leader recognised by the mass movement of Peru (beware, I say actions of the vanguard and not of the masses).

The originality of the Peruvian Revolution

After following you so long through the revolutionary stratosphere, we have forgotten the great Peruvian revolution of flesh and blood, which is being carried out by the masses of your country. It is time we land and study specifically the precise characteristics of your revolution; to study precisely the Peruvian revolution. I have two apologies for arriving so late in this letter to the real revolution: first, I had to follow you in your stratospheric flight; second, that in all my previous letters I have dealt comprehensively with the real, authentic revolution that the Peruvian masses are carrying out.

You say that without servility you intend to apply the originality of the Cuban revolution. We believe that the two revolutions are so little similar that we do not know what aspect of the Cuban revolution you intend to implement or develop. The most important specific features of the Peruvian revolution are opposed by the vertex to the Cuban revolution. Let's see if this is not the case. These features can be determined as four at this time:

First: The revolution in Peru has started as a gigantic mobilisation and organisation of the peasantry, as opposed to the Cuban revolution, which did not witness in its beginnings, or in its development a gigantic mobilisation and organisation of the working masses, including the peasant masses. Specifically, in Peru, before starting possible armed actions, we have an entire process of agrarian revolution and organisation of the peasant masses. In Cuba we had a process of democratic revolution, mainly led by the urban petty bourgeoisie.

Second, the Peruvian revolution already begun has no party organised and centralised at the national level recognised by the mass movement, nor a national leader in such conditions. The Cuban revolution had from the beginning a highly centralised party and an undisputed leader and recognised by the mass movement, the 26 of July and Fidel Castro.

Third: As a result of the foregoing in Peru the revolutionary rise adopts characteristics of development of atomised, molecular dual power, without any centralisation, since there are no mass organisations on a national scale, or vanguard party to centralise the mass movement. In Cuba the revolutionary process did not have a molecular, sporadic nature, but was completely controlled and centralised from the beginning by the mass party: the 26 of July Movement.

Fourth: In Peru there is a revolutionary divorce between urban and agrarian masses, they march at a different beat, with the urban masses being much behind. This causes a complete disharmony between the two spontaneous vanguards occurring in the mass movement. The peasant vanguard accompanies and leads the process of agrarian revolution; the urban vanguard, petty bourgeois, student and semi-classless, desperate because of the revolutionary delay of the city, wants to replace this objective situation with heroic revolutionary actions of the vanguard, separated from the working masses of the country and the city.

No matter how hard we strive we cannot find other essential characteristics, specific to the Peruvian revolution at this stage. This does not mean that we ignore the other specific problems of the Peruvian revolution: the Indian problem, semi-feudal relations, etc., but they all have to do with the specificity of the Peruvian structure and not the character of this stage of the revolution. I beg you to excuse me if I do not dwell on these and other peculiarities of Peru, to abbreviate this letter. Yet, I would like to dwell, because it is critical to understand your manifesto and your true position, in the fourth specific characteristic of my summary.

Let us build the Revolutionary Party accompanying the actions of the masses

A sad reality, which is the Achilles heel at this stage of the Peruvian revolution, you want to convert it into a revolutionary virtue. When you say that "mass actions, however revolutionary they are, do not replace but rather demand concrete and decisive action of the vanguard, whose assistance is essential to ensure the unity and purpose of the revolutionary process and without

whose leadership it is in danger of wasting its energies in chaotic action, and eventually be defeated”, you are confusing all problems, or something more serious still: you are sanctifying the current situation of your country.

We do not need much effort to verify that in your country currently there are mass actions and actions of the vanguard on their own account, separate, without any contact between them. Precisely you, the signatories of the manifesto, are an example of the latter type of action. Your actions have no ties with the mobilisation and organisation of the Peruvian working masses. They are pure and simple actions of the vanguard. When you say then that you “demand concrete and decisive action of the vanguard”, without self-criticism, but rather, vindicating your trajectory and program, you logically mean (nothing else can be understood) that you advise the vanguard to continue doing such actions. Something more serious yet, only those actions of the vanguard would ensure “the unity and purpose of the revolutionary process” and give a certain “direction” to the mass movement.

Here we have come to the most serious specific key of the present Peruvian revolutionary process. You want to replace the party with a substitute: the independent actions of the revolutionary vanguard. An impossibility. Because you are right: the actions of the masses without a leadership wear the energies of these and transform them sooner or later into a “chaotic” action of masses. But leadership and centralisation of the mass movement is not achieved with independent actions of the revolutionary vanguard, but precisely through the party.

The role of the revolutionary party is precisely that: to centralise, to prevent the chaotic action of the mass movement. This is why all successful revolutions had since the initiation of armed struggle, highly organised and centralised mass parties. It could not be otherwise, since the revolutionary triumph and development demand a well-organised and centralised effort, not at all chaotic, since its inception. Moreover, the party to centralise and organise the chaos of the mass movement needs to devote itself fully to penetrate the mass movement, to direct its actions. This prevents it and transforms into a crime that the party, when there are actions raised by the mass movement, set itself another type of action. Because it has enough work to organise and centralise the chaos to waste time on other type of pure actions.

We say this because your mistake is twofold. First, you ignore the fact that the vanguard, left to its own devices, does not centralise, or organise the mass movement since only the vanguard organised in a party can fulfil this essential task. Second, that this vanguard organised in party, to be able to centralise and organise the actions of the mass movement, must act within a single type of action and only one, without diversifying into other activities or tasks which are not the actions of the mass movement itself. If the vanguard organises its own actions, if it becomes independent of the mass movement, its organisations and actions, it is logical that the mass movement continue decentralised and chaos increases more and more. Precisely this is the unfortunate case of your country: the revolutionary vanguard of the cities has launched itself and plans to continue launching into isolated, heroic actions, in order to give centralisation and organisation to the revolutionary movement of the masses, without understanding that these isolated actions, however heroic they may be, push them away from the centralisation and authentic organisation of the mass movement.

To say it without euphemisms, all signatories of the manifesto would be infinitely more useful to the centralisation and organisation of the mass movement if since one or two years ago they had followed the example of Hugo Blanco, than with the heroic actions they performed. Tamayo, Pereyra or Martorell next to Hugo Blanco for the last year and a half would have meant that the Peruvian revolution would stand much stronger, since the Peruvian agrarian masses, current vanguard of the revolution, would had counted with highly qualified comrades to centralise and organise their struggles. Instead we have magnificent heroes who in these times of agrarian revolution in Peru are engaged in writing memoirs or taking solace that their actions sounded the “zero hour” of the Peruvian revolution, forced by the reaction to contemplate the course of a fabulous revolution, which they have contemplated and continue contemplating, now hopelessly, for not having understood that to centralise and organise it, this revolution needed a party and a

vanguard that understood it, and that understanding it, it would integrate into the same course of the revolution.

The great specific misfortune of the Peruvian revolution is just that. The magnificent urban revolutionary vanguard is very busy discussing how to organise combat groups, which revolutionary group to join, or how to overturn the regime and build the party through revolutionary action, without understanding that the agrarian masses have already begun this revolutionary action and that without them, acting as a bridge through the party, it will be left divorced from the magnificent revolutionary vanguard of the cities, and it will also be impossible to link the two processes: the agrarian revolution with the subsequent mobilisation of the urban masses. Let us be aware: the peasant mobilisation may end in chaos and every action of the urban vanguard by itself, independent, not linked to organisations or mobilisations of the working masses, especially peasants, means a setback of the Peruvian revolutionary movement, means a delay in the creation of a revolutionary party that will unite, organise and centralise with its intervention the revolutionary action of the Peruvian peasants and later the urban masses. Every independent action of the vanguard, every element of vanguard that does not fight for organising a united revolutionary party, and works towards linking to the organisations and actions of the masses themselves, is an adventurer or a sectarian, a mortal danger to the Peruvian revolution.

We do not speak of other revolutions that may have begun without any actions of the mass movement, and then the vanguard and its party embark on a desperate defensive struggle to make the working masses react. Here we also have a single type of action, of the vanguard and its party, but this is because the masses have not yet come into action. When they come into action and organisation, the only real, positive task of the revolutionary vanguard and its party, if it exists (else, it must urgently be created), is to bind itself, accompany, organise, centralise the actions and the organisations the mass movement itself. Any other action, any other place of work, is an involuntary crime against the revolutionary process, as it removes officers from the only real battlefield and prevents the concentration forces in the true battleground, to use metaphors in vogue.

Conclusion: Only the revolutionary party will solve the distressing problems of the Peruvian revolution

We have arrived at the end of this letter. It is time for me to define, to specify, the character of your manifesto and at the same time to point out which are the most important tasks for the revolutionary vanguard elements of your country.

I think your manifesto is the best example of this petty bourgeois, semi-lumpen vanguard of the cities of Peru, who in their revolutionary desperation when feeling the delay of the urban working masses of Peru, have embarked on making the revolution on their own account, in as many battle groups as cities, neighbourhoods and universities are there in Peru. This vanguard ignores the colossal importance that it can have organising itself in a revolutionary party and linking to the peasant movement and its vanguard. This vanguard ignores that in each of them there is a potential Hugo Blanco. This vanguard does not perceive what it would mean for imperialism and the reaction, hundred, thousand, ten thousand Hugo Blancos. This vanguard have not yet realised that Hugo Blanco is part of it, but that he broke with the ridiculous strategy of “creating the revolutionary party through actions” isolated from the masses, to devote himself to accompany and organise the revolutionary masses, which has yielded many more and better benefits to Hugo Blanco himself and the masses. This desperate vanguard, which refuses to see the path of Hugo Blanco, is what inspires your manifesto, as devoid as this vanguard of coherence and revolutionary methodology, and offering as only garment for so much theoretical, programmatic orphanhood, their boundless courage and heroism as well as their encyclopaedic ignorance of the actual actions of the Peruvian masses.

It is time to react. The victory is at hand. It is a matter of merging with the Peruvian revolutionary masses. It is a matter of organising and centralising the organisation and actions of the mass movement. It is a matter of organising and centralising the revolutionary vanguard about the tasks we set ourselves in our vanguard role of the actions of the mass movement. It is a matter of following the example of Hugo Blanco but through a revolutionary party and not through individual actions, although in doubt we prefer that everyone merge into the mass movement. And anyone who refuses to follow this course we must denounce him as an adventurer who unwittingly serves the interests of the reaction, because he stifles, prevents the binding of chlorate with sulphuric acid of the Peruvian revolution, of the agrarian masses in revolutionary process with this extraordinary revolutionary vanguard of the cities.

You, in whose ranks are active great revolutionary heroes, among them the largest figure of Latin American workers' movement that I have known, should use that heroism for self-criticism of your actions and your manifesto. Only thus will you fulfil the true role of conscious agents of the Peruvian and Latin American revolution, true builders of the power of the masses and the vanguard; in other words, builders of unions, militias and land occupations, builders of the revolutionary party. If this were the case, it would be the happiest day of my life. I will have won my oldest friend for our old program and method, enriched, not denied, by the new experiences.

My most fraternal embrace.

CHAPTER VIII

The FIR already is the revolutionary party

This letter was written between April and May 1963. On 15 May the arrest of Hugo Blanco finally took place. For security reasons Moreno says “we Chileans”.

[No date]

Dear friends,

You can't imagine with how much joy I received the third issue of “*Revolución Peruana*” [“Peruvian Revolution”], and some news from you along with your fraternal greeting. All this confirmed me that the FIR is, undoubtedly, the embryo of the only tool the Peruvian people lack to achieve their triumph: the revolutionary party. Everything indicates that your leadership visibly matures. From the form and content of the newspaper, through the political declaration and the appointment of Hugo Blanco as president, as well as your correspondence requesting help for the undisputed leader of the Peruvian masses, along with the colossal slogan of the newspaper: “Peasant of Peru, follow the example of Chaupimayo”, prove that your management and organisation mature in every sense: theoretically, propagandistically, in organisation and tactical sense. What a joy! It is the best news we could have.

A formidable political declaration

You demonstrate, mainly in the political declaration, that you understand what the most important task for the vanguard of the Peruvian revolution is. It is just the opposite of other documents published in the same newspaper: the joint manifesto of Tupac Amaru and 29 of May.

Rarely have I seen so well synthesised a concrete situation as in point 5 of your declaration: “The FIR recognises that at present the peasant movement is at the forefront of the masses. Hence it will concentrate most of its energies in welding with the agrarian movement. It will contribute with its cadres to accelerate the process of peasant unionisation on a national scale with the purpose of endowing it with a revolutionary leadership and close the doors to reformism”. Perfect in every way, including pointing the great danger of reformism, since this is not yet defeated and this struggle will be the most difficult and subtle, i.e. to defeat the Stalinists and the Christian Democrats in the consciousness of the masses. This thesis number 5, as the entire newspaper, gives us the fundamental pattern of our core, essential, activity at this time in Peru: to develop unionisation and the peasant movement, to fuse ourselves to it, to centralise nationwide — I would also say regional— and to combat within the movement of masses, the reformist currents. In these few lines is the essence of the revolutionary program at this moment in Peru.

Beware the fourth thesis

In my opinion the fourth thesis contrasts with the previous one, as it says: “The banking expropriations, Vallejos’ attempt to open a focus in Jauja, the first revolutionary movement in Chaupimayo, linked to the massive occupation of lands peasants in La Convencion, headed by Comrade Hugo Blanco, are unequivocal expressions that the Peruvian revolution is going to a higher phase of its development, phase in which the armed struggle of the people is appearing as one of the supreme forms of class struggle”. To me this is the same as saying that it is an abortion and a happy birth, that they are the same as both show that the woman became pregnant. However they are totally different: the first is a tragedy, the second happiness, although it is true that the woman was pregnant. Your thesis makes no distinction between abortion and happy childbirth.

This confusion of the political declaration is no coincidence, since the entire document ignores one of the essential aspects of the current Peruvian revolutionary process: the distancing of the petty bourgeois semi-underclass revolutionary vanguard of the cities from the revolutionary process of the urban masses, and mainly of the agrarian masses, advance guard of the revolution. This vanguard are desperate to do “their revolution immediately”, and they are jumping out of their skin to start the “armed struggle” and in desperation forget the real, daily, revolutionary, and where appropriate, armed struggles of the rural masses. This is a phenomenon that shows undeniably, in a sense, the Peruvian revolutionary process, but it can have fatal consequences: aborting the whole revolutionary process, as the vanguard will carry out their actions and the masses their very own, ignoring obviously each other. It is our obligation to combat this serious danger of action of the vanguard independently, separated from the mass movement. Let’s not forget it for a single minute; let’s condemn them as heroic acts that frustrate the revolutionary process, thereby hindering the “welding with the agrarian movement”.

It is essential not carry on with false sentimentality. In the distinction between pure actions of the vanguard and actions of the masses, in our denunciation of the former as reckless, irresponsible actions that break the possible bridge between the revolutionary vanguard and the movement of the agrarian and urban masses, lies the key to build a genuine revolutionary party in Peru. And don’t forget that without revolutionary party, without a revolutionary party able to penetrate the mass movement and lead it, there is no chance of triumph. In Peru this party will be built convincing the revolutionary vanguard that they should give away any separate action and turn to the mass movement. It is therefore essential to characterise, fraternally but with all harshness, the bank expropriations and the focus in Jauja as most dangerous adventures. Any other perspective is criminal, goes against the development of the revolutionary party and against the “welding” of the vanguard “with the agrarian movement”, and everything that goes against this task that you define so well, goes at this time against the Peruvian revolution, although the authors may be heroes, great men.

The great problem of the Peruvian revolution is that of the revolutionary party

After you point out with total accuracy in point 7 that the entire Peruvian revolutionary vanguard is divided, fragmented, without explaining the reason for this social phenomenon, you say: “But the Cuban experience teaches us that the revolution, like every historic fact, does not wait for the leaders and parties to live up to the demands of the class struggle, but inexorably follows its course”. Let me tell you that between this statement and the statement by the Tupac Amaru group saying exactly the opposite, I lean towards the latter: “But the mass actions, however revolutionary they are, do not replace but rather demand concrete and decisive action of the vanguard, whose assistance is essential to ensure unity and purpose of the revolutionary process and without whose leadership it is in danger of wasting its energies in chaotic action, and eventually be defeated”. I categorically lean towards this statement, in the sense that the mass movement, left to their own devices, will eventually be defeated. Specifically a revolution does not follow, as you say, an inexorable course. If it were so, let’s go to sleep, study, work or have fun at home. Precisely if we

do not do it is because parties with their leaders play a fundamental factor in the revolutionary process. It is just at a time of revolutionary rise when they become essential for the triumph of the revolution.

The definition of the Tupac Amaru group about the future of the mass movement left to its own devices is correct, but the solution they give is abysmal if it is meant to say that the actions of the vanguard will centralise the revolutionary process. They idealise the actions of the vanguard in opposition to you who idealise, fetishise, the actions of the masses. Both idealisations do not work because they ignore the role of the party. Although logically, I lean towards the idealisation of the mass movement. That is, if I had to choose between the two errors, I would choose yours. But the truth is that both lead to the same tragic conclusion: the party is not necessary for the revolutionary triumph. The Tupac Amaru group says it almost directly; you instead point out elsewhere in your document just the opposite, the urgency of creating the revolutionary party (you call it, I believe, “construction of the authentic Marxist-Leninist vanguard of masses that we know will take definitive forms in the course of revolutionary action”).

Here is the key to the whole problem. You are wrong when you say that the Cuban revolution has shown that the revolutionary process does not wait for parties and their leaders. On the contrary, the Cuban revolution is an example of what a tightly centralised and organised mass party can do. The 26 of July Movement without the great support from the mass movement it had, without its colossal chieftain-like centralisation, and without its recognised and attacked leader, Fidel Castro, could not have done anything, not even begin the guerrillas. What has not existed in Cuba and in other successful revolutions are revolutionary Marxist parties, but in all of them, and in any outbreak of armed struggle— guerrilla, people’s war— which came to victory, there always have been great mass parties fiercely centralised and disciplined. This always existed because without it, without such a party, with these characteristics, it is not possible the beginning of any triumphant revolutionary action. The only thing you can do without it, are heroic adventures.

We would be left with the theoretical problem, which I do not want to discuss here, whether a mass party with these characteristics, which launches an armed struggle against a regime, it is not in fact, by its praxis, a revolutionary party. I am satisfied to settle that always, so far, every triumphant revolutionary process had, from its inception, a disciplined, centralised party, with great influence on the mass movement.

The sooner you correct your mistake the better will be for everyone, including the consistency of your position. The Peruvian revolution, to reach the triumph, lacks a fundamental, essential element: the centralised party with support and rooted in the actions and organisations of the mass movement. The prospect is open that this party be, for the first time in history since the Bolshevik revolution, consciously Marxist-revolutionary. Let’s make it so and let’s bring the great Peruvian revolution to the triumph.

Congratulations on the appointment of Hugo Blanco as President of your organisation

I believe the appointment of Hugo Blanco as president of your organisation is an extraordinarily good decision. This means that your positions are not declamatory. You are for the fusion with the agrarian masses and because they follow the example of Chaupimayo, and you show it by naming the greatest leader of the agrarian masses and the revolution underway as your President.

There is a danger in this appointment, that it be nothing more than symbolic. We Chileans have a saying for this phenomenon: it is a salute to the flag.¹ If this were so it would mean that neither you nor Hugo Blanco, as a disciplined member of the FIR, have understood the most urgent need for the Peruvian revolution in this historical moment: the creation and development of a

¹ In Spanish colloquial language the use of the term “a salute to the flag” is widespread as a synonym of a gesture devoid of all value, referring to an impossible and demagogic action known in advance it will not be complied with or its breach not going to be punished. [Translator’s note.]

national revolutionary party with mass base. If it were so, Hugo Blanco would be an object of the FIR and the party, a flag or symbol that is agitated and not a subject in the creation of the party. Specifically, Hugo Blanco should start, if he has not already done so, to develop, centralise and control the party. And the party, the FIR, you must ensure that Hugo Blanco, together with the FIR's leadership, takes an active part in the centralisation, management and development of the unified party of the Peruvian Revolution or the FIR. Only thus will Hugo Blanco fulfil the role due to him by the conditions and his own merit, and you as well by promoting him, with sound judgment, to the highest leadership position of the FIR. In other words, Hugo Blanco should not be a nominal but an actual president of the FIR. This will mean huge efforts from him and yours, but it will ensure, if achieved, the structuring a true leadership of the revolutionary party. It is your obligation to take the necessary technical measures for Hugo Blanco to become the real, authentic leader of the FIR, as he is of the agrarian revolution now.

Our method is practical-critical and critical-practical. At a distance I have no other thing to do than to use a portion of our method, criticism, unable to use the other, the most important: the practice. This is why I think you will have to excuse me if for these reasons my unconditional support and admiration have been expressed through some fraternal criticism. As show of my support, accept my emphatic assertion that between my criticisms and your wonderful practice at the heart of the Peruvian masses, I will take the latter, without denying or recanting my criticism.

With fraternal greetings.

Other Papers

To broaden the discussion of Moreno against the putschist deviation in Peru, we reproduce parts of the book *Workers' and Internationalist Trotskyism in Argentina*, coordinated by Ernesto Gonzalez, Part 3, Volume 1 (1959-1963), Editorial Antidoto, which was published in 1999.

On the meeting of SLATO and the letter of Moreno to Hugo Blanco on 5 January 1962

(Pages 228-232)

[...] At the Lima meeting [of SLATO, before the first assault] it was also resolved that:

“a) With the development of peasant unionisation and the occupation of lands dual power has emerged in different peasant areas, under control of our party, b) This means it is already raised the question of insurrection and that the party must quickly overcome its delay in this sense, c) Tactical aspects of the line voted in Buenos Aires must be corrected [...] (it must first be raised the revolutionary united front as tactical transitional slogan, and only propagandistically the united revolutionary party), and regarding the distribution of partisan forces they should concentrate on the Cusco and not atomised across the country [...] As a result of the conference for Peru, the most important fact is the first official contact with Hugo Blanco and his conviction of the existing insurrectionary possibilities” (“Draft Report of Latin American activities” presented by *Palabra Obrera* and approved at the SLATO meeting in Lima on January 1963).

However, by then differences begun to occur with the comrades who ran the Peruvian FIR and POR, who given these insurrectional possibilities were taking a “putschist” line, given the great inequalities that existed between the peasant mobilisations in Cusco and the lack of struggles in the big cities, where the electoral process was the dominant political issue. Desperate because of this situation, they believed it was necessary to provoke an uprising before the elections, and conceived the idea of taking by assault the Gamarra barracks in Cusco, which appeared to them as the Peruvian “Moncada”, even forgetting that Castro had failed in that first attempt in Cuba.

In a personal letter to Hugo Blanco, Moreno details the agreements reached in SLATO that reveal the existence of differences and the decision to discuss more in depth without any haste that would end aborting the peasant rebellion:

“It is agreed not to vote any strategic line for Peru, but the following steps are taken to ensure that at the next meeting of SLATO a strategic line can be voted:

“a) Allocate all possible middle cadres to Cusco and within Cusco to the peasant movement,

“b) To professionalise these potential middle cadres;

“c) The specific tasks of these middle cadres will be: to develop the peasant unionisation, peasant armed militias and cells of the party or the revolutionary united front;

“d) Parallel to this a stay shall be rented to organise the insurrectional technical team, which is not very large, but highly capable;

“e) 500,000 Argentine pesos to cover all the needs for implementation of the plan until the meeting of SLATO, trusting the section Peruvian will know how to help themselves

and that it cannot mount an insurrection based on the almost sole and exclusive foreign cadres and finance [...]

“h) To co-opt Comrade Hugo [Blanco] as full member of SLATO. It is agreed not to vote any strategic line on Tucuman and Brazil, but to have a report ready for the meeting of SLATO.

“The next meeting of SLATO will decide on an overall plan for Latin America based on various reports and not for just one country” (Moreno to Blanco, 5 January 1962).

As part of those decisions, in addition it was resolved for *Palabra Obrera*:

“1) To make available to SLATO [...] four million pesos more to those they already had. With this new contribution to SLATO we go to approximately eight million pesos.

“2) To deny any aid to the Argentine section until SLATO resolve whether it is granted in accordance with the overall strategy that is voted on.

“3) To visit and develop in depth the contacts with the Brazilian comrades to prepare [the] SLATO meeting.

“4) Professionalise the Peruvian comrades resident [in Argentina] to urgently go [to Peru].

“5) To accept the SLATO meeting for 15 January [1962] and have all our nominated members assisting” (Moreno to Blanco, 5 January 1962)

Nevertheless, despite all the allocation of comrades and funds, a later balance sheet made an account that:

“after the arrival of [Martorell] the line voted is completely distorted. [...] It confuses what in the SLATO resolution was preparation for the insurrection in parallel to the organisation of the party, with putschism in all fields. Our first comrade [Pereyra] goes completely to this putschist line and applies it personally in Cusco, while G. [Martorell] actually takes over in fact the leadership of Lima. Under their dual influence the whole party is turned to the most feverish adventurism. Political work is almost entirely abandoned and recruitment and development of the revolutionary united front is only done around the proposal of action (“Draft report of activities...”, already quoted).

The first “expropriation”: the Popular Bank of Lima

The Peruvian POR progressed in its “putschist” deviation. That is, towards a violent and surprise action, carried out by a revolutionary nucleus, aimed to generate a political crisis in the government and the Peruvian regime forcing it to carry out an offensive against the uprising. They hoped this offensive, in turn, would force the definition of popular sectors in favour of the extension and deepening of the struggle making it “open”, i.e., pushing it towards the insurrection. [...]

The vicious circle of the proposal “for a good organisation much money is needed” replaced the need to develop policies that would enable to link the peasant uprising with the workers and popular urban organisations, while the peasant power was strengthened on the basis of genuine organisation of the mobilised masses.

The tragedy of the Peruvian experience of the POR and the peasant uprising led by Hugo Blanco was the influence of Castroist conceptions on the Argentine leaders sent to Peru, who did not realise it is not possible to replace the organisations of the masses with groups of the vanguard acting on their behalf. It was the beginning of a deep discussion on the revolutionary strategy in Latin America.

It acquired a dimension of tragedy by the end of 1961. In November, peasant mobilisations against the presence of Prime Minister Beltran in Cusco included concentrations of peasant masses that in La Convencion came to gather 40,000 demonstrators.

Nevertheless, determined to pursue its own line, on 15 December, 1961, Lima's team carried out a first "test" of their orientation, assaulting the Magdalena branch of Popular Bank, desperate because of the economic needs posed by the FIR in Cusco, according to the "putschist" plan they had embarked on. [...]

The economic problems, the obsession by the Lima group over and above any political consideration, remained posed. Shortly after the first assault, a delegation travelled to Buenos Aires to raise this issue as imperative. A subsequent report says:

"The feverish policy of the Peruvian section was leading it to a terrifying and inevitable financial crisis, which took the Peruvian leadership to pose an ultimatum to the Argentine and Latin American comrades: either even greater support was provided to continue feeding the rampant putschist pace of the party or to take responsibility for the failure of the Peruvian revolution. This fact, plus the totally opportunist variation of the line verified by the nature of the publications submitted, led to the comrades of the Argentine leadership to request an urgent meeting of Latin Americans comrades, which is held in Buenos Aires in January" ("Draft report of activities...", already quoted).

Moreno's letter to Hugo Blanco on 5 January, 1962 says about the proposals made by the envoy to Lima:

"This comrade informs us that the 'help yourself' method has failed and requests one to two million sols immediately to buy a thousand rifles and to achieve in the immediate term the insurrection, that you will do it with or without SLATO or the Argentine section."

No doubt it was an unacceptable ultimatum that broke with all party methods and ignored any political body.

"Given this situation and these reports we agree:

"1) That the SLATO comrades resident in Peru have voted in law or in fact (with or without a written document) the strategic line for Peru (approximate date of the insurrection and how to arm ourselves) without waiting for the SLATO meeting as had been agreed.

"2) That the Peruvian comrades have at their disposal via SLATO eight million pesos.

"3) To avoid falling into a formalism, the discussion of the procedure to stop the march of our Party and the Peruvian revolution, to urgently invite for early January Comrades Carlos Chango, Felix and Hugo (and if possible Anibal) to a meeting of SLATO in Buenos Aires. Thus the fate of the eight million pesos can be resolved immediately. If all the comrades do not come, the SLATO meeting will not take decisions as we consider essential there is a majority of you at the SLATO meeting.

"4) To categorically reject any other method that does not start from the premise that only and alone SLATO itself as a whole resolves the major strategic lines and especially the insurrection.

"5) To consider a traitor any SLATO comrade who violates his discipline in these revolutionary times and to act accordingly.

"6) If the comrades do not come for the date to which they were invited, that Comrade Maen (Bengoechea) travel urgently to Peru to agree all necessary assistance to the progress of the plan already voted and to urgently organise there the meeting of SLATO" (Moreno to Blanco, 5 January 1962).

But to the emergency meeting convened in Buenos Aires only two comrades came from Lima, on account of which the following decisions were made:

“1) That this meeting does not resolve anything because a majority of comrades from Peru, that we demand for any meeting of SLATO to solve strategic problems, is not guaranteed.

“2) To confirm the resolution of the previous meeting and not diminish at all the aid to the Peruvian section, as long as it goes for the set tasks and not for new tasks that only SLATO meeting can establish.

“3) Maen [Bengoechea] to go to Peru if possible on the 8 (of January) and [Moreno] on the 15 to prepare the meeting of SLATO, which shall be made no later than the beginning of February [...] This one or the upcoming SLATO meetings are the only ones authorised to adopt resolutions on strategic issues in the various Latin American countries.

“4) To decide on the next meeting of SLATO the overall strategy for Latin America and begin the discussion on Peru based on Moreno’s letter to Anibal. This should not be transformed into a factional discussion since positions are not opposed for the moment. It is about starting a fruitful discussion to achieve a synthesis of the way to reach the insurrection.

“5) To create a single highly trained technical apparatus for Latin America” (Moreno to Blanco, 5 January 1962).

Reality was that the discussion was at a standstill, because for Moreno and *Palabra Obrera* the central issue remained political, i.e. the program and political line to follow in order to promote and extend the peasant uprising in Cusco. The problem of money became secondary and subordinate to the foregoing.

The letter to Hugo Blanco reflects Moreno’s concern in trying to maintain a different relationship than the one it was taking place with Daniel Pereyra and his group. He hoped the direct relationship with the process of peasant struggle would allow a different dialogue and the possibility of agreeing on essential aspects:

“We understand your predicament, which is ours. But this predicament does not justify the imposition of three to five, without previous discussion, against the rest. The great predicament requires most urgent meetings of all leaders. The predicament does not justify orders among leaders who have not discussed and even less to follow orders that go against what was resolved among us all. We, in these grave times where we are about to give our all, believe more than ever in the collective development. We have stated ad nauseam here in Buenos Aires that we consider essential to dialogue with you, since your experience of the agrarian problem may convinces us. But we want you to convince us and be able, for our part, to convince and mainly to act as what we are, SLATO leaders. Our attitudes have had these objectives: strict compliance with SLATO resolutions, to be loyal to it; to support to the bitter end the Peruvian section; to safeguard the powers of SLATO and to defend our rights as its leaders.

“We continue to be against buying thousand rifles. We believe this money can be much more useful to the Latin American revolution otherwise used. As SLATO did not resolve this purchase, or this strategy (to distribute among the working masses the rifles bought) we continue to demand that this measure and this strategy be voted, after a minimal discussion. This letter has only one objective: to avoid misperceptions, misunderstandings that lock the fraternal exchange of ideas that we will do in a few days. If this has been achieved I am satisfied. I make it clear that I understand and fully justify the reasons that have caused these misunderstandings. All the comrades through me greet you, proud of the fact that some time ago you started with us. We hope that now you will help us better understand the Peruvian reality wasting some of your time. You will have the consolation of having fulfilled your duty towards peers as members of SLATO” (Moreno to Blanco, 5 January 1962).

Second assault and exchange of letters between Moreno and Pereira

(Pages 245-249 and 256-263)

[...] In a last effort to avoid the course the Peruvian party was embarking on, SLATO met again in Lima in April 1962 with the presence of Moreno. [...]

The cardinal feature was supporting the peasant uprising, linked to the mass organisations, developing political work towards them. [...] This resolution was adopted when the crisis of POR—and, consequently, the FIR— had already begun. Its notorious expression remained the “urgent need of funds” that wielded the majority of the leadership, headed by Martorell and Pereyra.

“The financial problem was of particular importance because in recent months the party had been changing its social composition. Systematic professionalization had created a particular kind of militant, half lumpen, half revolutionary, who was bound to the party more by their attachment to the income (Peru is a country of chronic unemployment) than to the revolution and the party. This phenomenon was particularly manifest in Cusco, which was where it had acquired a larger dimension [...] As the potential financial crisis had already begun to take its serious effects, the leadership in Cusco in the absence of Alberto [Daniel Pereyra] and without a definite attitude by Hugo Blanco who already lived in the interior, decided to ignore the Lima leadership and turn itself into national leadership, arguing that the Lima leadership did not longer guarantee normal financial supply. This breakdown is nothing more than a reflection at a regional scale of the tremendous anti-party pressure by the new semi-lumpen rank and file who pressed first and foremost, to preserve their income. On the basis of the SLATO conference agreement in February, Alberto accepted the expulsion of the members responsible for the split (Hugo Blanco was suspended and required to self-criticise, on account of not being directly responsible for the attitude) and he is appointed as Comptroller for the raised area. In turn Alberto becomes responsible for the technical work with great autonomy (he could carry out the planned actions to the extent that the conditions he said were met)” (“Draft report on activities ...”, already quoted).

Another resolution adopted then was to convene a congress to discuss in depth the serious problems that had been posed, since a new group of Peruvian comrades began to emerge as a possible leadership of the POR, and it was necessary that they developed, and for this it was essential to discuss and resolve differences in the whole organisation.

But the majority of the SLATO leadership, consisting of Peruvian and Argentine comrades of the POR-FIR, did not abandon the idea that with a new commando raid it was possible to solve all the financial problems at once, which remained their primary concern. The “expropriating apparatus” (which began to call themselves “Tupac Amaru” since the assault to Banco Popular in order to not appear linked to the FIR and Hugo Blanco) decided a new operation.

“Faced with the immediate objectives raised, [Moreno] is left with no other alternative than to proceed tactically making clear his position that the actions should be made in areas where there was a partisan rear and not where there wasn’t” (“Draft report on activities ...”).

Furthermore, it was also agreed that the “expropriating team”, if acting, would do so without recourse to the rest of the POR or FIR, so as not to complicate the situation of Hugo Blanco and other comrades operating in the mass movement. They should ensure their own technical team and at all times they would stay clear of any involvement in the political organisation that was heading the peasants’ mobilisations of Cusco.

The operation in the Credit Bank of Miraflores

[...]

[After being identified by the police] against the decision of the SLATO, the “expropriating team” had to seek help from the rest of the POR to escape the police chase. As it appears from the correspondence subsequent to the facts, the opinion of Moreno and other comrades was that the persecuted hid in Lima. But the bases on which Martorell was driving the construction of the FIR in the Peruvian capital, amongst the petty bourgeoisie and underclass sectors, soon showed their complete lack of strength even to get a hideaway. [...] Pereyra and Martorell then proposed the convenience of going to Cusco, and of requesting assistance in Bolivia from a character who, in the letters, is only identified with the letter “P” and who is characterised as a “personal friend” of Martorell, while “a petty bourgeois and bureaucrat” (Letter of Moreno to Pereyra, December 1962).

[...] Instead of entering Cusco on foot and by different sectors, as things had been organised by the comrades of the area, Daniel Pereyra decided to enter by truck, arguing that the physical condition of the commando members prevented them from doing this hike. This change of plans, neglecting the safety measures resolved by the Cusco comrades had tragic consequences. [Daniel Pereyra] was arrested in situ, along with another comrade whose exhaustion was such that not even the shooting had been managed to awaken him inside the hideaway. [...]

Meanwhile, as agreed, Nahuel Moreno had left Peru towards La Paz, Bolivia, where he settled on 27 April. [...] His first serious drawback was that the character “P” in whom the leadership of the FIR had trusted to ensure the exit of the comrades, flatly refused to provide help (Letter of Moreno to Pereyra, December 1962).

The crisis of the POR and its consequences

With the foiling of the peasant uprising of Cusco, it was frustrated at that time the real possibility of a revolution in the Southern Cone, starting from Peru; although the bourgeoisie failed to immediately impose its “stability” in the country. The military coup of General Velasco Alvarado in 1968 and his populist politics were a mediate result of this situation, and an attempt to end the social and political convulsions started 10 years before with the Cusco mobilisations.

For SLATO and its organisations, while it left important lessons about the strategy for Latin America, the experience of Peru produced a terrible crisis that, in practice, meant its dissolution. First, there was the split by the Chilean section headed by Luis Vitale and Humberto Valenzuela. As we have seen, the differences came from the interpretation of the Cuban revolution and its significance. Embarked, then, in a trade unionist course, the Chilean POR comrades removed themselves from SLATO from the beginning of the peasant rebellion of Cusco, and launched a campaign of accusations and attacks on the organisation. Same as in the Stalinists and the Peruvian bourgeois press, in their writings appears the term “gangster Morenism” to refer to our current.

In addition, the disaster suffered by the Peruvian section from the assault on the bank of Miraflores, led to its destruction. Between 1962 and 1964, from *Palabra Obrera*, along with the defence of imprisoned comrades and attempts to prevent the fall of Hugo Blanco, there were attempts to help rebuild the Peruvian POR, without success. The divisions led to no less than four tendencies to exist in fact, each one acting on its own. Felix Zeballos split from POR, accusing the leadership of having “diluted” the party in the FIR, and throwing all kinds of attacks from the newspaper *Consigna* [Slogan]. Meanwhile, from prison, Martorell and a group of Peruvian comrades, instead of making self-critical conclusions about their role as leaders and their orientation that produced the disaster, drafted a document, full of moral attacks against other comrades of the SLATO, particularly against Moreno. They insisted on blaming an alleged “lack of support from the Argentines” the failure of their putschist plans for an insurrection on a “fixed date”. In their own attacks they included the own Hugo Blanco. Almost all moral attacks against SLATO, Blanco and Moreno around the peasant rebellion of Cusco come from that source, repeated, revised and expanded to defamation by petty bourgeois writers such as former Peruvian Aprista army major Victor Villanueva, of whom Hugo Blanco will say “they do not understand the essence of the peasant movement” (*Peru: Land or death*, already quoted).

In all these divisions, the hands of the government and the Peruvian courts were no stranger, always trying to divide the FIR prisoners, and raise all kinds of doubts about their morality. One of the first official acts was to order the expulsion of some detained leaders, including Carlos Howes Beas, which generated among the other comrades strong criticism and accusations of having broken discipline. Similarly, to less politically robust comrades of petty bourgeois and wealthy social background, they tried to turn them into informers with the promise of moderate punishment or acquittal, pressing through their families.

The discussion with Daniel Pereyra

[...] Directly from his prison in Buenos Aires, Moreno starts correspondence with Martorell and Pereyra, hampered by security conditions, in which he will unsuccessfully try to convince the comrades to implement “our critical method” (Marxism) to their own actions, to reach a self-critical assessment of the action undertaken in Peru. In those letters, Moreno points out that in the Peruvian POR, between 1961 and 1962, there had been a tendentious fight, and he clarified that with Bengoechea they had resolved to address a discussion on the more substantive issues and not on all fronts, because new and young Peruvian comrades were very valuable, but had been recruited as part of the putschists positions of Martorell and Daniel Pereyra; therefore, it was a question of “winning” them for the most strategic positions and not for political tactics. Moreno acknowledged that in these discussions, “a weak point where we had to compromise was finance. There was no other choice. Unfortunately what seemed easier, to get the money, became the hardest [...] On the second trip I did this year I was surprised by [two Peruvian comrades] who strongly requested I do not oppose, if there was more money, the adopted resolution. They asked me as a matter of principle as the atmosphere created by your tendency was unbreathable. It attacks as petty bourgeois anyone who argued about comma of the plans or your program. Most distinguished in this tremendous campaign of ideological terrorism was ‘Pepe’ [Joseph Martorell] [...] This is the secret of unanimity of SLATO given the fact [of the Bank of Miraflores assault]” (Moreno to Pereyra, December 1962).

Daniel Pereyra, however, maintained his position, so that, in a letter dated 23 February, 1963, Moreno said:

“You keep raising the same thing as a year ago; the facts have not have left you, unfortunately, any experience” (Reproduced in page 34 of this publication).

In December 1963, Ernesto Gonzalez arrived in Lima to settle there and work with the POR. He took with him a new document by Moreno on the Peruvian reality and the political line and tasks he considered necessary in the new situation. Pereyra wrote to Moreno, after a long silence:

“My unstable situation of constant transfers, prevent me from keeping the correspondence, but I think we had come to define our views enough, at least as far as can be done in writing. I think I made some criticism, with enough clarity and I even remember your reply. Therefore, I do not understand why you ask me, regardless of what it may be, to tell you my opinion. I’ve already done it. I suggest you write to me directly clarifying what you want.

“I read the last document [...] seems to me a very good one, somewhat abstract in terms of its particular application and I think that should be our task [...] Of course I believe that we must make every effort to implement your recommendations, in which we have a terrible delay. In its broadest aspect the arrival of E. [Ernesto Gonzalez] is an indispensable contribution to achieve the implementation of this or any political line. I have pure confidence in success. But, beware!, on top of the overall aspect, we need to apply a whole line to the social situation and we’ll only achieve it with a lot of energy and firmness [...] unfortunately it wouldn’t be the first time a very correct line isn’t applied because of misunderstanding or other factors” (Pereyra to Moreno, 13 January, 1964)

Moreno replied the same 22 February, 1964 in which he received that letter:

“In your letter you point a criticism in passing, which I can’t overlook. The one about the line is correct but there is the danger that we’ll apply it late or without the necessary strength. You know that I like to take any discussion to extremes in order to see it clearly. I think that never in the general history of the last 100 years, a group of a country has done relatively so much and as hard as we did for our friends there. It is not about our constancy as strength and timing of our help, but about the real general disaster of which the primary responsibility for its level has been yours. In the midst of this general disaster, there’s no timing, strength or perseverance in assistance that can overcome it. That is, the fundamental problem remains there and not here. It’s time to determine responsibilities and to take responsibility for the future.

“It is necessary to insist again until it becomes set in all of your heads, those who live there, that the responsibility, total, absolute, categorical, and unmitigated, was, is and will be yours and yours only. An example, still very warm, will show you: [Ernesto Gonzalez] has been protesting because he didn’t receive the bank drafts and letters. They had gone out on time and did not arrive because the address to which they had been sent was not known [by Gonzalez]. Blame [belongs] to the total disorganisation that exists there, that prevents you from having fully trusted supporters [...] But precisely this disorganisation, this impotence, leads you to move the centre of the responsibility from you, only you, to us” (Moreno to Pereyra, 22 February, 1964).

Pereyra, on 29 February, possibly without having received this letter from Moreno, insists on his complaints of lack of correspondence:

“It’s very big the wish I have to establish an effective dialogue with you. So far I have failed, some proposals of my part have not received a response, or this is contradictory. Perhaps it is due to the intermediary and so I resort to write to you directly, begging for an urgent response, on the matters to be discussed:

“1) Coincidences on the basic tasks here (perhaps in the implementation tactical differences may emerge) [...] 2) Two things on the personal issue: a) What is my situation? In what category I am included? Do I have any right or not? b) If I have, I demand they be respected, consulting my opinion sometimes before acting. Tell me about it. 3) An example of this: I am against Ernesto Gonzalez travelling back to Argentina, as I consider essential for a man of his stature to help set up a leadership here. With his leaving his work is frustrated, people get discouraged, etc. My opinion is for him to stay. [...] 5) Again I raise that I think I can and should play a role of some importance, for which I have advanced my opinion [...] If you do not answer me in an explicit way, I will consider you approve of my opinion and you give me *carte blanche* to act on my own. I’ll wait for an answer until 15

March. 6) The issue of solidarity I believe has been unfortunate. This is not measured by intentions but by realities, and these have been minimal [...] 7) Above all, answer quickly. Here time is urgent and we cannot be idle. Understand the passion that springs from these lines, that they are not the result of desperation— I've been here 22 months— and seek to act quickly” (Pereyra to Moreno, 29 February 1964).

[...] As of this date the breaking up process of the Basque Bengoechea took place. This affected once again the possibilities of attention of the Peruvians comrades. Communications from Buenos Aires with Ernesto Gonzalez became complicated, until he was forced to return to participate in the discussion with Bengoechea and his group. After the explosion that killed the Basque and other comrades in July 1964, the persecution *Palabra Obrera* was subjected to in Argentina made things even more difficult. Arrest warrants and arrests of their leaders prevented for months the travel of comrades, as Pereyra demanded. However, Horacio Lagar and Ernesto Gonzalez returned to Peru as soon as it was possible, to shore up the situation of the prisoners and the POR.

Moreno, during 1964, insisted with his criticism of Pereyra's positions, on which a legend is generated as to the attitudes of *Palabra Obrera* about the detainees in Peru:

“In the previous ones I have already indicated to you that your proposal is guilty of being subjective and does not take into account the overall political and objective situation.

“To this objective situation it has been added [...] another superstructural phenomenon which reflects a whole crisis of leadership in the Latin American movement, what has happened in recent times, and which legally precludes the travel there of any of us [referring to the persecution of *Palabra Obrera* after the explosion that killed Bengoechea]. But even if this had not happened, most surely some other similar accident would have happened, because it fits in the overall situation. I am absolutely convinced that you do not realise this.

“Today as a result of the putschist, irresponsible adventurer, lumpen, Castroist and Guevarist leaderships of the Latin American revolutionary movement, there is an obvious setback. Peru is no exception. This setback, which is not a defeat, should be taken as such and we should work accordingly, to transform it into a means to reorganise and prepare ourselves for the new upsurge process that will take place in the short term.

“The tasks you propose and making a matter of principle that one of us go there, I think it's the same methodological error you've made systematically: wanting by virtue of promotion to change the objective and subjective situation of the Peruvian revolutionary process [...]

“A revolutionary leadership is not artificially created from outside, but rather it must be the product of the process of the class struggle in the country concerned. There may be some help, but it will always be petty in relation to what the country itself has to provide in terms of cadres and possibilities [...] There is a main task to which all others are subordinated, and today this main task is to use the current retreat and strengthen the party both there as well as here. We consider a political and organisational crime to weaken our organisation further than what we have done as a result of all these adventures, in order to give aid, which at most would be 1 or 2 percent of what you need, and that the real help you need has to come from your own forces [...] Several of your letters insist that you want to know where you stand, as if suggesting in your language that you give us an ultimatum. It is these damn ultimatums what have caused all the tremendous tragedies that we have endured and the true disasters.

“Instead of a fraternal discussion with a previous clarification that we will do what will emerge from the discussion, we get threats, denunciations, ultimatums, admonitions. That is why I would beg you on behalf of so many disasters, failures, and horrors that have been committed, that we are not interested at this time to know to whose account to charge them, and I charge them to the general account of the movement and its leadership; that you don't adopt measures or resolutions individually, that you discuss fraternally and do not impose any ultimatums on us, that we will not impose any on you, and that

through this discussion we will go solving all problems without falling into despair and understanding that we live at a moment of retreat which can be very useful to strengthen the party” (Moreno to Pereyra, 28 October 1964).

Nevertheless, Pereyra will not change position. He will maintain a voluntarist vision of the revolutionary process, attributing the failure of the policy pursued in Peru to Moreno and the leadership of *Palabra Obrera*.

Annex

Hernan Camarero*

Hugo Blanco and the peasant uprising in the Cusco region (1961-1963)

In Chaupimayo we become owners of the land: the plots cultivated by the peasants for themselves and for whose leases they were forced to work for free for the boss, were now property of the peasants. The crops and the houses of the landowner became common property of the union. The distribution of uncultivated land to anyone who would cultivate it began. Those measures were totally or partially extended to other unions and were formalised or driven with the 'Agrarian Reform Law' that I took from hiding in my capacity as 'Agrarian Reform Secretary for the Departmental Federation of Cusco Peasants'. We formally named judges who replaced the bourgeois authorities (their rulings could be appealed to the General Assembly). The police came rarely, informing the union with anticipation: 'There is an arrest warrant against X and X, we will go such day; it would be convenient on this day the persons concerned be not at home to spare us problems'. When a non-union peasant complained against someone from Chaupimayo, in the Civil Guard checkpoint of the district they were told to go to the union to demand justice, or to return to the post with an order signed by our union to hear the case. We did the schools ourselves, we paid the teachers (appointed by us and confirmed by Education officials). Public works were in the hands of the union, which determined their priority. All this, of course, backed by an embryonic armed force, the peasant militia in development."

Hugo Blanco, *Land or Death*

"In Peru, former student and great peasant leader Hugo Blanco is threatened with being shot these days. His crime: having unionised for the first time the most miserable rural region of the country. Unionised and educated, the peasants had begun to recover their lands from the landowners, of which they had been stripped from the time of the Spanish colony, also demanding better living conditions for agricultural workers (...) Hugo Blanco does not deserve to die."

Jean Paul Sartre speaking on 28 November, 1966 to 6,000 students convened in the Palace of the Mutuality in Paris at an event in solidarity with the people of Vietnam

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These words by Hugo Blanco, recounting part of the experience that took place in the area of Chaupimayo, and of Jean Paul Sartre in solidarity with this cause, are a sign of the intensity and impact that reached the process of peasant uprising in the Peruvian highlands in the early 1960s, which reached its highest expression in the valleys of La Convencion and Lares, in the department of Cusco. This process had begun some years earlier, between 1956 and 1959, when massive peasant unionisation took place, and led in the following years to a process of land occupation and armed uprising. This agrarian revolt, which was directed by Blanco, a Trotskyist militant trained in Argentina, was finally defeated by mid-1963.

There is a relatively extensive literature that has referred to this peasant uprising; however, there are few papers that specifically analysed it. One of the most important exceptions in this regard is the study by Eric Hobsbawm on the theme, in addition to some other contributions.¹ While progress has been made in an investigation of the causes and development of the peasant movement, it is still scarce what it is known about the true role Hugo Blanco had in the process, although in all papers that refer to this rebellion the leadership of this character is stated.² For example, in the most recent collection of studies on the history of Latin America, edited by Leslie Bethell, this is how the significance of this leader is stated: “Between 1959 and 1963 Hugo Blanco, a leading Trotskyist, had mobilised some 300,000 peasants in the valleys of Lares and in the region of Cusco in Peru”.³ However, often there is no progress beyond this mere statement about the key participation of Blanco. His figure still remains in the shadows. The goal we set for ourselves in this paper is, therefore, to contribute to an understanding of the role that Blanco exercised in the aforementioned historic events. In our story we will use a source of great importance, which has been curiously unexplored: the book the own Blanco wrote in prison years after concluding the experience of peasant rebellion, entitled *Land or death*.⁴

This essay aims to investigate the manner in which Blanco exercised his leadership of this peasant mobilisation. The paper addresses the following issues: a) the economic, social and political context in which the peasant uprising in Cusco unfolded; b) the political formation of Blanco, and the characteristics of the political current to which he belonged; c) how Blanco established contact with the peasant problem of Cusco; d) the manner in which Blanco was able to become the leader of a massive process of peasant unionisation, land occupation and formation of agricultural organisations; e) the political support that Blanco had to do his experience of leadership of the peasant struggle; f) the causes and the manner in which the rebellion and the arrest of Blanco himself developed. Consider that virtually the only external political support Blanco had was coming from the Trotskyist movement, not only of the one existing in Peru but especially from the Argentine, grouped in the organisation *Palabra Obrera* [Workers Word] (which had an

1 Eric J. Hobsbawm: “Peasant movement in Peru” in *Primitive Rebels. Study on the archaic forms of social movements in the XIX and XX centuries*. Barcelona, Ariel, 1974, pp. 274-297 (1st ed. 1978). It is the English historian himself who alerts that “this peasant, persistent, strong and widespread movement, has been poorly investigated although much discussed” (p. 274). Other relevant literature on the subject is the journalistic analysis on peasant struggles in Cusco in the early 1960s in Hugo Neira: *Andes, land and death*. Madrid, Editorial ZYX, 1968, 1st ed. 1964; and the book by the American sociologist Wesley W. Craig: *The peasant movement in La Convencion, Peru. The dynamics of a peasant organisation*. Lima, Institute of Peruvian Studies, 1968. Also important is the work by Howard Handeman: *Peasant struggles in the Andes*, Lima, Journal of the Rural Research Workshop, Catholic University of Peru, 1980. A secular historiography account of the Peruvian peasant movement is done in Wilfredo Kapsoli: *Peasant movements in Peru, 1879-1965*, Lima, Delva Publishers, 1977.

2 The only papers where the figure of Blanco is specifically addressed are: Victor Villanueva: *Hugo Blanco and the peasant rebellion*, Lima, Juan Mejia Baca, 1967; Gonzalo Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, Lima, Editions “Mas Alla”, 1967; and the aforementioned work by Neira.

3 Alan Angell: “The left in Latin America since c. 1920” in Leslie Bethell (ed.): *History of Latin America (Vol. 12: “Politics and Society since 1930”)*. Barcelona, Critica, 1997, p.106.

4 Hugo Blanco: *Land or Death. The Peasant struggles in Peru*, Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1972. We also consulted the excellent English edition of this book, which also has pictures of peasant uprising and the judicial proceedings to Blanco after his arrest: *Land or Death. The Peasant Struggle in Peru*. New York, Pathfinder Press, 1972. It may be good to clarify here that Blanco had a good assessment in the study by Neira, but very bad in the one by Villanueva (former Aprista major in the Peruvian Army), of whom Blanco judged one of those who “do not understand the essence of the peasant movement”. (Blanco, op. cit., p. 2).

organisational counterpart in Latin America, the SLATO). This timely political aspect has hardly been considered so far in studies on the subject; however, as we hope to demonstrate, considering the participation of Trotskyism in the process of peasant insurgency is essential to fully understand it. We must remember that Hugo Blanco became the largest mass leader that Trotskyism had in Latin America.

Politics, economics and society in Peru in the early 1960s

Peru, since the early 1950s, was undergoing a series of transformations in the socio-economic and political levels. With the establishment of the dictatorship of General Manuel A. Odria (1948-1956), supported by the elite and American diplomacy, a change took place in both levels: economically, an impetus was given to the restoration of the model of open growth, oriented towards exports; politically, an era of instability, of dictatorial government and electoral turmoil began. As Skidmore and Smith say “The system’s contradictions would eventually appear with a crystalline clarity”.⁵ Several measures were taken in favour of the sugar growers: liberalisation of the exchange rate, lifting of import restrictions and promotion of foreign investment in mining and petroleum. The government of Odria tried to carry out a “dream of orthodox development of the economists”, which strove to implement “an export-oriented system where the cyclical difficulties of the balance of payments were settled with restraint of internal demand and devaluation of the currency, in which the inflow of foreign capital and profit repatriation barely had restrictions and in which the involvement and participation of the government was kept to a minimum”.⁶

Alongside these economic measures, the autocratic regime of Odria pursued a policy of curtailment of civil liberties and persecution of all dissent, especially of the followers of the party that had most popular support, the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance. The APRA had been founded in 1924 by Victor Raul Haya de la Torre with pretensions of continental party and a “bourgeois nationalist” program based on ideas such as Latin American unity, industrialisation and agrarian reform.⁷ The party had been outlawed almost permanently by the oligarchic and military regimes that happened in Peru. It was the same in this period. Haya de la Torre himself was imprisoned, but later escaped from prison and sought refuge in the Colombian embassy, where he remained for more than five years, waiting for a military safe-conduct. Odria further consolidated its position by winning a plebiscite in 1950 (without the presence of the opposition), forming a regime that tried to emulate the style and manners of the one implemented by Juan Peron in Argentina: he courted the working masses (especially in the coastal region); squandered funds on grandiose public works (mainly in Lima); and he formed a retinue of personalist followers.⁸

The government of Odria began to weaken after the economic crisis caused by the decline in export earnings after the end of the Korean War, when there was an increase in unemployment, inflation and the strike movement. The oligarchy began to distance themselves from the personalist and arbitrary methods of Odriaism, pressing, then, for the call to free elections in 1956. They were won by a banker of the oligarchy, Manuel Prado Ugarteche (who had previously ruled), which had approval from the own Odria and the Army. At this point, the APRA still retained a strong popular support but had lost many of the features that had characterised it as a force non-integrating into the dominant political game and appeared to be ready to join the traditional political system. Under

5 Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith: *Contemporary History of Latin America*. Barcelona, Critica, 1996, p.230. With regard to economic, political and social problems of Peru in the 1950s and 1960s, we have also consulted the following works: Carlos A. Astiz: *Pressure groups and power elites in Peruvian politics*. Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1969; Francois Bourricaud: *Power and society in contemporary Peru*. Buenos Aires, Sur, 1967; Fredrick B. Pike: *The modern history of Peru*. New York, Praeger, 1967.

6 Rosemary Thorp and Geoffrey Bertram: *Industrialisation in an open economy: the case of Peru during the period 1890-1940*. Working Paper Series No. 23. CISEPA, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Lima, 1974.

7 An examination of APRA and Haya de la Torre can be found in Harry Kantor: *The Peruvian Aprista movement*. Buenos Aires, Pleamar, 1964; Victor R. Haya de la Torre: *Anti-imperialism and APRA* [3rd Edition]. Lima, Amauta, 1970; Felipe Cossio de Pomar: *Victor Raul; a biography of Haya de la Torre*, 2 volumes. Mexico, Cultura, 1961 and 1969.

8 T. E. Skidmore and P. H. Smith: *Contemporary History...*, op. cit, p.231.

the government of Prado came the approval of APRA and the release of Haya de la Torre. In those elections it was ranked second the ticket of the National Front of Democratic Youth, of debutant Fernando Belaunde Terry, an architect trained at the University of Texas and from a prominent family, who began to articulate the hopes and frustrations of the educated middle sectors of the country.

Prado's government marked a period of political stabilisation. Union organisation was allowed (and at the end of his mandate it had gathered 330,000 members)⁹ and the free activity of the Peruvian Communist Party (PCP), which was able to win strong presence in the union and agrarian sphere. The communists were the ones who in 1956 founded the Peasant Confederation of Peru, which would be under their control. In economic policy, the government of Prado, through its Minister in the area, the aristocrat Pedro Beltran continued Odria's orientation, placing emphasis on exports and foreign companies. Despite the announcement of a program of "Roof and land" for the peasants, little was done with it.

In contrast with the stable political situation, since the inauguration of Prado an increasing social conflict was experienced, especially in rural areas: "For the broad scope they came to cover, for their intensity and their impact on the agrarian structure and national and regional political system, the struggles that occurred in the period 1956-1964 are probably the most important in contemporary Peruvian history of rural protests [...] It was in the Peruvian highlands, especially in the central highlands (departments of Junin and Pasco) and the southern sierra (Cusco) where the peasant mobilisation was more intense and had more political impact..."¹⁰ The climate of social unrest is expressed in different ways. In April 1958, the visit of US Vice President Richard Nixon produced large popular mobilisations. In Cusco, the population nearly took the city, overcoming completely the traditional union and political leaderships. The repression was very hard but could not prevent the continuation of the demonstrations. In addition, in early 1960 several strikes broke out, especially in the coastal industrial zone. It was also during the Prado administration when began to develop the powerful peasant movement that occupied the land of the landowners in the highlands area: "In the early 1960s the action headed by Hugo Blanco moved for various reasons, the ruling class and the army. [Peruvian newspaper] *La Prensa* [The Press] unleashed a violent campaign against the communist 'guerrilla', thereby ensuring that the military focus on the task of repression against the peasantry and in general against all the popular movement in the process of becoming progressively autonomous from APRA".¹¹

An essential element to take into account is the process of political leftward shifting that was taking place around the early 1960s (and which would deepen over the decade) in sectors of students and the middle class in general. This happened in all of Latin America and also had a timely expression in the Peruvian case. A key incentive in this phenomenon of radicalisation was the impact exerted by the Cuban Revolution. Consider the general admiration that was waking up the quest of the "bearded ones" of the Caribbean island among the youth across the continent and consider the situation that took place by early 1962. At that time Cuba was expelled from the OAS, while the United States and most Latin American countries initiated an economic blockade against it. With the Second Declaration of Havana, Fidel Castro responded by announcing his support for organisations that decide to confront weapons in hand the "pro-imperialist forces" in any country in the region. Simultaneously, it was culminating in the island the "expropriation" of property of the bourgeoisie and foreign capital. Economic and military aid from the USSR to Cuba multiplied, and between September and October were installed platforms capable of launching nuclear missiles against the US. Upon discovery of its presence, the US threatened to start a nuclear war. This "missile crisis" in October 1962, was resolved when Khrushchev— with the public disavowal

9 "The number of recognised unions increased from 493 in 1955 to 1093 in 1961..." Denis Sulmont: *The Peruvian labour movement (1890-1980)*, Lima, Tarea, 1985, p. 84.

10 Mariano Valderrama L.: "Political History of the Peruvian peasant movement in the XX century" in Pablo Gonzalez Casanova (ed.): *Political History of Latin American peasants* (vol.3), Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1985, p.136-137.

11 Julio Cotler, "Peru, oligarchic state and military reformism" in Pablo Gonzalez Casanova (ed.): *Latin America: History of half a century* (vol. 1: "South America"). Mexico, Siglo XXI, 1986, p.399.

of Castro— agreed to negotiate with Kennedy and withdrew those weapons from the Caribbean. All these events that aggravated the conditions of the “cold war” rocked several leftist forces, which began to be tempted to test the “foquist” tactics and “guerrilla warfare”. For its part, the Algerian independence, achieved in the same year, also influenced the radicalisation of groups within the nationalist parties throughout the world, which did not hesitate to use various methods of armed struggle to achieve their goals. All this would be evident in Peru, with the appearance of armed groups of “Castroist” orientation, which would have a link with the peasant uprising process analysed here. In the APRA a sector split, “APRA Rebelde”, which soon gave rise to the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), led by Luis de la Puente Uceda and Ricardo Napuri. But it also hit hard on the PCP, leading to the formation of the National Liberation Army (ELN), organised, among others, by Hector Bejar Rivera.¹²

If we stop now in the dominant features of Peru’s economic and social situation at the time of the outbreak of the peasant revolt we can point out that since 1950 there has been happening some industrial development in the country (which was reflected in a change in the composition of PBN) and a deterioration in the growth of agricultural activity which led to increased migration from the countryside to the city.¹³ However, by 1962, 60 percent of the Peruvian population was still made up of six million peasants and of the indigenous’ communes. Their income was a monthly average of US\$3. At the other end of the social pyramid, 500 people representing the Peruvian oligarchy, formed by large landowners and businessmen. By the early 1960s, in Peru the mortality rate exceeded 12 percent; life expectancy barely reached 46; illiteracy affected almost 50 percent of the Peruvian population, but reached 80 percent in the rural sector of Cusco. The food deficit in the latter reached 61 percent of the necessary calories and 92.8 percent of the proteins required for living.¹⁴

It is important to note that Peru has been historically divided into three regions, with huge disparities among themselves: the coast— the relatively more prosperous and developed-sector; the highlands— mainly peasant—, and the jungle— with little settlement. Disparities between these regions, particularly between the coast, predominantly urban and “Creole”, and the mountains, rural and indigenous, presented the image of several countries within a single state. A heterogeneous country but unified around a common trait: extreme poverty, which was felt especially in the highlands region. By the end of the 1970s it could be said: “Peru is one of the countries with the worst income distribution in the world. A study by Paukert, based on a sample of 56 countries, ranks it among the four of worst distribution (along with Gabon, Colombia and Iraq). Decisively influencing this situation, undoubtedly, are the very low incomes of poor Andean peasants, about 25 percent of the nation’s households whose average per capita income hovers around US\$ 50 annually since a couple of decades ago. This places most of the Andean rural areas at a level similar to that of the poorest Asian and African countries”.¹⁵ The peasant rebellion led by Hugo Blanco, will have its epicentre in the highlands region (with certain proximity to the jungle area). It is desirable, therefore, to deepen the social x-ray of the Andean peasantry.

12 A description of the formation of the Peruvian guerrillas at this time is in Rivera Hector Bejar: *Peru 1965: Notes on a guerrilla experience*, Montevideo, Editorial Sandino, Casa de las Americas Prize, 1969; and in Daniel Pereyra: *From Moncada to Chiapas. History of armed struggle in Latin America*, 2nd ed., Madrid, Los libros de la Catarata editorial, 1995.

13 As claimed by Anibal Quijano Obregon: since the 1950s, “the manufacturing industry came to occupy the first place previously held by agricultural activities, and each of the average annual growth rates of industry and mining were double of what agriculture was showing”, in A. Quijano Obregon: *Nationalism, neo-imperialism and militarism in Peru*, Buenos Aires, Periferia Editions, 1971, p.42-43. The problem of internal migration is well covered in Henry F. Dobyns and Mario C. Vazquez (editors): *Migration and Integration in Peru*. Lima, Estudios Andinos, 1963.

14 Statistical data extracted from Carlos Malpica: *Chronicle of hunger in Peru*. Lima, Francisco Moncloa editors, 1966, pp. 260 and 265; and Augusto and Sebastian Salazar Bondy, Virgilio Roel Pineda and Jose Matos Mar: *The crossroads of Peru*. Montevideo, Arca, 1963.

15 Jose Maria Caballero: *Agriculture, agrarian reform and rural poverty*. Lima, Institute of Peruvian Studies, 1980, p. 139.

The peasantry of the Peruvian highlands

Most of the rural population in the Peruvian Andes was indigenous, spoke Quechua and lived under conditions of exploitation that fell within a backward capitalist production, although they mimicked old feudal forms. The system of land tenure was very varied and unique. The concentration of ownership was one of the highest in Latin America: 1 percent of agricultural units occupied 75 percent of the total surface available and 0.35 percent of the owners owned 60 percent of the lands.¹⁶ Moreover, some of the largest haciendas were of American capital. A documented statistical and sociological study claims about the social profile of the Peruvian highlands: “The most important tenure system in the region is undoubtedly the traditional estate, which has been described as complex hacienda-smallholding. Next in rank the transitional estates and the really modern commercial estates do not exist [...] What the traditional large estates of the Peruvian highlands mean from a sociological point of view, requires a more precise idea than the one we usually have. Often references are made to it as a feudal institution of classic characteristics [...] but this is not the case [...] In the highlands, the traditional hacienda appears and operates without a master. The owner rarely lives there; he arrives at the property just to harvest the crop, whose proceeds he will invest far away. Without adequate capital investment, the basis of economic sustainability of this estate, ancestral and primitive in its methods, it is the indigenous feudal serf, rooted tenaciously to the usufruct of a small plot of land, which he is allowed to cultivate in payment of countless hours of work for the benefit of the boss.”¹⁷

A 92 percent of the rural population was made up by *comuneros*— i.e., members of indigenous communes or *ayllus*, whose lands were for communal-exploitation. It was about three million people, most of them forced by lack of land, to work additionally for a *gamonal* or estate landowner. The relationship between the peasant and the *gamonal* was structured in a series of strata. The *arrendire* [renter], contracting directly with the landowner, obtained the right to cultivate a plot of the property, in exchange for free work in the *gamonal's* fields (sometimes up to 25 days per month). In large estates, some *arrendires* subcontracted to *allegados* (associates), and they, in turn, to the enabled or *manipuras*, in relations similar to those existing between the *arrendire* and the *gamonal*. Furthermore, there were also “free labourers”, formally rural wage workers living on the haciendas, without land or their own housing, working for miserable pay. To these it was normal unpaid personal services— called *pongaje* in men and *mitani* in women— consisting of carrying out domestic work, on a compulsory basis and by simple decision of the *gamonal*. Abuses committed by landlords covered corporal punishment, torture, killings, and sexual exploitation of the peasant woman, among others.

The peasant lacked any right in his relations with the *gamonal* and with the political power. Remember that the rights of the *ayllus* (communes) to their lands had been violated since the independence of Peru in 1822, and periodic peasant revolts had been crushed for almost a century and a half. The peasant, mostly indigenous and illiterate, had no political rights, including voting, as it was limited to those who could read and write. Moreover, as Hugo Blanco stated, “the ‘Indian’ is an oppressed nationality. Although the wall separating him from the mestizo and white is not as strong as in the case of the United States, the humiliation, the crushing of which he is victim is greater. Their language, their music, their clothing, their tastes, their traditional practices are scorned, crushed, denigrated [...] Undoubtedly, the struggle in the field is the peasant against the *gamonal*; but the vindication of the Indian, of the oppressed nationality, is a fundamental

16 The examination of the large property is well treated in Henri Favre, Claude Collin-Delavaud and Jose Matos Mar: *The hacienda in Peru*. Lima, Institute of Peruvian Studies, 1967. Regarding the problem of land ownership and the social structure in the Peruvian countryside, we refer also to the ever classic text of Jose Carlos Mariategui: *7 Interpretive essays on Peruvian reality* [13th edition]. Lima, Amauta Library, 1968.

17 Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDA)—made up FAO, OAS, IDB, ECLAC and IICA—: *Tenure of land and socio-economic development of the agricultural sector: Peru*. Washington, Pan American Union, General Secretariat of the OAS, 1966, p.111.

ingredient. Therefore, we have always spoken in Quechua along the struggle; we have always exalted the Indian”¹⁸

On this “social environment” began acting Hugo Blanco when he arrived in the late 1950s, the La Convencion Valley, on the Urubamba River (also known as Vilcanota or Willkamayu). But who was Hugo Blanco? How was his relationship with Trotskyism?

Hugo Blanco and Trotskyism in Cusco

Hugo Blanco Galdos was born in Cusco in 1934, son of a lawyer advocate of peasants (who became a Member of the Court) and a mother of rural origin.¹⁹ During his adolescence, in his father’s practice he had known the demands and miseries of the agrarian sectors, and had learned to speak Quechua while listening to old leaders of indigenous uprisings tell their stories of struggle. In 1954, as was customary in many young Peruvians of the time, Blanco was sent by his family to study in Argentina. He did so in the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of La Plata, which he left shortly before completing his studies. Blanco became associated with the large colony of university Peruvian residents in this city, linked to politicised Athenaeums where all ideological currents converged, especially the exiled APRA. While his father could finance his studies, Blanco preferred to earn his own income and learn the experience of living as a labourer: he became a hired hand in meatpacking plant Armour and Swift in [the town of] Berisso, joining the meatpackers union; this is when he learned the rudiments of political and union activity.

The young Peruvian became then associated with one of the tendencies of vernacular Trotskyism that had some gravitation in the union and student circles of La Plata: the one oriented by the leader Nahuel Moreno.²⁰ This current had been acting in the country since 1943, when he founded a small political core called *Grupo Obrero Marxista* (Marxist Workers Group – GOM), which in 1948 adopted the name of *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* [Workers’ Revolutionary Party – POR]. In 1954 the POR joined the Socialist Party for the National Revolution (PSRN), controlling its Buenos Aires Federation. The PSRN was an experience of regrouping of various socialist and Trotskyist groups which had a policy of rapprochement with the Peronist workers and of denunciation of the imminent military coup against the government of Peron. After the triumph of the *Revolución Libertadora* [Liberating Revolution] coup and the beginning of the workers’ resistance to this process, the PSRN was outlawed. Moreno’s group, which had established strong bonds with sectors of Peronist workers finally formed, in July 1957, the organisation *Palabra Obrera* [Workers’ Word] (which in 1965 would join the FRIP of the Santucho brothers to form the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* [Revolutionary Workers Party]). Blanco joined *Palabra Obrera* in the same year of its foundation, starting to be active in La Plata region.

In 1958 the now Trotskyist activist Hugo Blanco returned to Peru. There he joined Moreno’s sister current, which was much weaker, both numerically and organisationally, compared to the Argentine party. The names showing the evolution of Peruvian Trotskyism are very similar to the previous case: in 1946 they had created the Marxist Workers Group (GOM), which is then incorporated in the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR). The foundation stage of Peruvian Trotskyism was closed in 1952 when the violent repression of Odria’s military regime ended in exile and prison for most of the Trotskyist leaders. In 1956, at the end of the dictatorship, Trotskyism emerged divided into two currents. One, led by Ismael Frias, acting within the framework of the so-called International Secretariat of the Fourth International (worldwide organisation headed by the Greek Michel Raptis, and by the Argentine Jorge Posadas in Latin America). The other, which kept the name of POR and whose best known leaders were Hernando Aguirre Gamio and Felix Zevallos,

¹⁸ Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit., p.13-17.

¹⁹ Much of the data about the life of Hugo Blanco have been reconstructed from a critical reading of papers by Villanueva (*Hugo Blanco...*, op. cit.) and Añi Castillo, even though both papers have several factual errors and interpretation weaknesses.

²⁰ The reconstruction of the history of this current was made from Ernesto Gonzalez (coord.): *Worker and internationalist Trotskyism in Argentina* (4 vols.), Buenos Aires, Antidoto, 1995, 1996 and 1999.

appeared heavily influenced by the positions of Nahuel Moreno and the Argentine POR. From the agreement between the POR of Argentina, Peru and Chile, plus the contribution of nuclei in other countries, the SLATO (Latin American Secretariat of Orthodox Trotskyism) was set up, acting with its own policy within the Fourth International. The Peruvian POR, despite its certain influence in the trade union field, was a small group that did not exceed a score of leaders, distributed between Lima and Arequipa, the two main cities in the country. However, as we shall see, this party will acquire some weight in the Peruvian popular movement from the activity initiated by Hugo Blanco in the Cusco valleys.

At the beginning, Blanco joined the POR in Lima, again getting a job in a factory; but he remained for a short time in the Peruvian capital. That was when he decided to settle in Cusco. Years later, the protagonist recalled those circumstances: “In honour of the truth, we have to admit that the beginning of our peasant work was not due to a very clear prior political vision of the importance of the peasantry in our country; but, in large part, to the pressure of circumstances. In addition, the theoretical contributions of comrade Nahuel Moreno, in particular, helped us a lot to be aware of this importance. Richard Nixon’s visit to Lima in 1958, sparked popular demonstrations of repudiation of such an extent, that it was a surprise to the repressive forces. They reacted after the events going hard against the revolutionary groups; the POR, which was one of the main drivers of the mobilisation, was also one of those that most suffered repression. In order to prevent my capture it was decided I leave the factory where I worked [...] Then, considering the combativeness being shown by the people of Cusco (who overtaking the leaderships almost completely seized the city in April 1958) and other factors, the party decided to move me to that city. I was the most suitable as I was natural of that department, and I was out of the factory”.²¹

Blanco noted that in these early days, in addition to its numerical scarcity, the Peruvian POR was far from being a solid party not only in terms of its numerical strength but also with respect to its programmatic clarity. The POR did not see the importance of the activity in the peasant sphere and for a long time this task in Cusco fell to single party militant, almost completely detached from the rest of the organisation.²² In the highlands city, Blanco began working on the street sale of newspapers. Given his political and trade union experience learned in Argentina, the young man quickly stood out in organising the Trade Union of Newspaper Vendors. As a representative of this union he joined the Federation of Workers of Cusco (FTC). The FTC was oriented by the Communists, who have always had in this Andean city most power.²³ Thus Blanco recalled his first actions: “Within the FTC I met a reality that we did not expect: it was essentially a craft organisation, with minority workers’ representation. In addition, the radical wing was not constituted by the workers’ delegations, but by peasant delegates. It was then that I began my peasant militancy, because although we POR militants had a disproportionately ‘workerist’ criterion for Peru, as Marxists we practiced the method of seeing reality and assimilating its teachings, and of acting wherever the revolutionary current went through”.²⁴

By mid-1959 major demonstrations against the rising fuel prices took place in Cusco. The POR participated actively in the process. Hugo Blanco led one of the “pickets” organised by the party, and in clashes with police he was identified as responsible for attacking a police patrol. Following this activity he was imprisoned in the Central Prison of Cusco. In prison, Blanco associated with several leaders of peasant unions, among them stood out Andres González, who, from Blanco’s preaching, also joined the POR. In this first experience with agrarian leaders, Hugo Blanco quickly agreed about the criticism that they had towards the FTC led by the Communists, both for the

21 Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit., p.7. An example of the dimension reached by the mobilisation against Nixon is given in the fact the commander of the military garrison of Cusco was “captured” by the population. The Peruvian Communist Party accused “undercover Trotskyists” of being responsible for the facts. This can be seen in *Unidad* [Unity], organ of PCP, 16 April, 1958. Quoted by Ismael Frias, *The Peruvian revolution*, Lima, editions POR(T), 1963.

22 Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit., p.25.

23 Eric Hobsbawm (in “Peasant movement in Peru” op. cit., p. 283) takes care of highlighting the enormous influence communism had in Cusco, much larger than APRA. Its hegemony in the labour movement was almost total and its organisational presence among the peasantry was also important. Hugo Blanco will have to deal with this.

24 Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit., p.7.

“bureaucratic methods” as for the “reformist orientation” that this party would have used in the leadership of the federation.

After more than two months in prison, Blanco, with the support of some of the rural leaders, embarked on a hunger strike for eight days, demanding his freedom. As Blanco recalled: “The revolutionary peasantry, helped by other sectors, pressured the FTC in such a way that this was forced to threaten a strike demanding my freedom, with which it was won”.²⁵ Indeed, the PCP, which guided the federation, was forced to lead the demand for Blanco’s freedom, as several peasant unions began pushing in that direction. Detention and the hunger strike transformed Hugo Blanco into a “public figure” in Cusco, as the only leader of the FTC who had been arrested for the incidents alluded to before. After leaving prison, Blanco was named delegate for some peasant unions with the FTC. But the Communists, who already at this time accused Blanco, alternatively or successively, of being an “FBI agent provocateur, adventurer or a rich kid pretending to be a peasant”,²⁶ challenged the appointment: “This bureaucracy flatly rejected my appointment as a union delegate with the FTC and practically threw me out of the Federation. Furthermore they blocked with all their power my direct involvement in the organisation of the Provincial Federation of Peasants of La Convencion, in the foundational Congress of this and in their mass meetings”.²⁷ From there it would begin the long-running dispute between the Communists and the Trotskyists of Blanco for union representation of Cusco peasants. Blanco believed that the best way to earn that representation was to become a peasant and go to live among them (as he had previously decided to live as a labourer). By early 1960 he had already settled in the valley of La Convencion.

At La Convencion and Lares: heart of the events

It is worth stopping at the specific characteristics of La Convencion since it was (along with Lares) the theatre of the peasant rebellion that was then initiated. La Convencion is a border province of the department of Cusco, while Lares is a district of the province of Calca, also belonging to that department. La Convencion has 45,000 km² of hills and subtropical and tropical forest at 1,250 metres of altitude; it is separated from the rest of the Cusco region by mountains and narrow passes, and crossed by rapid waters. This area had always been almost uninhabited (there were only four indigenous communities of the 217 legally recognised, in the region of Cusco) until after the 1930s malaria was eradicated and a railway (from Cusco to Santa Ana) was built. The area is thus opened to a wider market economy and the population increased, although it still remained at very low levels. But the high degree of isolation in which this territory was at the time of the uprising of Blanco is expressed by the fact that the capital of the area, Quillabamba, was at several hours by rail, bus or truck, on very precarious roads. It is important to note these features because it may help explain, perhaps, the isolation the peasant uprising will have.

At La Convencion, the land was divided between public land not cultivated and properties of large estates (there were 174 of them). The latter were cultivated in part by *arrendires* (farm labourers) receiving parcels on the slopes of the mountains to grow their food in exchange for a fixed number of working days and whose access to market is by means of the landowners. Since the 1940s the landowners were responding to the high demand for coffee and tea in the international market by encouraging its cultivation in the best land, which were precisely the mountain slopes. In many cases, landowners pressured to cancel concessions to the *arrendires* and directly assume the cultivation with wage labourers. After a time the *arrendires* found they could increase their production of coffee in vacant lots and sell directly to middlemen. So they began to refuse to provide labour services in the plains, where less profitable products (sugar cane, cacao, and coca) are cultivated. As it has been pointed out: “The population of the valley has doubled between 1940 and 1960 (from 30,000 to more than 60,000 people, of which 10,000 were farm labourers), due to

²⁵ Ibid, p. 8.

²⁶ Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, op. cit. p. 49.

²⁷ Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit., p.8.

the arrival of immigrants who were attracted by the possibility of making money with the expansion of the agricultural market".²⁸

In this context it loomed large social category of *associates* (about 12,000), recent immigrants, who worked for the *arrendires* in planting-harvest seasons and received from them small plots for subsistence farming. According to Craig, "less than a third of the peasants who lived in La Convencion in 1965 were natives from the province. Two thirds came from the provinces of Urubamba, Caloa, Anta, Acomayo and Apurimac, adjacent to La Convencion".²⁹ These "pioneers" as Hobsbawm called them, had arrived in the area attracted "by both the new economic possibilities as well as hopes for greater freedom in a large virgin territory, but they found a land already parcelled, distributed among a handful of oddly archaic and enlarged estates. La Convencion is a new country, and almost, in the American sense, a frontier territory".³⁰ Underneath them the already mentioned the *enabled* or labourers.

Once established in La Convencion, Hugo Blanco sublet a small plot in character of *associate* within the plot his friend and comrade Andres Gonzalez leased from an unpopular landowner Alfredo Romainville, in his hacienda of Chaupimayo. Blanco was then in the domains of a *gamonal* who had more than 80,000 hectares and several haciendas: Huadquina, Santa Rosa, Jochapampa, Chaupimayo and Yamana.³¹ Gonzalez was the Secretary General of the Union of Peasants of Santa Rosa and Chaupimayo, and for the mere fact of having organised the union he had been sent to jail for two years by Romainville.³² The central political objective charted by Blanco was to deepen and extend unionisation of the peasantry of the whole area and to begin developing with other leaders a "bill of demands" that they showed the boss. When the *gamonal* refused, rural workers of Chaupimayo started the first peasant strike and became the vanguard in the taking of land. The "pickets" prevented groups of strikebreakers hired by the *gamonal* from working and they cut off the road to the very Romainville on his way to his estate. In addition, the union organised the slaughter of cattle and the distribution of a ration of meat for all peasants living in the estate.

In what Blanco would be truly notable was in the organisation of peasant unions and their centralisation into a federation. Early attempts to create unions in La Convencion had been in the early 1950s. But these unions "rather served as a basis for prestige for some 'left' lawyers of Cusco who had very little to do with the peasants".³³ When Blanco established himself in the region they were very scarce, "almost all organised by the leader Calvo Bohorquez. There was no Provincial Federation or Departmental Federation of peasants. All unions in the valley were simply members of the FTC. Blanco set himself the primary task of organising new unions and, under his own responsibility and without the help of his friends of the POR from Lima".³⁴ On arriving at Cusco Blanco had found only eight unions organised; when his campaign is over, they will be almost 150, with nearly 15,000 members. At the same time, the Provincial Federation of Peasant Unions of the Convencion and Lares (FPCC), was created with Andres González elected as general secretary and Blanco as a delegate for the Departmental Federation of Peasants of Cusco, where he would serve as Secretary for Agrarian Reform.

The most significant part of the organisation conceived by Blanco was that he tried to incorporate all the peasants— be they *arrendires*, associates, enabled or free labourers— in the same body and behind a single list of demands, and appealing to the strike action. The strike, in this case, was that the peasant would not work the land of the landowner. If the boss does not give in, he loses the harvest. At the same time, during the strike, the peasants could devote themselves to working the land assigned to them. This work of his plot implied the occupation of the land, and

28 Guillermo de la Peña: "Rural mobilisations in Latin America since c. 1920", in L. Bethell (ed.), op. cit., p. 237.

29 W. W. Craig: *The peasant movement in La Convencion...*, op. cit., p. 9.

30 Eric J. Hobsbawm: "Peasant movement in Peru", op. cit., p. 277.

31 Carlos Malpica: *The owners of Peru*, Lima, Peisa Editions, 1973 (1st ed. 1964), p. 157.

32 Victor Villanueva: *Hugo Blanco and the peasant rebellion*, op. cit., p. 30.

33 Adolfo Gilly: "The guerrilla trade unions of Peru", in Marcha, Montevideo, August 1963. Quoted in V. Villanueva: *Hugo Blanco and the peasant rebellion*, op. cit., p. 75.

34 Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, op. cit. p. 34.

so the strike posed, by way of fact, the fundamental problem for the peasant: land ownership. As it can be seen, Blanco first appealed to the agitation of minimum and felt claims by all the peasants. But this, like François Bourricaud points out, ran “the danger of running into a series of local and anecdotal reasons for complaint”. That’s when Blanco decided to raise the ante and make a general claim for land. As the French sociologist continues on: “To avoid losing momentum, we must designate an enemy and formulate a hope: the enemy is the landowner, hope is the land returned to the peasants. Hugo Blanco perceived very well the starting point of the agitation process, which is the time when the claim goes outside the scope of the hacienda to spread to provincial level. At this point a double bond is made. First, the protest movements within the various estates can be coordinated; secondly, agrarian agitation comes into contact with the urban population”.³⁵

Strikes with occupation of land, unionisation and rising of peasant consciousness seemed to be the three main strategies promoted by Hugo Blanco. As observed by a journalist at the time: “While the strike lasted, the process of unionisation was driven thoroughly. All risk situations were discussed at a mass meeting of the Union. Many of the sessions had a typically catechetical, educational, proselytising nature. The peasants were explained the class character of the government, the class character of all its organs of power. Each point was painted with vivid examples and related to situations in which the listeners themselves had been protagonists. Day by day consciousness increased. The villagers understood the urgent need to promote unionisation. They understood that they would be more respected to the extent they spread their own organisation. Little by little they found the sense of a strike, a clash with police, a land invasion”.³⁶

Thus, Hugo Blanco, “*Hugucha*” as he was called in Quechua by the Cusco peasants, began to become a legendary figure for the peasantry. But certainly he was not the only leader or activist. Let’s take a look at how he recalled that, “because of the abuses of the *gamonal*, of repression and the Trotskyist vanguard, Chaupimayo radicalised in such a way that almost all of its members were well disciplined revolutionary trade unionists. Even the rank and file members of this union, played the role of organisers and leaders in other areas [...] These leaders of La Convencion, along with the courageous activists from other provinces surrounding the unparalleled Juan Huallpa in Cusco and those who acted with Claudio Hanqo in Lares, have been the real leaders of the process of revolutionary upsurge in La Convencion”.³⁷ By July 1961 Hugo Blanco was not just an important agrarian leader in La Convencion but he was disputing every inch of the FTC leadership to the Communists.

The situation was unprecedented: a militant with university studies and Marxist theoretical education, who had been formed in the massive Argentine unions (especially in the combative meatworkers union) and in a political current as Trotskyism, which made a cult of the experiences of the industrial proletariat, is now catapulted as leader of a peasant and ethnic resistance. It is from this experience and ideological baggage how it is possible to understand the approach of Blanco to convince the Cusco peasants to become aware of the full potential that could be found in an organisation of rural workers to break with the stratifications imposed by the *gamonal* and to incorporate the strike as a form of struggle. However, we must not lose sight of the distance that separated the aspirations to radicalise the process of struggle in a socialist perspective, Blanco’s own, and the most direct and immediate reasons that would encourage peasant mobilisation. This was clearly observed by Hobsbawm: “The crucial fact about the peasant agitations of La Convencion is that its origin and its leadership reside in the rural middle class of *arrendires*, though their demands also reach those of *associates*. Its main interest was to convert the system of feudal lease of the land in a capitalist system of the same or to make it peasant property”.³⁸ We can hypothesise that Blanco placed himself ahead of expectations and proposals of the *arrendires* when he began to raise total expropriation of large estates and their distribution among the true agricultural landowners.

35 F. Bourricaud: *Power and society in contemporary Peru*, op. cit. p. 44.

36 Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, op. cit. p. 56-57

37 Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit., p. 27. Blanco mentions, equally, a large list of leaders and their place of activity.

38 Eric J. Hobsbawm: “Peasant movement in Peru”, op. cit., p. 279.

Analysing this first experience of struggle, a Congress of the Peruvian POR, meeting in Arequipa in November 1960, developed as a political line the objective of achieving a “peasant insurrection”, accompanied by a defensive system of armed struggle. To that end, it was decided to promote the formation of a Revolutionary Front, calling on all revolutionary forces of Peru and requested the SLATO to discuss and clarify the development of these policies. This was done in Buenos Aires, at the meeting of SLATO in April 1961, within the framework of the resolutions of this Trotskyist organisation on Latin America. Although a complete turnaround of the militancy to Peru was not decided at that time, its importance stood out. As noted by a subsequent document that reviewed the facts, the SLATO found that at this time in the Cusco peasantry existed “a solid revolutionary base. This makes that the Peruvian problem be particularly discussed and a whole new program for the section be adopted whose central bases are the following: a) The vanguard of the revolution are the peasant masses; its engine, land occupation. b) Cusco is, for now, the regional centre of this process (...) d) The way to combine the agricultural and urban process is the slogan “Land and vote for the Peasant” and denouncing the fraudulent nature of the elections, for the no vote of the majority of the population, illiterate”.³⁹

Considering that it was difficult to assess the Peruvian process from Buenos Aires, the SLATO then decided to send some leaders to the area to assist the Peruvian POR. In the following months, given the advance of Cusco peasant struggles and the leadership role Hugo Blanco had in them, the organisation considered that Peru should be the privileged axis of intervention throughout the continent, for being there in a better position to concentrate forces to drive the “Latin American revolution”. This meant installing SLATO headquarters in Lima, turning in favour of the peasant uprising the largest financial effort and, especially, developing a suitable strategy and tactics for the preparation of the “Peruvian revolution”. Without all these facts related to the Trotskyist movement we have described, and that no academic study hitherto has referred to, it is impossible to understand many of the events of the peasant uprising, and the participation of Blanco in it, which we will now analyse.

The peasant uprising

During 1961 began to clearly be noted that the process of peasant unionisation and land occupation had deepened. The cry of *Otac allpa otac huañuy!* (Land or death!) walked the valleys in the mouth of tens of thousands of peasants with torches in their hands and shaking their tools. The whole valley of La Convencion was in a state of indefinite strike. The city of Quillabamba was controlled by the rebel peasants. “The owners of Radio Quillabamba had to give their microphones for better dissemination of the speeches and proclamations that visiting leaders would launch.”⁴⁰ On May Day and 26 July mass peasant demonstrations were held. “Landless workers with machetes in hand and thousands more men carrying torches and tools, did shake those who would have believed dead the Quechua nationality.”⁴¹ In November of that year, the demonstrations against the presence of Minister Beltran in Cusco included mass concentrations, which in La Convencion came to collect 40,000 protesters. Since then, in the latter region and in Lares, the biggest rise of the peasant uprising is reached, deepening of land occupations and taking violent measures against the landlords and police.⁴²

The owners organised armed groups to repel occupations and the peasants attempted an incipient armament to defend themselves. A series of “militias” organised by trade unions were then formed. You can call them this way for the type of organisation and the statement of its objectives,

39 “Draft Report on Latin American Activities”, in *Boletín Palabra Obrera* [Worker’s Word Bulletin], No 1, Buenos Aires, January 1963.

40 Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, op. cit. p. 58

41 Ibid, p. 59.

42 In Hobsbawm aforementioned article there is a description of this massive process of land occupation such as was then reported by the Peruvian press (dailies *Cronica*, *La Prensa*, *Expreso* and others).

but it should be clarified they did not have authentic war equipment but only farm tools and some old shotguns and rifles. It was precisely at this moment when Blanco began to raise the need for armed struggle as a tactic of peasant defence: “In La Convencion, once the union work advanced a little, we began the propaganda of armed struggle, first among the vanguard, cautiously, then gradually among the masses [...] Some peasants from the vanguard began to acquire weapons, stating that a weapon was ‘the best lawyer’”.⁴³ The role model to follow that was becoming popular was that which had concluded in Cuba with the revolutionary triumph of Fidel Castro.

As an example of the radicalisation the peasant process was reaching let us recall one of the facts narrated by Blanco in his book. During one of the initial strikes, the union of Chaupimayo was assigned a close area to promote it. A *gamonal*, with the support of a police commission, tried to confront the peasant picket and the result was that they were disarmed. “The return was tremendous, triumphant, the ‘Secretary of the Women’s Front’, a feisty comrade went with the kepi of a guard in her head and the gun in her shoulder [...] When I met with my comrades coming back from Quillabamba, we took advantage of the incidents for a meeting of consciousness raising; we showed its symbolic character: This is what the Peruvian people will do in the future, seize weapons from the hands of the exploiters and their servants [...] The fact that the Stalinist reaction was still strong in the Federation, forced us to return the policeman’s gun due to the pressure from it, to avoid severe repression. The *gamonal’s* gun we never returned.”⁴⁴

The climate of social unrest that existed at that time in the Peruvian highlands appears well described in the first issue of *Bandera Roja* [Red Flag], organ of the POR in Cusco, where it reported on the “First peasant rally of Cusco” held in those days: “The imperial city has witnessed with a genuine class framework, a manifestation of peasant delegations coming from all provinces. It was an angry rally, expression of the rise of the peasantry; they were the descendants of the Inca warriors, suffering for four centuries but willing to end oppression [...] Cuba and Fidel Castro have been present in the memory of the speakers and the masses and it has been promised to follow their steps and make the agrarian reform [...] The struggle that the peasant is carrying out for the freedom of their leaders is worthy of admiration: a 48-hour strike throughout the province of La Convencion, a courageous rally in Quillabamba and now a rally in Cusco that had the valuable collaboration of the revolutionary students [...] Revolutionary Cusco heard excited the rebellion phrases: *Huañuchun gamonal! Kausachun llancac runa! Allpatan munaiku! Kausachun Cuba! Kausachun Fidel Castro! Cohabitants to the wall! Kausachun Peasant Federation! Kausachun Workers Federation Cusco!*”⁴⁵

In that paper it was reported on the activities for the constitution of a “Revolutionary United Front, toward the single party of the Revolution”. Highlighted there was the formation of a Revolutionary Students Front (FER), akin to the prospects of struggle that Blanco promoted. The FER presented itself in the student elections at the University of Cusco, where it came second with 45 percent of the vote. All this will come together towards the creation of a “Worker-Peasant-Student Union”. This process of popular regrouping is well described in *Bandera Roja*. There it was reported that “the students participated in the peasant rally with their speakers and attending massively [...] together workers, peasants, and students after traveling some streets of Cusco went to the premises of the Workers Federation where a historic meeting was held. It was agreed to organise a United Committee of Workers, Peasants and Students in which would be represented the FER (Revolutionary Student Front), FTC (Workers Federation of Cusco), the FDCC (Departmental Federation of Cusco Peasants) and the Provincial Peasants Federation of La Convencion”.⁴⁶ In this political situation, and from these experiences of growth, bonding and radicalisation of various peasant, student and worker sectors, it was formed in December 1961 the *Frente de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (Revolutionary Left Front – FIR), in which converged the POR, independent and

43 Hugo Blanco, *Land or death*, op. cit., p.27.

44 Ibid., p. 62-63.

45 *Bandera Roja* [Red Flag], Cusco, July 1961. The slogans in Quechua means “Death to the gamonal!, Long live the workers! The land for us!, Long live Cuba !, Long live Fidel Castro!”

46 Ibid.

Leninist CP— a faction of the PCP which had broken with the party accusing it of reformist—militants.

The call of the FIR to the entire “revolutionary left” failed to get from this an attitude of participation and support in the process of the Peruvian peasant uprising. Possibly, the presence of a peasant leader of recognised Trotskyist trajectory and training generated a shock in the Peruvian left, in which the Communists had great influence. According to Blanco, “The Peruvian Communist Party still considered itself the undisputed owner of the Peruvian revolution (although they saw it as distant, as far away as possible). At that time we Trotskyists were still described unquestionably as ‘agents of imperialism’ (in Cusco it was added ‘and of the *gamonales*)”.⁴⁷ As years later it was acknowledged by Hector Bejar, former leader of the PCP and then organiser of the Castroist ELN: “peasant unionisation extended from 1956 to 1962. The highest point of that great wave, because of the political quality of its leaders, was in the valleys of La Convencion and Lares and the leading figure was Hugo Blanco. But Hugo Blanco was and is a disciplined Trotskyist militant. This fact posed a serious problem to the left. Hadn’t it been said for many years that the Trotskyists are agents of imperialism? Hadn’t it been repeatedly pointed out Trotskyism are a counter-revolutionary current? The years of Stalinism were not far away and, in any case, the fallen idol Stalin, the supreme anathema against Trotskyism had not been removed by anyone; he was in full force. That’s on one side. On the other, the left as a whole did not fully enlist into the peasant struggle. They oriented organisations ‘from above’, advising the unions, temporarily assigned organisers to the countryside, but they did not directed ‘from within’, in the manner of Blanco. On the one hand, their political prejudices, still remaining, prevented them from giving Blanco the collaboration he deserved. On the other, their inertia kept them locked in their old urban moulds”.⁴⁸ In this way, the political support of the movement led by Blanco was restricted to small sections of the left; indeed, it did not extend much beyond the FIR and the Latin American Trotskyists of SLATO.

Trotskyism and the peasant uprising: between the agrarian “insurreccionalism” and “putschism”

The Argentine Trotskyist current where Hugo Blanco had begun his political activity, and its Latin American counterpart, the SLATO, would throw themselves completely to act in the Peruvian process. As we had advanced, it is essential to make an analysis of the positions and actions of this current given the importance it had in the historical process we inquire here. For this current, the main problem in Peru was that an “agrarian revolution” was developing in the Cusco region and the Central Andes fully isolated from the rest of the country, where, after eight years of experience under a dictatorship, the proletariat and the urban poor continued to pin their expectations in the elections. For Nahuel Moreno and the *Palabra Obrera* group, the traditionally most “backward” sector of Peru in terms of organisation and political participation, the peasantry, was at the vanguard, while the urban masses were at the rear of the open process. To resolve this contradiction, Moreno proposed: to fully participate in the process of land occupations and to encourage all expressions of “dual power” (creation of peasant militias to defend from landowners and the army, control of radio stations and schools in the area, among others); to massively unionise the peasants and rural workers and for their unions to enter the Confederation of Peruvian Workers; to build a revolutionary party of masses, both in the countryside and in the cities, making propaganda and agitating in the latter the need to support the peasant revolution under way.

On 24 April, 1961, the Peruvian POR delegates returned home after participating in the meeting of SLATO in Buenos Aires. They had a long letter by Moreno addressed to Hugo Blanco, where he stated: “there is no problem more difficult than to define the stage a country is going through and the revolutionary tasks that correspond to it. In general we all agree that our countries

⁴⁷ Hugo Blanco, *Land or death*, op. cit., p. 34.

⁴⁸ Hector Bejar Rivera: *Peru 1965...*, op. cit. p. 47.

have in their agenda two major historical tasks: national liberation and agrarian revolution. The problem is to see how both historical tasks are combined and materialised. (...) This means that if we raise at this time the national liberation on an equal footing with the agrarian revolution, we would be dissolving the specific process of the Peruvian revolution, which has begun as an agrarian revolution, in a very correct abstract form (...) Your revolution has a specific feature: it has begun at this stage as agrarian revolution and not as a workers' revolution or of the whole people against imperialism. It has as its vanguard the peasantry of an area, Cusco, who raises the land problem while the proletariat of the cities and mines remains at the rear, on the defensive".⁴⁹ For Moreno, the two large mass claims that had a revolutionary content in the Peruvian process were "*land and the right to vote*" for peasants. Regarding this issue, Moreno insisted that "the major problem that arises is how we combine this struggle for land and the vote for the peasantry (which is a struggle of specific interest to the rural masses) with the problems that afflict or concern the urban masses and especially the working class of Lima, the coast and the major mining centres. (...) Our involvement in the elections is to bring awareness to the working class and the urban masses, about the current stage of the Peruvian revolution (...). It is about revealing to the urban workers that there is an agrarian revolution underway, which they are unaware of".⁵⁰

At its meeting of April 1961, SLATO had decided to send some Argentine leaders to Peru to support the small party of Blanco and his intervention in the peasant uprising. In June of that year, one of them, Daniel Pereyra was sent to Lima. This experienced militant worker of the metallurgical union then settled in Cusco as Argentine member of the Political Bureau of SLATO organisation which had now decided to settle in the Peruvian capital. In September 1961 Moreno travelled to Lima. Upon arrival, Pereyra had been arrested for participating in a protest by teachers in Cusco, and shortly after, in October 1961, he was deported to Argentina. Moreno agreed with the Peruvian comrades to send two other leaders, Jose Martorell (a Spaniard who had been an anti-Franco guerrilla in his country and participated in the anti-Nazi resistance in France) and Argentine Eduardo Creus, to strengthen the work. It was decided to hold a conference of SLATO in Lima to decide the orientation for "insurrection", which was understood as a concrete and immediate possibility. In November, clandestinely, Pereyra returned to Peru and again settled in Cusco, while Martorell became the guide for the work in the Peruvian capital. This strengthening of the Peruvian party, from the presence of militants sent by *Palabra Obrera*, it would then be highlighted by Hugo Blanco in his book *Land or death*, "the SLATO had realised the great importance of our peasant movement and of the urgent need to strengthen it. It sent three experienced comrades for our help. Daniel Pereyra, Eduardo Creus and Jose Martorell [...] With the arrival of Pereyra and other members of the Peruvian POR to Cusco, the work was greatly strengthened".⁵¹ In the SLATO Conference the following points were raised: "a) With the development of peasant unionisation and land occupation dual power has emerged in different rural areas under the control of our party. b) This makes the question of insurrection to be already raised and the party must quickly overcome its deficiency in this regard. c) [...] regarding the distribution of partisan forces they should concentrate on the Cusco and not be atomised across the country [...] As a result of the Conference for Peru, the most important fact is the first official contact with Hugo Blanco and his conviction of the existing insurrectionary possibilities".⁵²

However, the leadership of the FIR-POR, concentrated in Lima Peru since late 1961, instead of orienting towards a strategy of "insurrectional" type were orienting towards a "putschist" type of line. That is, they began to have as central orientation to promote a political-military strike, violent and by surprise, carried out by a revolutionary core, aimed at generating a crisis in the Peruvian government that it would require it to carry out an offensive against the uprising. They hoped that this offensive, in turn, would require a definition of the popular sectors in favour of the

49 Letter from Nahuel Moreno to Hugo Blanco, April 1961, reproduced in pp. 9-10 of this edition.

50 Ibid., p. 10.

51 Hugo Blanco, *Land or death*, op. cit., p. 28.

52 Resolutions adopted by the SLATO Conference, Lima, quoted in the "Draft report on Latin American activities, January 1963, p. 2.

extension and deepening of the struggle. The concern was the great inequalities existing between the peasant mobilisations in Cusco and the lack of struggles in big cities, where the electoral process was the dominant political issue. Desperate because of this situation, they believed it was necessary to “provoke” an insurrection before the presidential elections scheduled for 1962, which were to choose the successor of Manuel Prado. They conceived, thus, the idea of taking by assault the Mariscal Gamarra Barracks of Cusco, which appeared to them as a Peruvian “Moncada” (even forgetting that Castro had failed at his first attempt in Cuba). In this line, which we can call “Blanquist”, also fell Argentine leaders sent to Peru, mainly Pereyra and Martorell. Moreno was completely opposed to this approach. Hence, Hugo Blanco would then assert in his book: “The merit of having reacted first and of having started a serious fight against this [putschist] deviation corresponds to comrade Nahuel Moreno”.⁵³

Influenced by Castroism, Pereyra and the Lima group headed by Martorell set the date for the assault to the Gamarra Barracks before the elections of June 1962. To that end they previously needed many more financial funds than *Palabra Obrera* was sending. Meanwhile, little or nothing of that aid was sent from Lima to Hugo Blanco, since Pereyra and Martorell needed those funds for the organisation of their armed group. Determined to pursue their own line, on 15 December, 1961, the leadership team based in Lima made a first “test” of their orientation, assaulting the Magdalena branch of Banco Popular. The operation was successful from the purely technical point of view, but got very little money. Of the 105,000 soles obtained (about US\$4,000 at the time) 40,000 were impossible to spend, being new banknotes, whose number could be easily controlled.

With this operation took place a clarification of the differences that had opened in the Argentine and Peruvian Trotskyist currents. On one side, there was a group oriented towards a “putschist” line, of organising an armed group independent of the actions of the masses (almost like a guerrilla). On the other side, where the Argentine leader Moreno was, a group condemning this perspective for being opposite to the line of promoting and extending the peasant uprising in its own grounds. As expressed in a letter to Pereyra in January 1962: “We are against organising guerrilla groups in Peru. We believe in developing, as opposed to guerrilla groups, peasant and partisan (or of the Revolutionary United Front) armed militias. The difference between the latter and the former is simple: the guerrilla is isolated, he prepares independently of the class struggle; militias instead are part of the union and political life, they do not leave it for a minute. (...) We favour, for example, that any trade union take land and defend it, or that in La Convencion Valley for the peasants to already impose their authority, with their militias, led by the Federation. But we are against calling it a “liberated zone” or that a government or army of liberation be constituted there. (...). Open struggle to defend the occupation of land and the peasantry, yes! As a goal in itself, no!”⁵⁴

For Moreno, the immediate slogan was: “Peasant, take land right now, unionise and form militias to defend your lands and your unions. And the propagandist slogan is: agrarian conferences! This propagandist slogan is of fundamental importance because it means transforming the atomised, molecular, in general, regional or national dual power. It is for this reason a slogan for action in stages: every peasant federation of a valley or a region should call to a Conference to impose in their areas centralised militias, the taking of land and other more general or political forms of dual power (control of radio stations, schools and other government institutions)”.⁵⁵ For Moreno, “Taking of lands, unionising the peasants, organising their militias and completing the democratic revolution are the very difficult tasks you have on the agenda”.⁵⁶ In this sense, he argued that it was essential to link the urban vanguard, mostly influenced by Castroism, to the mass struggle: “Any comrade that wants for open struggle should join the peasant and partisan militias. But not make a special body; let’s not make an army separate from the class struggle.

53 Hugo Blanco, *Land or death*, op. cit., p. 77.

54 Letter from N. Moreno to D. Pereyra, 5 January 1962, reproduced in p. 18 of this edition.

55 Ibid, pp. 18-19.

56 Ibid, p. 21.

If the comrades of the vanguard do not understand it, let us educate them”.⁵⁷ At the same time, Moreno recriminated Pereyra: “You keep considering that [the Peruvian revolution] will follow the general guidelines of the Cuban revolution in the Moncada variation, or at most, in the Sierra Maestra variation”.⁵⁸ But for Moreno the dynamics was different, because it would be an agrarian revolution in intensification.

With the positions developed in the letter by Moreno, and the elaborations resulting from the January meeting in Buenos Aires, *Palabra Obrera* sent one of its most important leaders, Angel “Vasco (the Basque)” Bengochea to Lima to defend this line against the militants acting in Peru and were preparing to take, no later than June 1962, the barracks in Cusco. But, although in the leadership of the POR was emerging a group of militants who opposed this adventure, Bengochea on returning to Buenos Aires was frankly pessimistic about the dynamics of the Peruvian party that seemed firmly embarked on a “putschist” course. Moreno, who pending the report by Bengochea, had remained in Buenos Aires, given the gravity of the facts set out to travel to Lima in February 1962 for a new meeting of SLATO. As outlined below the putschist course could not be stopped and this would generate the almost total destruction of the Peruvian party as the year went on. This would cause further isolation for the struggle led by Hugo Blanco.

The “Miraflores disaster” and the collapse of political support for Blanco

In April 1962 a new meeting of the SLATO was held in Lima. Nahuel Moreno attended the meeting anxious to avoid the “putschist” course the Peruvian party and also the SLATO were embarking on. The official resolution argued that the core activity of the party should be supporting the peasant uprising, linked to the “mass organisations”. But most of the SLATO leadership, headed by Martorell and Pereyra, did not abandon the idea that with a new commando strike it was possible to solve at once all financial problems, which remained their primary concern. The “expropriating apparatus” (which began to call themselves “Tupac Amaru” since the raid to the Banco Popular to not appear linked to the FIR and Hugo Blanco) decided a new operation. It was also agreed that the “expropriating team,” if acting, would do so without resorting to the POR or FIR, in order to not complicate the situation of Blanco and other militants operating in the peasant movement. They had to ensure their own technical apparatus, and at all times they would keep out of any involvement in the political organisation that led the mobilisations of the peasantry of Cusco.

On 1 April 1962 a team had appropriated a car to participate in the most important group operation: assaulting the Miraflores branch, in Lima, of Banco de Credito. It was a large branch, with about 60 employees and a building of magnitude. It was an operation for more people and greater preparation, timing and synchronization was needed. As a counterpart, it promised a lot of money. The operation took place on 12 April and it is appropriate to pause in its details as it illustrates well a kind of political strategy. A command of nine men entered the bank in broad daylight, taking 2,950,000 soles (more than US\$ 100,000 at the time). It was a fabulous sum for Peru, and that kind of assault was unprecedented in the country. On the following days the newspapers reported in “catastrophe type” headlines that it was “the robbery of the century”. However, one member of the command, Jorge Tamayo, on exiting the bank came face to face with a fellow university student who recognised him. Within hours the police had data from one of the “assailants” and began the search. Although there was confusion and multiple versions, which in the early days were reflected in the press of Peru, it did not take long finding the student sector that had participated. The improvisation and inexperience of the group were leaving traces that the police managed to follow. The situation forced quick definitions. Against the decision of the SLATO, the “expropriating team” had to seek help from the rest of the POR to escape the police chase. The situation was desperate, with advanced demoralisation of some members of the Lima FIR; they seemed unprepared for the foreseeable persecution of the forces of repression. Pereyra and Martorell proposed then the

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 21.

⁵⁸ Letter from N. Moreno to D. Pereyra, 28 January 1962, reproduced in p. 23 of this edition.

convenience of going to Cusco, and requesting assistance in Bolivia from a character known to them.⁵⁹

It was agreed then that the group travel to Cusco. There, amid the peasant rising, there were many places to shelter the militants. The journey was dangerous, because all routes had police checkpoints. At the same time, it was decided that Moreno, who had been at odds with the operation of raiding the bank, travelled to Bolivia, to organise from there the necessary support for Blanco and the FIR in Cusco, once the members of “Tupac Amaru” were outside Lima. Moreno was given the task of organising the escape of the “expropriating team”, getting them out of Lima hidden in a truck, where eight militants were located. Pereyra was traveling with the driver. The truck went past a dozen police stations smoothly. After four days of travel, on 27 April, they were at the links of Cusco in Limatambo, 30 kilometres away from the city. Everything indicated that they were safe, according to the intended plan. At two in the morning of 28 April, a first group managed to disappear from the area. But while the second group was getting off the truck a police patrol showed up. The police believed that the militants were stealing the truckload. Daniel Pereyra, given the order to stop, faced policemen in a shootout until the magazine of his gun was empty. He was arrested on the spot, along with another member of the group. Others were arrested that night and the following days. All those arrested were savagely tortured for several days, especially treating Pereyra brutally. Then they were taken to the Gamarra barracks.

The capture of Pereyra’s group coincided with the rumours circulating in Cusco, on the preparation of a peasant insurrectional uprising on the occasion of May Day, “the opinion of the Army and the PIP [Peruvian Investigative Police] was that the extremists prepared the outbreak of a lightning-revolution, a sort of Night of Saint Bartholomew, in which they would put an end, with gallows and guillotines, to the *gamonales* of Lares and La Convencion”.⁶⁰ In the old “Imperial City”, the government “proceeded to reinforce the police contingents, the PIP and Assault Guard of Cusco, as well as the Forth Light Division, which increased its forces with troops and armoured carriers [...] Cusco gave the impression of a city in wartime occupied by the enemy”.⁶¹ The radio stations and newspapers did nothing else but talk about the capturing of the “Red Gang” led by “Che Pereyra”, a few hours before the peasant and indigenous concentrations convened by the unions. Nothing finally happened in the demonstration on May Day, but during the rest of the month dozens of arrests took place. The Lima FIR was completely disjointed. A few who remained “refugees”, as the own Martorell, ended surrendering, demoralised. Nahuel Moreno, as agreed, had come out of Peru towards La Paz, Bolivia, where he settled on 27 April. There he learned of the arrest of his comrades and began activities, not only in support of Hugo Blanco, but to face the new situation created by the almost complete annihilation of the FIR-POR. Peruvian police, based on accusations of little firm elements of the FIR, accused Moreno of being the “mastermind” of the assault and he was arrested in La Paz given the extradition request presented by the Peruvian government. Moreno, publicly and in accordance with the decision of the SLATO before the assault, had to demarcate all responsibility in the events. Finally, due to the demands of different political and social organisations in Bolivia he was released, the 18 May, 1962.

In Cusco, meanwhile, on 5 May, amid a strong military operation, the group of detainees was taken to the airport and flown to Lima, and thence to the prisons of El Fronton and El Sexto. They were already 31 prisoners, the “expropriating apparatus” and the leaders and links of the FIR in Cusco. A crowd of students and peasants farewelled them at the airport and there were incidents with the police. But the truth is that the entire operation of the bank assault did not awake any popular support in the country. On the contrary, the government and its repressive forces used it to discredit the left in general, and Hugo Blanco and the FIR in particular, who were

59 Letter from Nahuel Moreno to Daniel Pereyra, December 1962, in the folder “Correspondence Moreno-Pereyra”. The reconstruction of the assault to the Miraflores bank and the facts following that “operation” was done based on this source and other internal documents of the organisation *Palabra Obrera* and the papers already quoted by Blanco, Pereira, Añi Castillo and Villanueva.

60 Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, op. cit. p. 110.

61 Victor Villanueva: *Hugo Blanco and the peasant rebellion*, op. cit., p. 119.

already abundantly accused in the Lima press of “*red gang of robbers*” and “*gangsters*”. But the most serious consequence was that Blanco was isolated and unsupported at the time when he, finally, was elected general secretary of the Provincial Federation of Peasants of La Convencion and Lares, “*against the rabid opposition of opportunism*” as he says in his book.⁶² In June 1962, Moreno wrote from La Paz, indignantly: “Here we are confused by the madness and irresponsibility that some of the FIR’s best leaders committed. [...] It is pitiful that the adventures of our putschist, adventurer friends have prevented a careful preparation of the political, organisational help to the process of agrarian revolution headed by Hugo Blanco, and that is how this colossal leader of our movement and the agrarian revolution will find himself isolated from help when he most needs it. And this despite all the help we sent for the movement and for him. But unfortunately, on the pretext that such aid was too little to make the insurrection according to plan “X” or “Z” prepared in a cafe in Cusco, or some tea rooms or luxury apartment in Lima, never came to him, despite that it was very important.”⁶³

Isolation and ebb tide of the peasant struggle after the military coup of 1962

Meanwhile, the peasant uprising and guerrilla actions were causing concern in the ruling classes and the state institutions. Headlines, like this one from influential daily *La Prensa*, multiplied: “Guerrillas in Cusco!” “Hugo Blanco, head of armed peasant groups, commits outrages!”⁶⁴ This was not a problem limited to La Convencion: in many areas of the country’s central and southern sierras, peasant strikes and occupations of states were taking place. Between 1959 and 1963 there were at least 100 occupations; a very important number of them occurred in the departments of Pasco and Junín.⁶⁵ Faced with all this, the Armed Forces began to express great concern. As noted by Julio Cotler, “... within the army officers [the peasant rebellion] was the first warning of what could be generalised in the country if the problems that gave rise to such movement were not tackled. Thus, the need to implement structural changes turned out to be a joint platform of a section of the army and the Church of ‘*El Comercio*’⁶⁶ and the new reformist parties, creating among them a sort of alliance. The conflict of classes, that inflamed the division within the ruling class, as well as the institutions pillar of the regime of domination and which ensured its hegemony, intensified as the 1962 elections approached”.⁶⁷

Indeed, by the middle of that year, the national political situation appeared defined by a process of importance: the presidential elections to elect a replacement for Prado. In these elections, carried out on 10 June, 1962, there were three important candidates.⁶⁸ All proclaimed their willingness to make social changes; for example, each party presented its draft “Agrarian Reform” and flaunted it. The candidate who enjoyed the greatest popular support was Haya de la Torre, who had the backing of the only genuinely institutional party, APRA. The other was Odria, with its Odriist National Union, representing the more traditional faction of the landowners and the bourgeoisie enriched by his government, and with some support in the urban sector that had been clientised by him during his mandate. Finally, Belaunde Terry presented again, reflecting the new reformist forces (gathered now in the Popular Action party), and sectors of the Church and the army interested in the progressive reforms promised by the candidate. The counting of votes resulted in a narrow victory for APRA. As the winner only had available 33 percent of the vote, an agreement in Congress became necessary. As Halperin Donghi says: “Haya de la Torre,

62 Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit. p. 9.

63 N. Moreno: letter from La Paz, 15 June 1962, reproduced on page 29 of this edition.

64 Quoted by Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, op. cit. p. 125.

65 Guillermo de la Peña: “Rural mobilisation...”, op. cit. p. 238.

66 *El Comercio*, founded in 1839, is the oldest newspaper in Peru and one of the most influential. [Translator’s note.]

67 Julio Cotler, “Peru, oligarchic state...”, op. cit., p. 399.

68 A specific analysis of the electoral situation can be found in Andres Townsend Ezcurra, “The Aprista Party and the general elections in 1962”, in *Cuadernos*, monthly magazine of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, No. 57, Paris, February 1962, pp.43- 46.

determined to shut out who had emerged as the only formidable rival [i.e., Belaunde], declared himself willing to give up his candidacy and give the support of the APRA legislators to General Odría”.⁶⁹ However, a decisive event occurred: the army, which had never forgiven the murder of some of its members in Trujillo in 1932, committed by Aprists, just days before Prado delivered his mandate, went out to contest the arrangement engineered by Haya de la Torre, and annulled the elections, claiming fraud in favour of that candidate. On 18 July the military deposed the president, took the government (with Perez Godoy at the top), suspended Congress and announced that new elections would be called.

The military coup, while it was a rejection of APRA, did not have the enthusiastic support of the ruling classes; on account that the military government attempted to implement the new guidelines that were sprouting in the military. For example, given the situation that existed in the Sierra, it issued a “Law on Bases for Agrarian Reform”, precisely in the province of La Convencion. However, this measure did not have great scope or much success in its application; the same happened in other areas. In the year that the military government extended, it was evident the reform guidelines (which were a tepid foretaste of the experience General Juan Velasco Alvarado would hold from 1968), “had not yet matured in the institution and that the oligarchic forces on one side and the popular movement on the other maintained their integration and strength to prevent the experience of military rule from persisting”.⁷⁰ But at the same time that the military government pursued these curtailed and partial reform measures, it deepened its repressive policies: hundreds of peasants, popular and leftist leaders began to be imprisoned. It was in this context that the siege occurred that led to the final crushing of the agrarian rebellion led by Hugo Blanco.

But until the end of 1962, Blanco and his group, despite the almost complete disarticulation in which his political support— the FIR-POR— was falling, remained convinced that the decisive element of reality was the depth and extension of the peasant rebellion. Thus they continued to believe that what had occurred (and still remained) in the Peruvian Andes was what Trotskyism used to call as “dual power”; i.e. a situation of social polarisation typical of the revolutionary processes in which the power of the peasant masses (with its autonomous bodies) was opposed to the power of the ruling class and its state institutions. Behind this characterisation it stood a political strategy: the need to prepare an armed insurrection of the peasant masses, in alliance with the other popular sectors that could overthrow the power of the ruling class and establish its own domain. And this analysis did not vary with the repressive crush of FIR-POR or the triumph of the military coup.

Blanco’s quote, with which we introduced this paper, illustrates very well this characterisation to which we refer. We are not in a position to corroborate the degree of accuracy that Blanco’s assertions contain. What interests us here is to point out what was the vision he had of what was happening in the Peruvian highlands. According to the Trotskyist leader what was defining the peasant uprising were the following: appropriation of landed estates by agricultural unions; distribution of these lands among the peasants; “expropriation” of various property from the landowners; replacement of state authorities for others instituted by the peasant movement, which went on to perform various judicial, administrative and educational functions; and organisation of peasant militias.

With these other examples would Hugo Blanco recall his belief in the existence of a “dual power” in the region: “Since we were Trotskyists, it was not hard for us to understand that a process of Power Dual was developing and that it was our duty to get the masses to become conscious of it [...] Thus we did not get tired to explain that the assemblies were our ‘Parliament’, as opposed to the bourgeois parliament in whose election the peasantry had not even participated, because, being illiterate, mostly they did not vote. We explained, therefore, that compliance with the ‘laws’ passed by our ‘Parliament’ was subject only to the strength we had, not its ‘legality’ [...] The Military

69 Tulio Halperín Donghi: *Contemporary history of Latin America*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1998, p.599.

70 Julio Cotler, “Peru, oligarchic state...”, op. cit., p. 400. For an examination of the historical behaviour of the Peruvian Armed Forces refer to two works by Victor Villanueva: *Militarism in Peru*, Lima, 1962, and *New military mentality in Peru*, Buenos Aires, Replanteo, 1969.

Junta in 1962, forbade at a national scale the military and school parades held every year during ‘patriotic days’. In Chaupimayo we performed both ceremonies with all the formalities of the case; allusive speeches explaining that, in fact, it was the only true Peruvian army which was marching on that date, and although our ‘Union Defence Brigade’ was very weak, it was the embryo of what would be the future people’s army, the army of workers and peasants, the authentic Peruvian army. In the night school operating in the final stage of Chaupimayo [...] it was explained: Chamber of Deputies and Senate: Set of servants of the *gamonales* and capitalists, appointed by them to make laws to maintain the exploitation of the poor by the rich [...] In such style was the whole course of ‘Civic Education’, ‘History’, etc. [...] Dissolved the concept of rulers and ruled in human unity of the Assembly, where the minuscule opinion acquires gigantic proportions as inseparable atom of a powerful, large, collective intelligence”.⁷¹

Over time, however, the leaders of the peasant uprising began to observe their weaknesses. A fact appeared as decisive: Hugo Blanco and his comrades leading the fight in La Convencion and Lares were isolated from the rest of Peru. The uprising appeared detached from the others taking place in the Andean region: firstly, because they occurred on a social structure and a type of land tenure very different to that of La Convencion; secondly, since many of these peasant struggles were led by organisations controlled by Communism (or to a lesser extent, by Aprism), which had no interest in solidarity with a movement led by Trotskyists. Another reason for the weakening of the process led by Blanco was because the only political organisation supporting it, the FIR-POR, had been almost completely undone by the repression of the military government in Lima, Arequipa and now in Cusco as well. This political and social isolation was well described by Blanco himself: “This was the highest level of the peasant rising, with several *gamonales* expelled from the area and their property confiscated by the peasantry. However, the peasant movement of La Convencion and Lares was isolated, even including the rest of the department as their rear. Moreover, not even in the area it had a minimum party apparatus. The union leadership, because of its size and complexity, even in the best of times, could not replace it. For lack of party or other body which at least replace it in this task, the organisation of the militia was not solid”.⁷²

What Blanco perhaps did not see was that the isolation of the movement he led also had to do with the policy of concessions that was driving the military government, which accepted discursive and symbolically many of the peasants’ claims. As Hobsbawm argues: “The movement reached its climax in the final months of 1962. Indeed, after the general occupation of lands of La Convencion, the victory of the peasants was tacitly accepted by the authorities, whom now concentrated in the pursuit of the armed groups of Blanco [...] and in preventing the peasant movement from gaining ground in the rest of the region, much more densely populated and in a much more explosive situation”.⁷³ Efforts to resolve this situation of political isolation from the outside of the country proved equally futile. The Argentine organisation *Palabra Obrera*, which from July 1962 had set as its main task the support to the Peruvian peasant uprising, sent one of its leaders of greater weight, “Vasco” Bengochea to Cuba. The objective was to request material support of the Castro regime that would prevent Hugo Blanco from being surrounded by the forces of repression. But this aid did not arrive effectively.

The defeat of Hugo Blanco and the peasant movement of La Convencion

After the “disaster of Miraflores” the encirclement of police and military forces on Blanco and the peasants of La Convencion was narrowing, as part of an overall repressive policy that the military government implemented. In a raid on 5 January, 1963, “more than 2000 leaders and activists of the left and the FIR in general, were arrested”.⁷⁴ As early as August 1962 Blanco and

71 Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit. p. 47-58.

72 Ibid. p.67.

73 Eric J. Hobsbawm: “Peasant movement in Peru”, op. cit., p. 291.

74 Añi Castillo: *Secret history of the guerrillas*, op. cit. p. 125.

a group of militants that remained of his organisation, isolated and desperate, had decided to establish a guerrilla group. The Trotskyist leader always substantiated this decision on the need to defend themselves against military repression suffered at the time. As the own Blanco recalls, from the assault to the bank: “It happened what was expected. A strong repression against us that caused the collapse of everything (FIR in Cusco, national FIR, expropriating team, military team) except the only solid thing we had: the peasant movement. Although due to its protection they could not imprison me, my action was very limited [...] It was precisely the isolation what forced us to change from militia into guerrilla [...] The enemy no longer waited, they began their offensive counting with all the advantages [...] The escalation of repression included imprisonment of leaders installation of Civil Guard posts in the most militant areas [...] Chaupimayo was not touched, but we all knew it would be the last and the fiercest step of the escalation of repression [...] We had to choose between being crush cold or fall fighting [...] We opted for the latter, not out of romanticism but for a political criterion [...] The immediate motive for the passage from the militia to guerrillas was the brutal outrage committed by the owner of the Qayara hacienda accompanied by civil guards against the home of Tiburcio Bolaños, secretary general of the estate’s union: they ransacked his home, taking money and goods, mistreating his relatives. The landowner in the presence of the guards, put a gun barrel on the chest of a child, threatening to shoot if they did not say where Bolaños was; the boy ignored his whereabouts. The landowner put the barrel on the child’s arm and shot [...] The news came almost simultaneously with the increase of repression in the rest of La Convencion and Lares and the killing of the Cusco rally where Remigio Huaman died”.⁷⁵

From these facts it was convened an assembly of Chaupimayo, extended with other unions. It was decided to send a commission to Qayara, not only authorised to bear arms, as was usual in such cases, but to “*make use of them if necessary*”. And the “fugitive” Hugo Blanco was named as manager of the Commission. “We left armed and with the guerrilla team on our back. We did not arrive at Qayara. Given the foolish attitude of the two policemen at the Pujiura post, accustomed to ‘the Indian does not shoot’, we were forced to have our first armed clash, as a result of which a policeman fell. (It turned out to be one of those who committed the outrage of Qayara)”.⁷⁶ The confrontation at the Civil Guard’s Pujiura Post, on 13 November, 1962, forced the commission to change their itinerary, but did not abandon the relationship with the peasants; it crossed valleys and hills of unionised areas and others in which held assemblies, promoted occupations and called to apply the ‘Decree of Agrarian Reform of the Provincial Federation of Peasant Unions’. The armed commission was composed of senior leaders of the peasant unions. According to Blanco peasant support was almost absolute, and described it as something moving: “they fed us, clothed us, guided us, protected us [...] As our stomach and our backpack had limited capacity, we received a little from each so that no one be offended [...] Any reference to a ‘payment’ would have been an insult [...] would have been a serious political mistake to suggest ‘payment’”.⁷⁷

Hugo Blanco continued, wandering, with his “armed” detachment (in fact with very few weapons of war) touring rural areas and signing as “Agrarian Reform Secretary of the Departmental Federation”, the provisions adopted by the peasant assemblies. The guerrilla had two more armed clashes. In one two policemen fell; on the other, the guerrillas were dispersed. According to Blanco’s account, isolated actions of sabotage were also carried out by peasants. Finally, on 30 May, 1963, isolated after the dispersion, Hugo Blanco was located (unarmed, ill, hungry and almost naked) and captured by a police party, saved from being killed due to a discussion among the pursuers who did not agree on killing him. All the collaborators of Blanco were arrested in the following days. In a helicopter of the Peruvian Air Force the new prisoners were taken to the Gamarra Barracks and then to the prison in Arequipa. Who had been the most wanted man in Peru was then only 29 years old.

A major problem is presented from then on to the peasant movement in defeat: Hugo Blanco and other leaders of the uprising in Cusco (and the facts of Miraflores) were brought to trial. In

⁷⁵ Hugo Blanco: *Land or death*, op. cit. pp. 29, 30, 67 and following.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 69 and 70.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 74.

Tacna a War Council sought the death penalty for Blanco. A campaign to save his life and obtain the release of all detainees began then. This campaign, which lasted for several years, quickly acquired an international character. In Peru, it was headed by the remains of POR-FIR; outside of that the Argentine organisation *Palabra Obrera* (and later its successor, the PRT) and the forces of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The campaign was also promoted worldwide by various peasant, trade union, political and human rights organisations, and a number of prominent intellectuals. In Argentina, the list of organisations and figures that supported the claim included from the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) to many unions and the entire Argentine left, student centres and groups, intellectuals, politicians, journalists and artists of the time, in a diverse range such as John William Cooke and Bernardo Neustadt. Many Chilean organisations (peasant groups, leaders of the CUT and SP), about 400 US academics, and intellectuals and artists of the prestige of Bertrand Russell, Simone de Beauvoir, Arthur Adamov or Alain Resnais, among many others, joined the claim. One of the most significant supporters was French writer Jean-Paul Sartre, mentioned at the beginning of our paper; the existentialist philosopher remembered that not only Indochina was fighting for a better world, and took Hugo Blanco as an example, asking them to join the claim for his life and freedom. An editorial in *Le Monde* on 7 December, 1966 made a pronouncement on the same sense.⁷⁸ At the same time, the legal defence of the detainees was attempted in the courts.

Finally, in Lima, in September 1966, concluded the memorable trial conducted to Blanco and his comrades on the Supreme Council of Military Justice. The harangues of Blanco at that time toured the newspapers around the world: “If the gains made for the peasantry through our struggle, if the abolition of *gamonalism* in La Convencion, if the progress of the Peruvian Revolution deserves the death penalty, let it be applied to me! If what the reactionaries expect is that I or my people ask for mercy, they are crazy. Never will we do it! You can kill the revolutionary but not the revolution”.⁷⁹ The jury then opted to commute the death sentence hanging over him and replaced it by 25-years of imprisonment.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, in August 1967, it was achieved the release of Argentine Pereyra. After seven years in prison on the island-prison of El Fronton, Blanco won in late 1970, an amnesty. Nevertheless, he was expelled from Peru, as the military government of Velazco Alvarado considered him a danger to its policy aimed at dismantling the peasant mobilisations and cancel the Peruvian revolutionary left. For almost ten years he lived in exile in Mexico and then returned to Peru. In 1980 he won an important endorsement in the 1980 elections at the head of a list of the left. It seemed that the young rebel, who placed himself at the head of an agrarian mass struggle, still remained a memorable figure for the Cusco peasants and other popular sectors.

After the imprisonment of Blanco: an incessant peasant resistance

After the arrest of Blanco and the main peasant leaders of La Convencion in May 1963, the agrarian uprising seemed momentarily halted. The military government showed some success in the dissipation of peasant agitation. With military measures the movement was being dissolved, where the organisation was weak, as well as in regions where the combination was potentially explosive. For example, in the Central Andes, particularly in the area of Cerro de Pasco, the

⁷⁸ All the details of the campaign we have been able to reconstruct from the analysis of the collections of the journals *Palabra Obrera* (of the eponymous organisation) and *La Verdad* (organ of PRT). There is practically no issue of this press that does not contain calls, articles or demands for freedom both of Blanco and the peasant leaders, as well as Pereyra, Martorell and other Argentine prisoners in Peru. In them, at all times its capacity as “revolutionary fighters” is vindicated, without ceasing to remark the political differences with the “putschist” behaviour of Pereyra and his comrades, “Disagreeing or not with the method, it is an indisputable fact the group was led by two of the most heroic figures of Latin American revolutionary workers movement: Daniel Pereyra and Jose Martorell. The discussion about the rightness or otherwise of the tactic is our business, of the revolutionaries”. In *La Verdad* No. 53, 15 August, 1966, p. 32.

⁷⁹ Quoted by Victor Villanueva: *Hugo Blanco...*, op. cit., p. 167/168.

⁸⁰ A detailed account of this trial, especially the vehement allegations of Blanco, can be found in the already quoted works by Añi Castillo and Victor Villanueva.

repression was brutal. In the department of Cusco, however, repression was combined with reform measures, which led to the recognition of land occupations carried out, with the aim of dismantling the peasant mobilisation.

In the conjunctural deactivation of the peasant movement another element took part: the new electoral situation open in the country. Indeed, in June 1963 the army was forced to hold new presidential elections, as promised. To the delight of the Armed Forces, APRA was second, with 34 percent of the vote. In these elections the reformist parties allied and carried the ideal candidate for the army, the newspaper *El Comercio* and the Church: Belaunde Terry; “his platform was to implement reforms, but carried out technically and gradually, administered by the state, without the masses taking the initiative”.⁸¹ The ascension of Belaunde, in July, generated great expectations in the popular sectors. Because, as Halperin Donghi says: “[this] candidacy was endorsed by both the Christian Democrats and almost all movements to the left of the APRA. His program— which collected, very deliberately, echoes of the language preferred by the Alliance for Progress— included a promise of physical integration of the sierras and the highlands and to carry out land reform”.⁸² Finally, this land reform would not be successful: on the one hand, the project would suffer brutal mutilations during its gruelling parliamentary process; on the other, the government put little effort to promote it. Thus, the proposals for agrarian reform that Belaunde agitated in his campaign were only part of a strategy of containment of the peasant unrest without higher aspirations to be truly carried out: in 1968 only 2,625 families had actually received land in Peru, generally of poor quality.⁸³ The government ended emphasising the technical improvement of agricultural production and not the distribution of land, with the apparent hope that the landowners increase their production.

The failure of Belaunde’s “agrarian reform” only served to return the peasant anger. Once again, in 1964, in several regions of the Central Andes, thousands of peasants began a process of invasion of estates, taking both cultivated land and fallow fields. The situation seemed to repeat the experience occurred a few years or months before, “the peasant movements raged in the sierras and APRA dissidents tried to lean on them to launch the insurrection they had been preaching. The government decided to tackle the mountain protest with harsh repression, for which it was necessary to resort to the regular army”.⁸⁴ But to this updating of the peasant agitation a new element is added. A sector of left urban activism dived in full to the “foquist” experience, opening “guerrilla fronts” in the Central Andes. Again, the Castroist model reflected its influence. The main driver of this action was Luis de la Puente Uceda, an APRA dissident who, as we mentioned earlier, organised the MIR. The leader and ideologist of the MIR had unsuccessfully sought a deal with Hugo Blanco himself at La Convencion. Soon after, he found an ally in the ELN (a sector that had split from the PCP in 1962). Thus, the MIR and the ELN launched in 1964 into an experience of “guerrilla warfare” in the rugged mountains of La Convencion. “They had little preparation. A huge cultural and linguistic gap separated them from the peasantry and had little knowledge of the living conditions in rural areas, much less a program that could earn them the support of the peasants”.⁸⁵ The consequences of all this is that the guerrillas find few supporters to their cause and finally in 1965, they would be crushed by the military, killing their leader, De la Puente. So, thanks to the intervention of the regular army, Belaunde finally managed to crush both the peasant agitation as the guerrilla insurgency. The result of these operations of repression threw frightening figures for 1966: 8,000 peasants dead, 19,000 homeless and 3,500 prisoners; 14,000 hectares of land destroyed by fire and napalm.⁸⁶

The irresolution of the agrarian question, expressed in the collation of the squalid figures of land distributed to the peasants against the bulging number of dead for demanding it, would be

81 Julio Cotler, “Peru, oligarchic state...”, op. cit., p. 400.

82 Tulio Halperin Donghi: *Contemporary history of Latin America*, op. cit., p. 599.

83 Data taken from Guillermo de la Peña: “Rural mobilisation...”, op. cit. p. 260.

84 Halperin Donghi: *Contemporary history of Latin America*, op. cit., p. 599.

85 Alan Angell: “The left in Latin America...”, op. cit., p. 105.

86 Figures taken from T. E. Skidmore and P. H. Smith: *Contemporary History...*, op. cit, p. 232.

among the main concerns of the agenda of the new reformist military regime headed by Velasco Alvarado from October 1968. In some sense, this new populist politics that was beginning to be implemented then represented, among other things, an attempt to end the social and political convulsions started 10 years before with the peasant mobilisations of Cusco.

Final reflections

The return of the peasant agitation between 1963 and 1966 shows that the movement led by Hugo Blanco in previous years did nothing but respond to a phenomenon of structural and conjunctural agrarian discontent that had a gravitation real and independent of the leadership it represented. It is possible to hypothesise about the inevitability of this outburst, beyond the management actions undertaken by Blanco, given the subsequent recurrence peasant uprising and diversity of forms it took.

One of the conclusions emerging from this study of the peasant uprising occurring in the Cusco area between 1961 and 1963 is a high degree of insulation, which ultimately led to his crushing defeat and was evident in this process. This isolation had a dual character: social and political. The first aspect is linked to the peculiar geographical, economic and social characteristics the territory of La Convencion and Lares possessed: there agricultural conditions were exceptional because labour was scarce and large estates were mostly unoccupied. The conditions were very different in the rest of Peru. This explains why the movement had not spread and why the landlords and the government tolerated, for some time, the land occupations carried out by the peasants. Along with this it should be noted the impossibility presented to the Cusco agrarian movement to articulate an alliance with other subaltern classes, especially the working class, not so much of the sierras, which was scarce, but of the coastal area, which was relatively large and had a high level of organisation that would have been very useful in tasks of support to the peasant movement. It seems, however, there were no concrete actions from this employment sectors backing the peasant actions in Cusco.

The second aspect of the isolation suffered by the peasant movement has to do with the political loneliness in which the Trotskyist leadership of Hugo Blanco and his people performed. Peruvian Trotskyism was an extremely marginal, sparsely established among the subaltern social sectors and almost with no ties (or even bitterly confronted) to the rest of the leftist political forces. About the only sponsorship the Trotskyist current of Blanco could count on was that of his Argentine and Latin American comrades of SLATO. But this support, as we have seen, as it diverted to “putschists” or guerrilla actions, did nothing but contribute to increasing the insulation level of Blanco’s group and subject it to a higher degree of exposure to the repressive forces of the state. Moreover, the tasks of guidance of the uprising fell almost exclusively, on an even paternalistic way, in the figure of Blanco. To get an idea of the scope this authority had, keep in mind that many peasants, when they occupied the land, came to Hugo Blanco for him to give them the title of property... Moreover, it is no coincidence that after the arrest of this leader, the peasant movement was controlled and no alternative leadership emerged.

Finally, still useful are the conclusions resulting from the balance sheet of the crossing of strategies and discussions that took place within the Trotskyist movement to which Blanco belonged, problems that, we believe, had been almost ignored until this study. Overall, there seems to have existed two strategic directions in this political tendency. One was oriented towards the need to strengthen the peasant struggle for land occupation (which included the armed defence of those actions) in an insurrectionary way, trying to give the process a socialist content. The other was the “putschist” way, which had as orientation to give surprise political-military attacks, by a handful of “heroes”, aspiring to replace with their impatience the actions of the masses. The implementation of this line by a group of members of the party that supported Blanco was what contributed to the increased loneliness and military persecution to the latter. Blanco himself seems to have debated between the two concepts, but we believe that most of the time he was guided by

the former. The second conception was the one that a time later resumed the Peruvian guerrillas and many other experiences that in the 1960s and 1970s would shake Latin America. Then it was beginning to prevail the Castroist model, the foquist tactic and “guerrilla warfare”, where many “vanguard groups” would act on behalf of the masses. In the peasant uprising of La Convencion appear prefigured all these discussions and actions that presaged a stormy future.

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