Radical Americas

RADICAL AMERICAS

UCLPRESS

Special issue: ***Histories of socialism and Indigeneity***

Research article

Adopting the Indian heart: class and Indigeneity in Hugo Blanco's politics in La Convención, Cuzco (1959–1969)

Tania Gómez[1,*]

[1] Goldsmiths, University of London, UK
* Correspondence: tgome003@gold.ac.uk

Submission date: 6 September 2024; Acceptance date: 4 June 2025; Publication date: 6 August 2025

How to cite
Gómez, T. 'Adopting the Indian heart: class and Indigeneity in Hugo Blanco's politics in La Convención, Cuzco (1959–1969)'. *Radical Americas* 10, 1 (2025): 6.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006.

Peer review
This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer-review process, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

Abstract

Occurring in the era defined by the Cuban triumph, the land reform from below in the valleys of La Convención and Lares in Cuzco is often narrated by presenting its most visible face – the Trotskyist *mestizo* (ethnically mixed) Hugo Blanco as 'the Peruvian Che Guevara' or, more moderately, as a 'quasi-guerrilla leader'. This faulty interpretation does not allow us to fully understand the roots and significance of the events of La Convención and, in particular, Hugo Blanco's uncommon adoption of 'the Indian heart', where the Indian side of the peasantry emerged as a medium and standpoint for the revolutionary efforts. This article presents Blanco's socialist proposal – of the importance of the Indian side of the Andean peasantry – as a break in the 1960s revolutionary scenario of Latin America, a time of the hegemony of a class-centric focus on the rural Indigenous population. To do this, I locate the Indian place in Blanco's politics until 1969 in three sections: first, I will present Hugo Blanco's early political path within the broader context of the socialist

revolutionary moment of 1960s Latin America; second, I will show how the encounter between Trotskyism, peasant unionism and the Indigenist cultural movement became a fertile ground for Blanco's desire to adopt a working-class, peasant and Indian position; and third, I will present how the union organisation of strikes and land reform from below functioned as the political ground from which the centrality of Indianness among the peasantry emerged.

Keywords Indigeneity; Hugo Blanco; peasant unionism; land reform; Perú; Latin America

Introduction

Two years after the victory of the Cuban Revolution, a critical movement spread in Perú, with as many as 300,000 peasants, organised in unions, occupying close to 70 of the 140 estates of the valley of La Convención in Cuzco.[1] A short but momentous event, this was a central from-below attempt to dislodge the social aristocratic basis of the Peruvian *hacienda* (large-estate) system. Strikes followed by land uprisings created conditions for the subsequent enactment of the most radical land reform of the region in 1969. In the same year, English historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote about the events of La Convención as the 'scene of the most important peasant movement of that period in Perú, and probably in the whole of South America',[2] conveying the international excitement around the first significant attempt to organise the peasantry within a leftist revolutionary movement in Perú.[3]

Occurring in an era defined by the Cuban triumph, which had turned Latin America into 'the most critical area in the world',[4] this short Peruvian land insurgency is often narrated by presenting its most visible face – the Trotskyist *mestizo* (ethnically mixed) Hugo Blanco – as 'the Peruvian Che Guevara' or, more moderately, as a 'quasi-guerrilla leader', who preceded the guerrillas of 1965 that aimed, but ultimately failed, to apply the Guevarista *foco*-model in Perú.[5] This faulty interpretation does not allow us to fully appreciate the roots and significance of the events of La Convención and, in particular, Hugo Blanco's uncommon pronunciation that he had 'adopted the Indian heart', expressed after the conclusion of this project. As a young revolutionary in the 1950s, Blanco placed himself within the generational project of the revolution, which aimed to imitate Che Guevara's revolutionary project as a life journey.[6] However, the peasant land uprising that started in La Convención had been developing before the Cuban Revolution and emerged from other streams of influence.

Different than a *guerrillero*, the young, eager Blanco, who joined the growing peasant union mobilisation in Cuzco, was a peasant organiser[7] who began to identify as an Andean Indian only after his experience in La Convención. This politics was forged in the encounter between the Trotskyist grassroots workerism of La Plata and the peasantry's political organisation in the Andes, in an act that echoes the *mestizo* Emiliano Zapata's identification with the Mexican peasants, as well as the urban student Subcomandante Marcos's rooting in the Zapatistas' communities in the later part of the century. In other words, his was one of the rare and meaningful cases where a *mestizo* revolutionary adopted the Indian position. For Blanco, the Indian struggle was but a part of the complex Peruvian Revolution.[8] He wrote from the El Frontón island prison in 1969:

> The only way we Indians can become part of humanity is by being Indians, it is our way of being people. It is not by accident that the [Revolutionary Military] Velasco government [1968–1975] wants to dissolve us into the general category of peasants as if we do not suffer a thousand humiliations precisely because we are Indians.[9]

A way of existence that the 'peasant' as a class position cannot fully encompass, this attempt to adopt the Indian heart of the Andean peasantry is one of the central elements of Blanco's political life, where Indigeneity is foregrounded, rather than being a backwards element of the revolutionary effort. This endeavour belongs to the universe of heterodox Latin American Marxism that since José Carlos Mariátegui, had been developing a critical understanding of the reality wherein both class and Indigeneity are found in entangled forms, in an imbrication of exploitation, domination and conflict.[10] Thus, Blanco's revolutionary strategy was transformed from one focused on the economic exploitation

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

of the peasant class to a more comprehensive understanding of domination where class and Indigeneity were entwined, as the Indian side of the peasantry emerged as a medium and standpoint for revolutionary efforts, a proposal that was put into practice in one of the most defining movements of Peruvian history.

This article presents Blanco's socialist proposal as a break with the 1960s revolutionary tradition of Latin America at a time when the class-centric focus on the rural Indigenous population was hegemonic.[11] Recent works on the figure of Hugo Blanco have read his involvement in La Convención through a decolonial lens, based on the correspondence shared with Indigenous novelist José María Arguedas,[12] where both recognised in each other the same process of having adopted the Indian standpoint, but without a wider discussion of the historical location of this encounter and the Indian standpoint in the intellectual and political history of the Latin American and Peruvian Left.[13] Blanco's proposal is connected to the Indigenist cultural moment, but this is only part of the traditions that allow us to locate his legacy historically. For a complete picture, Blanco connects three different strands of history: the peasant history of uprisings, the Indigenist cultural movement and the socialist revolutionary moment of Latin America.

This effort to historically locate the Indian place within Hugo Blanco's politics until 1969 will be undertaken in three sections. First, I will present Hugo Blanco's early political path within the broader context of the socialist revolutionary moment of Latin America in the 1960s. Second, I will show how the encounter between Trotskyist working-class organisation, peasant unionism and the Indigenist cultural movement became a fertile ground for Blanco's will to adopt a working-class, peasant and Indian position. And third, I will present how the union organisation of strikes and land seizures functioned as the political ground from which the centrality of Indianness among the peasantry emerged.

Situating Blanco's heterodoxy of tradition within the Latin American Left

Hugo Blanco's uncommon enunciation – an urban middle-class son of a *mestizo* family from Cuzco, claiming to be an Indian himself – appears as an anomaly in the mid-twentieth-century socialist tradition focused on the urban proletariat. Yet it becomes explicable when situated alongside two other political traditions which interacted with the socialist revolutionary movement of Latin America (1960–70s): the history of the broader peasant uprisings and the Indigenist cultural movement of Perú. Ultimately, Blanco's account of the importance of Indianness within the revolutionary efforts of peasants' unions was undertaken in the context of calls for 'land or death', the main slogan of La Convención, which can be read as a combination of Mexican peasant revolutionary Emiliano Zapata's 'land and liberty' and Cuban anti-imperialist Fidel Castro's 'homeland or death'.[14] But it also echoes another call from the Peruvian Indigenist universe: 'the land is ours, what is the worth of the land without us' by Cusquean writer Luis E. Valcárcel.[15] In this way, Blanco's political project is simultaneously an expression of existing political traditions and a novel synthesis of what was politically possible.

In this first section, I will locate the initial political trajectory of Hugo Blanco within the socialist revolutionary movement, focusing on how these traditions conceived of the relationship between the working and peasant classes, Indianness and the revolution, to understand the common roots and the particularity of Hugo Blanco's position.

The place of the peasant class and Indianness in the revolution

Born in 1934 in the rural town of Huanoquite, Cuzco, Blanco was involved in political organisations and participated intensely in the peasant unionism of Cuzco in the 1960s. The first years of his political life occurred during a decade that witnessed profound upheavals through the clash of two leftist generations. On the one side were the supporters of and participants in the Peruvian communist parties that, since 1935, had adopted the 'popular front' command of Moscow and become reformist organisations acting within the law. On the other was the so-called 'New Left', which rejected the former by enacting the need to re-embark on armed revolutionary efforts to spread socialism worldwide. Huge differences in the place each held for the peasant class divided these two cohorts. However, in both iterations, the peasantry appears as an unknown, blurry subject in the political imagination and, particularly for the New Left, an incomplete character to be politicised and aided. This is the political universe in which Blanco began his political life and started to build his ideas of class, Indigeneity and the revolution.

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

The peasant unionism of the Communist Party as a route to civilised politics

From the 1940s the Communist Party and their reformist legal style became influential in the peasant movement, supporting the organisation of the Confederation of Peasants of Peru (Confederación Campesina del Peru, or CCP),[16] and in the growing and novel 'peasant unionism' organisation, which responded to the explosive transformations and tensions in the countryside. This association would be radicalised at Hugo Blanco's arrival in La Convención valley in 1958.

Far from being a timeless image of the Spanish colonial organisation of land and lives, the semi-tropical region of La Convención had only been occupied since the 1930s by landowners, or *hacendados*, of the high-altitude areas, motivated by the high prices of coffee, cacao and tea. They were eager to colonise the peripheries of their Andean haciendas, formerly the land of displaced Indigenous *Machiguengas*. This generated a phase of land reappropriation, which led to a historical peak of land privatisation and extremely unequal land possession, where just nine estates owned more than half of the agrarian land.[17] Eager to take advantage of the capitalist rush but lacking the workforce, the landowners saw the need to introduce modern exploitation of the land to achieve their goal of the capitalist exportation of agricultural goods. In La Convención and Lares, this hybrid structure of labour and property, where work to produce goods for overseas export was unpaid, was established with migrants, young *cholos* (urbanised Indians) who had left the peasant communities of Urubamba, Calca, Anta, Acomayo and Apurímac.[18] Contracts were signed in which the *hacendados* exchanged a portion of wasteland for the unpaid labour of ex-community peasants, now turned into renter-peasant workers or *arrendires*.[19]

Even though the landowners were willing to welcome these new workers into a hybrid structure of labour and property, they were very reluctant to give up their racialised domination over the Indigenous peasants who would work in their haciendas.[20] Except for some liberal landowners, most of the contracts included requirements that aimed to maintain hierarchical domination: most renter-peasants were banned from building a house made of bricks with a metallic roof and lived instead in precarious wild cane, thatched roof and houses with untiled floor, with the intention that they would not develop a sense of property ownership. Widespread prohibitions, such as the wearing of non-traditional clothes and shoes, speaking Spanish or providing their children with a formal education, to the use of physical punishments and permanent mutilations if subordination and fear were not shown, sexual violence towards women and other offenses were discussed in the national media as the expression of a decadent system.[21] The Romainville hacienda, where house burnings and forced mine-work were practised, and where years later Blanco would decide to be involved as a renter-peasant, is therefore only an extreme expression of the order of domination.[22]

Only the renter-peasants' desire to secure economic benefits, which meant living within a 'neo-feudal' environment, maintained this very fragile equilibrium. They transformed the forested slopes of their land into productive plantations, selling produce outside the hacienda and hiring workers (sub-renters called *allegados* or seasonal workers).[23] This process meant that the renter-peasants' effective dynamisation of capitalist agriculture transformed them into a peasant elite, or a *kulak* class,[24] a situation that threatened the socioeconomic hegemony of the landowners.[25] With the rising price of cacao in the 1950s, and as landowners became aware of the rising wealth of the renter-peasants, the former responded with evictions without recognising the improvements arrendires had made to the land.[26] The first peasant unions of the Andean lowlands, created in 1940 in the countryside on the *hacienda* Maranura in La Convención and the *hacienda* Chhuro in Paucartambo,[27] impeded the evictions of both renter-peasants and sub-renters. These first moves were influenced by the reformist-legalist style that the Communist Party had fomented between the 1940s and the 1950s,[28] which was organised more seriously from 1952 with the economic support of the increasingly wealthy peasants.[29] How were the actions of the peasant unions regarded by the local sphere and the communist organisers? What ideas of class and Indigeneity were being mobilised?

In the political imagination of the time, the peasant responses were seen as a rebellion by Indians who were thought of as extremely deprived, incomplete humans who lacked the components of modernity, such as the ability to read, write and be part of Hispanic culture.[30] Even if the renter-peasants had become a new emergent social stratum – *cholos* who were economically challenging the *hacendados* – they were described as sub-humans because of their Indianness: most of them spoke Quechua and came from rural communities. In a judicial verdict in June 1961, a group of renter-peasants

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

in La Convención who plotted to murder the *hacendado* Duque because of his eviction threats were absolved of the death penalty because of:

> Their conditions of indigenous, semi-civilised, illiterate, degenerated by alcohol and coca leaves and the infrahuman life they carry … without culture and because of their poor eating habits. Even though their Spanish surnames and ethnic features are mestizos, their legal situation is completely the same as the aboriginal because of their ignorance, unculture, and degeneration.[31]

In contrast to the viewpoint that could not grasp the changing position of the *cholos*, the emergence of a class-based approach provided an alternative militant framework by turning Indians into peasant comrades. If the peasantry was the identity of those who worked the land, even if it was the land of others, or those who aspired to work land of their own, which had been widespread since the Mexican Revolution of 1910,[32] the novel language of socialism created the possibility that rural leaders who had previously called themselves Indians would start to self-identify solely as peasants or *compañeros* [comrades], and regard the Indian categorisation as an insult.[33] If Indians were to adopt a class vocabulary and modern tools such as union organisation and literate culture, they would eventually transform into new types of beings – the peasantry. In 1933, a communist peasant, Mariano Turpo, when addressing his comrades of the Peasant Union of Lauramarca after being imprisoned, stated that the lack of literacy 'makes them more Indian, easy victims of the *gamonales* [abusive landowners]'.[34] The practical implication of this is that by applying a class viewpoint and modern revolutionary techniques to their existence, 'Indianness' could be washed away.

The framing of the Indian question within revolutionary efforts, which emerged through the work of Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, the first creative Marxist of the Americas and founder of the Peruvian Socialist Party, stands in huge contrast to this emphasis on non-Indian peasantry. The Mariáteguian focus on the Indian stems from viewing racial conflicts from the perspective of the class struggle,[35] where 'race has its role in it and the medium to confront it' by promoting Indigenous-origin militants that 'make use of their mentality and language as an effective ascendant towards their peers'.[36] But with the death of Mariátegui in 1930, the Socialist Party was converted into a Soviet-obedient Communist Party, which assumed a class-focused line and rejected the 'filo-indigenous postures'.[37] This meant that official communism would assume a rigid class rhetoric to distinguish social differences, in which the Andean Indian culture could only be seen as false consciousness, a Messianic and non-modern expression of politics.[38] It instead promoted novel organisational models, such as the peasant unions, Left partisan militancy and strikes and land seizures as efficient models of contestation.[39] In this way, through a unilinear interpretation of history, where the progressive proletarianisation and modern politicisation of colonised peoples are the necessary push into modern capitalist class relations, a step that precedes the constitution of communism,[40] the Andean peasantry emerged as a group that was the natural (and subordinate) ally of the urban proletariat.[41]

In practice, the political activity of communism in Cuzco would become a mostly reformist matter of lawyers and rural teachers who fitted into old local hierarchies[42] and remained faithful to the pacifist coexistence doctrine of Moscow.[43] General ideas of social justice against landowners and the demand for agrarian reform, influenced by the local experiences of injustice and by the anti-oligarchic American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) and the Communist Party, can be found in the renter-peasants' political imagination in the 1940s. But the first peasant unions, partly organised by the Peasant Federation of Perú- CCP (politically influenced by the Communist Party and the APRA), worked in a reformist style of political action inside the limits of the law. Thus, for those practising civilised and civilising politics, acting within the law acquired superior connotations. When the peasant Casiano Rado responded to the Communist Party's accusation of organising looting in Cuzco, he rejected their involvement, as his communism was 'an action of science and faith, promoting class consciousness but within the legal limits and order, which was different from the pre-political, ignorant and uncultivated actions'.[44]

How differently did the 'New Left' of the 1950s understand the place of the peasant and its Indian component? In a direct rejection of the urban-centred communist parties, the Chinese and Cuban examples shone a radically different light on the political work in the countryside of this new cohort. The 'New Left' was able to move away from rejecting the connection between the 'traditionalist' peasantry and revolutionary efforts of 'modernisation, mobilisation and politicization'.[45] Now, as a central subject

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

for revolutionary efforts, the Andean peasantry held a tactical place, following the influential Cuban Revolution and its *foco* strategy of mobilising a professionalised group of combatants in rural areas.

The march towards the 'Real Perú' of the New Left

In his 1960 *Guerrilla Warfare*, Ernesto Che Guevara challenged the orthodox Marxist reliance on material conditions. Instead, he proposed that self-organised guerrillas would be able to create a revolutionary moment if they engaged with a peasant population in rural places. Thought of as the 'underdeveloped America' these hidden places would be strategic in armed fighting against state powers.[46] Successful in Cuba, this did not spread in the Andean region as Guevara had failed to establish strong relations with the local peasants in Bolivia in 1967. This became a major factor in the defeat of the Bolivian campaign for revolution on a regional scale.[47] The essentialist and static vision of the world of the Indian peasantry an unchanged place completely disconnected from the nation and the market, combined with a lack of knowledge (which Guevara had gathered from his youthful travels around the Peruvian Andes)[48] would be repeated in the Cuban-backed guerrilla organisations, where the centrality of the peasantry was followed by a tragic combination of enthusiasm and unfamiliarity about the real state of the Andean peasantry, the so-called '*real Perú*'.

The Rebel APRA (later the MIR, or Revolutionary Left Movement) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) were created in 1962 as two breakaway groups that left the APRA and the Communist Party as part of an ongoing process of radicalisation within leftist currents that rejected the bureaucratised reformist route.[49] Both were impressed by the successes of La Convención and received military and ideological training in Cuba in 1962 to extend the 'Peruvian revolution'. Aiming to break with the urban confinement of their parties and march towards the 'real Perú' in the rural areas,[50] they hoped to achieve what Fidel Castro confidently called the conversion of 'the Andean highlands into a hemispheric Sierra Maestra'.[51] Ambitious objectives were set by a mostly urban and middle- to upper-class group who, in the context of Odria's censorship, lacked a comprehensive analysis of the political scenario and internal processes of the Andean highlands. These guerrilla groups instead built their references to the Andean world on Mariátegui's 'Seven Essays' (1920) and on images of a clash of feudal lords and Indigenous servants about to explode,[52],[53] illustrated by the Indigenist literature of Ciro Alegría, José María Arguedas and Manuel Scorza. In this scenario, they saw themselves as the great catalysts[54] and were overly confident of being 'something completely new within the Peruvian left, as our direction is young, non-polluted, decided and consequential'.[55]

While the ELN was rigidly focused on the *foco* Guevarista approach, ignoring altogether the already existing peasant unionism, the MIR shifted from placing importance on peasant political action to later underrating the peasantry's capabilities as a political actor. Near to the moment of action, Puente Uceda discarded the possibility of building on the existing political work taking place, preferring to concede to the MIR vanguard.[56] The peasantry, according to the MIR approach, was the 'primitive Ayllus of the Incas', 'where collectivist methods of work and feelings of mutual aid and help still prevailed'; as 'the weakest point of the system', it needed to be aided.[57] Both failed to build significant support among the peasant communities and were virtually defeated by military forces in 1965, only three years after their creation.

Against this backdrop of revolutionary projects, Hugo Blanco's involvement in La Convención valley appears to have followed a fundamentally different route, as it was embedded in the local context and embraced the Indian aspect of the peasantry. However, these elements were not present in the initial years of Blanco's political activity as he held to the common urban dogma of the industrial workers as the vanguard. His position went through a substantive transformation in Argentina, where he was influenced by a heterodox Trotskyism that promoted his 'proletarianisation' and his ulterior 'peasantisation', and his arrival in Cuzco, a city where socialist and peasant organisations were facing and affecting each other.

La Plata, Lima and Cuzco (1954–8): the process of becoming a worker and a peasant

Hugo Blanco's father, like many other middle-class Peruvians in the 1930s, was influenced by the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) ideals against the oligarchic state. The APRA of Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, alongside the Socialist Party of José Carlos Mariátegui, were the most vigorous

anti-oligarchic movements to date, being the first expression of mass politics in the country.[58] As anti-oligarchy efforts responded to the crisis of the ideal of 'decent' white elites ruling the 'uncivilised Indians'[59] at the end of the nineteenth century, these parties would discuss the place of the Indian question on the path to a modern nation.[60] While Haya de la Torre believed that the APRA party should promote national capitalism as an inevitable phase of the sub-developed countries, to be led by modern *mestizos* from the middle class, Mariátegui proposed that the Peruvian path allowed for the centrality of the Indian communities as a political subject for national liberation.[61]

It is the crisis of these two anti-oligarchic political options in the 1950s, with the APRA reduced to a conservative-elite supporter and the Communist Party's preference for reformism that defined the early years of Blanco's initial involvement in politics. He would find a way out via Argentinian Trotskyism and its commitment to the adoption of the class position of the 'revolutionary subject'.

La Plata and Lima: the path to becoming a proletariat

Following a standard life stage of the Cuzco elite, Hugo Blanco moved to Argentina in 1954 to study agronomy in La Plata, in the footsteps of his brother, an Aprist organiser who had been incarcerated in Cuzco. As an impatient leftist student of Universidad Nacional de La Plata, and excited to be in a place free from the weight of the censorship that characterised the regime of General Manuel Odria,[62] Blanco was actively involved in the search for radical leftist options that would defy the deviation of APRA and the Communist Party from the revolutionary cause. With the help of his brother and his political acquaintances, based in a room that Blanco described as 'the base of the APRA party of La Plata',[63] he eventually met one of the founders of Peruvian Trotskyism, Carlos Howe Beas, who introduced him and other Cusquean comrades to Argentinian Trotskyists.[64] This group instructed them in Marxist philosophy and economics and the history of the Internationals. In particular, the figure of Hugo Bressano, also known as Nahuel Moreno, a professor at La Plata University, leader of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) and, through the eyes of Blanco, the 'principal theorist of Latin American Trotskyism'[65] was central: he would become Blanco's mentor and define his political learning.

Emerging in 1944, the Trotskyist current led by Moreno (Morenism) was characterised by a 'furious workerism' that commanded their members to join the factories to promote union work among the masses[66] and by a particularly heterodox and flexible diagnosis of the working-class political sphere. The years of Blanco's militancy in the POR and his first experiences as a factory worker[67] coincided with significant working-class mobilisation against the first coup d'état against Peron in 1957.[68] Morenism was motivated to reformulate its initial support of a de-Peronisation of the working class to a classist reappropriation of the Peronist identity, learned within the Peronist movement.[69] In light of this process, and considering the end of the dictatorship in Peru, in 1958 Blanco was instructed by the POR to search for the proletariat in Lima, the 'most adequate move in the light of theory'.[70] He started to prepare to 'come back to the motherland to apply the antidotes he found in the recipe book of his comrades'[71] by learning about Peru for three months in Buenos Aires libraries.[72] Once in Lima, reality would rapidly shake up his plans.

Looking to restructure the Peruvian POR through the organisation of urban unions in the narrow industrial zone in Lima, Blanco faced political persecution following the organisation of a small protest against Richard Nixon and he was instructed to move to Cuzco, his hometown. Installed in Cuzco, he began organising newspaper retail-sellers within the Workers' Federation. His participation in a city union strike resulted in his being jailed for two months. It is there that he spoke in his rough Quechua with Andres Gonzales, general secretary of the Chaupimayo peasant union. Gonzales shared his concern about the fear his imprisonment could cause in Chaupimayo's rising peasant union movement, to which Blanco answered: 'I can go to Chaupimayo to support the people.'[73] In 1958, he decided to move to La Convención valley to join the rising peasant-workers unions and become a renter-peasant in the *hacienda* of Romainville, one of the cruellest landowners of the region. However, this was not the first encounter between socialist Blanco and peasant unionist Gonzales, as they had met previously in the Cuzco Workers' Federation through Blanco's father-in-law, a communist lawyer. This was no minor detail, as it showed that Cuzco was a place where the leftist forces were directly facing the novel phenomena of the peasantry organising in unions.

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

Cuzco: the path to becoming a peasant

Far from being a *tabula rasa* from where Blanco could conduct his revolutionary dreams, Cuzco had long been the scene of encounters with crucial political movements. This Andean city, former capital of the Incas, had been the epicentre of various cycles of peasant uprisings since the establishment of the Spanish colony. The latest one was a cycle of rebellions against the expansion of the haciendas in the 1920s,[74] which had a great influence on the development of Indigenism as a cultural movement that discussed the Indian's place within the Peruvian nation.[75] This city was also the centre of an important wool and alcohol trade, as well as an emerging textile industry.[76] But there were only limited links between the moderate stance of the city's organiser-workers (mostly artisans) and the Indigenist elite of anti-aristocratic discourse, as the former feared appearing subversive to the ruling classes.[77]

Unionism started to take a different route in the 1920s, with the creation of a communist cellule in Cuzco in 1927. It rejected Indigenism and the possibility of convergence between Marxism and Indian culture, as the former was thought of as a conservative ideology far removed from the struggle to build a peasant-worker alliance.[78] The Communist Party was a central supporter of the new cycle of agrarian unionism that started in 1945. By 1950, the hegemony of the leftist rhetoric of class would surpass the political force of Indigenism.[79] In Cuzco, the Communist Party supported the growing peasant unions movement and periodically sent labour leaders of 'Indian origin' from the Workers' Federation to work alongside peasant leaders for the purpose of acceptance.[80] They seemingly avoided, however, a further discussion of Indian culture within the revolutionary strategy.

The Indigenist cultural heritage was, however, accessible to the Cuzco elite, as it found its way into the literate culture, leaving a fundamental trace on the *mestizo* upper and middle class in regions where new generations of lawyers' sons and bureaucrats would lead the regionalist efforts against Lima's centralism. Both the poet César Vallejo from La Libertad Highlands and the novelist José María Arguedas from Andahuaylas,[81] central figures of the neo-Indigenist generation, had been born into 'decent' *mestizo* families outside Lima. Blanco's teenage years were influenced by reading 'novels of social and Indigenist tendencies' by Clorinda Matto de Turner, Jorge Icaza, José Eustacio Rivera and Ciro Alegría,[82] considered by Blanco as the 'forefathers' of revolutionary Indians because of the 'native tradition' that their work established.[83] But as a Cuzco native, Blanco's approach to the Indian peasantry was direct. He later remembered the importance of the Indigenous education he received in his teen years from his first mentor, Lorenzo Chamorro, an Indian community member and his father's friend, who had organised protests against the hacienda San Jeronimo and was gravely injured by this.[84] In times of a new cycle of peasant uprisings, building on Mariátegui's heritage to bridge the gap between Andean culture and socialism was available as a political option.

Nonetheless, Blanco's encounter with the Andean peasantry in Chaupimayo was not the expression of a 'clear political picture' of the importance of the peasantry in Peru.[85] For Blanco, it 'had an element of adventure and some of the strategy', allowing him to escape from the Cuzco communism that had rejected his Trotskyism. More than a defined plan, it was an exploratory move.[86] A solid recognition of the importance of peasant unionism as an effective social machine[87] was possible because of the theoretical contributions of his mentor Moreno.[88] He had insisted on his permanent location in Cuzco in 1960,[89] a place where dual power was starting to emerge. In his interpretation of the Trotskyist concept of dual power, Moreno argued for the need to support this 'pre-revolutionary situation in which the working class had achieved control of a considerable part of the State power', visible in Cuzco in an embryonic stage through land seizures and union organisation.[90] Building on this, Blanco established that the local development of incipient forms of dual power between the bourgeois government and sectors of the population other than the proletariat (which was practically non-existent in many zones) was not contradictory. He predicted a possible future moment of a duality of power on a national level.[91]

The logical conclusion, then, was to consider La Convención and the role of the peasant unions as a place of revolutionary potential. Determined to support this political process he considered to be of utmost importance, he decided to relocate to the epicentre of peasant unionism in La Convención, Chaupimayo. If in Argentina, Hugo became an industrial worker to better understand the proletariat's problems and fight alongside them, in Cuzco, he became a peasant with the same objective.[92] But it was in Chaupimayo, through the organisation of strikes and land seizures, that Blanco adopted the centrality of the Indian within a socialist perspective.

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

Hugo Blanco's adoption of the Indian standpoint as part of a socialist revolutionary experience

At a time when the rural population assumed a central role in revolutionary politics by emphasising its class position, Hugo Blanco presented an uncommon centring of Indigeneity, or what he called 'Indianness'. This exceptionality among the cosmos of the Peruvian Left is the general consensus. In 1976 historian Alberto Flores Galindo argued that Blanco constituted the example that the struggle against economic oppression within the land uprisings did not mean the disappearance of the 'Indian element', the cultural oppression,[93] as he achieved the 'first encounter between Andean culture and Marxism'.[94] In 2000, anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena also spoke of Blanco's uniqueness in 'identifying himself and his fellow leaders as revolutionary Indians', but, for her, he maintained the subordination of cultural domination to the land problem and the pre-eminence of the peasant identity over that of the Indian.[95]

Certainly, in *My Tayta Jose María and the Indian Aspect of the Peruvian Revolution* (1969), Blanco speaks of the Indians' rediscovery of themselves as a way to break out of the material and mental bondage inflicted on them.[96] At the same time he also states that the Indian struggle is 'only one part of the entire Peruvian revolution' as 'it exists [but] there is no reason to exaggerate its importance'.[97] This ambivalence should be read as an expression of an attempt to think, on political grounds, simultaneously of a revolution at the societal level, and of the Andean 'way of life' of the local peasantry as the medium and standpoint of that revolution. Holding both political strategies at the same time would be a challenging equilibrium to maintain, as the outcome of events in La Convención will show. In the final section, I will present how the union organisation of strikes and land seizures functioned as the political ground from which the centrality of Indianness among the peasantry emerged. I will also look at the further development of Blanco's politics through his correspondence with José María Arguedas and the restrictions on disseminating the land reform starting in La Convención.

The Chaupimayo path: the Indianisation of Blanco as product of the organisation of land strikes and seizures

A short time after his arrival in Chaupimayo in 1958, Hugo Blanco, having become a renter-peasant, was elected president of the local peasant union and later became a prominent spokesman for the peasants of the entire valley.[98] From this position, he was able to radicalise the renter-worker unions through the introduction of strikes that demanded the end of free labour, which was generally accepted, and the organisation of armed defence militias to protect the occupied land, summarised in the slogan 'Land or Death', which was followed by the radical wing of the peasants. Eventually, armed peasants not only defended the plots they rented but also seized the landowners' lands, reaching 40 of 380 seized haciendas in 1962.[99] The spirit of Chaupimayo, the epicentre of La Convención's revolution, was then a combination of renter-peasant strikes and land seizures so powerful that it began to be replicated on a national level.[100] How this was possible?

Preparing the terrain for the expansion of unionisation and the radicalisation of the process was achievable, in part, because of Hugo Blanco's willingness to live as a peasant, which differentiated him from other political actors. In contrast to legal advisers from the Workers' Federation of Cuzco, seen as allies but always foreign to the peasant world,[101] Blanco was able to change his image from a Spanish-speaking 'student'[102] to a Quechua-speaking renter-peasant and union comrade. As a member of the Chaupimayo union, he insisted on assuming farming tasks on the *chacras* or plots of the comrades that were needed to complete their work quota, in a practice of reciprocity or *ayni*.[103] This allowed him to join the informal discussions of quotidian problems and discover the workers' opinions more closely than would have been the case in assemblies.[104] This is a particularly decisive position that provided an inside understanding of the particularity of their class position in two crucial matters: the role of the peasant unions as organs of power and the place of racial oppression within the class conflict.

As a renter-peasant and union member, he could observe that peasants endured not only the direct exploitation and abuse by the landowner but were also bonded by the need for basic services such as roads and canals and by inhabiting the same geographical unit. These were elements that could potentially turn them into a community, in the general sense of the word. A class position and a latent community could be the basis for the development of a peasant democracy enacted by the peasant unions, which could organise effective agricultural work strikes, appropriation of plots, the end of unpaid

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

labour, collectivisation of the landlord's assets, distribution of uncultivated land, the naming of alternative justice institutions and the provision of infrastructure such as schools and public works. In this way, the peasant unions adopted a deeper significance than the workers' trade union[105] as their actions were reconfiguring the sphere of social production.

In addition, by witnessing directly the limitless power of landowners who inflicted violence (physical, sexual and racist) on the peasants, essentially 'doing as they pleased', Blanco developed an understanding that the struggle in La Convención valley was not only based on work exploitation, but also on oppression in a wider sense.[106] As he narrates in *Land or Death* in 1972, apart from the 'feudal' economic relationships between the landowner and the renter-peasant,[107] 'there is more, as the Indian is an oppressed nationality'.[108]

Indianness as a way of life was not dependent on blood but rather on a social community, whose language, music, manner of dress, tastes and customs were ridiculed, suppressed and denigrated.[109] Thus, the resurgence of the Indian and the public display of the Quechua culture became fundamental aspects within the struggle between the peasant and the landowner. As Blanco states, 'We always spoke Quechua throughout the struggle and always exalted everything Indian'.[110] The specific importance of the collective public displays that accompanied the new order of things was experienced as a crack in the oppression of Indians:

> The mass meeting put the Indian on top of the monster. A concentration of ponchos in the main plaza, the heart of the city. At the court on the cathedral portico, which dominates the plaza like a rostrum. The odor of coca and Quechua, permeating the air. Quechua, out loud from the throat; Quechua shouted, threatening, tearing away the centuries of oppression. A march down the main streets, before and after the meeting. Windows and doors of the powerful fearfully slammed shut at the advance of the multitudes, aggressive, insulting, threatening, shouting in Quechua truths silenced by centuries of Castilian Spanish. The Indian, master of plazas and streets, of the entire street and the sidewalk. That's what the peasant meetings meant, aside from the specific object for each gathering.[111]

An exaltation of a way of life coexisted with the introduction of new practices, which appear to have had a transformative effect on the renter-peasant identity, as their participation in the activities of the unions meant they were 'becoming socialist workers'.[112] This does not seem to imply their de-Indianisation, but rather these practices were mechanisms that enhanced their living conditions. Apart from the use of the printing press, written law and military discipline, Blanco introduced new living conditions, the building of schools, hospitals, hygiene habits, metal beds and roofs and the use of shoes, established as 'dictatorial orders' to get 'with their own hands the beds, shoes, lands, books, an improved life that the landowner refused them to have'.[113] Blanco supported unions to produce their own printed documents that mimicked a property legal title which was hung with pride by renter-peasants in their houses. Even in cases where, because of illiteracy, they could not understand the words written on them, they still held profound significance, as it was a paper that spoke on their behalf.[114]

This merging with the Indian peasantry had its limits. Blanco reached a level of integration unusual for the socialist practice of the time and would remain as an external character for a considerable group of unionists. For instance, in 1961, the first document of the Chaupimayo valley, which includes a common declaration to seize lands, known as the oath of the Mandor Hacienda, did not include Blanco's signature, because of his friction with other communist-influenced unions and because of the need to present this move as 'strictly peasant'.[115] Nonetheless, the enduring imprint of his actions is undeniable. The impact of the unusual changes that occurred in the period of the land strikes and seizures was such in the collective consciousness that Blanco started to appear in peasants' testimonies as a figure of supernatural powers. He was seen escaping the police, transforming into a dog, a puma or a cat, or being present simultaneously in Canchis, Urubamba and Espinar organising unions, punishing the abuses of landowners and granting lands to the rebellious peasants.[116] His commitment was seen as extraordinary because it was not solely focused on the objective position of the exploitation of the peasantry, but was additionally attentive to the experience of oppression as constitutive of the historical condition of the peasantry as an Indian peasantry. These experiences of humiliation, hunger and abuse at the hands of the authorities were sufferings Blanco was keen to share, and with consequences he was willing to assume. This was particularly evident when he faced police persecution and had to live an extremely deprived life as a runaway,[117] which left a crucial imprint that was felt as a restorative move:

> Accustomed to no one doing anything to change their condition, they have seen that there is a man who has suffered for them. More than the incentive of unionisation, which Blanco found strong in the countryside [at his arrival], this is a phenomenon of loyalty. The peasant does not forget and waits. The persecutions, anaemia, and humiliations suffered by Blanco have made him, perhaps more than his political theories, a man whom the South does not forget.[118]

Groundbreaking as it was, this project was seriously limited in its subsequent national rollout, a vital move in the plans of Blanco and the Peruvian POR. Even if Blanco promoted a united front between renter-peasants, sub-renters and seasonal workers to isolate the landowners,[119] the evident socioeconomic differences between the renter-peasants and the sub-renters exacerbated the decline of solidarity among the unions, particularly after the enactment of land reforms by the military provisional government of Nicolás Lindley in 1963 as a counter-revolutionary reaction to the land reform initiated in La Convención and Lares.[120] Generally satisfied with the land granted, the self-defence committees, which had started as a decision of the La Convención federation,[121] were not fully extended after Blanco's imprisonment. Blanco recognised that the preoccupation with the wider problems of Peruvian society and socialism were not part of the peasant imaginary, which he explains by their condition of oppression within the hacienda as a prison-society.[122] He lamented: 'In my head was the revolution but not in the people's heads. The objective of defending the agrarian reform was achieved as the land belongs to the ones who work it, but that was it.'[123]

The isolation of this process also occurred in part because of the limitations of the Peruvian Left that aimed to support it. The FIR (Revolutionary Left Front), which the Peruvian POR joined along with other factions of Peruvian radical leftists and the Argentinian POR in 1961, failed in its attempt to support the development of peasant unionisation and land seizures. One of its factions in Peru opted for a strategy that imitated Castro's grandiloquent assault on the Moncada barracks, undermining the importance of the existing peasant political organisation and the immersion this support needed. A series of failed bank expropriations in Lima intended to fund these efforts and the subsequent persecution of their leaders virtually destroyed the FIR,[124] as well as the chances of a 'Peruvian Revolution', with the dream to extend the land uprising of La Convención as the first step. When Blanco was captured by the police on 29 May 1963, he was found alone, hungry and without the support of a distant and weak party that barely existed.[125]

From his conversion into a renter-peasant, Hugo Blanco was able to develop a political strategy that considered a potential community that would form the basis of the peasant workers' social class and prove its efficacy as the strikes and land seizures advanced beyond the frontiers of La Convención. But on an additional level, Blanco was attentive to the limitless violence of racist motives that was constitutive of the social scene he joined as a participant. In his words, not only exploitation but also oppression needed to be dismantled by a socialist strategy. His decision to embrace those denigrated elements, the Quechua culture and the Indianness of the peasantry, as a medium for the class struggle, stemmed from the intense commitment he started to cultivate in La Plata, adopting in all possible senses and dimensions the position of the oppressed people he was fighting for. This standpoint did not stop when the La Convención political project was over. Later, after his imprisonment in 1963, the Indian's place within Hugo Blanco's revolutionary practice was developed on another level of meaning and affect in more personal sources, found in the correspondence he shared in November 1969 with José María Arguedas.

Hugo Blanco and José María Arguedas: the Indian revolution and its method of stone and dove

Arguedas, the most important novelist of Peruvian Indigenist literature and the national representative of a narrative vindicatory of the Quechua world, had seen in Blanco 'one who has interpreted better the aspirations of the Indian peasantry and knows how to speak to them in their language and modes'.[126] In his final years before his tragic suicide, Arguedas had been developing a radical stance on Indian liberation, considering that within the social tensions among classes and the economic interest of the struggle, there was a cultural ground, especially prevalent in Peru, that acts as profoundly spiritual and violent forces that inflame the opposite sides, agitating them with implacable force'.[127] After receiving a copy of Arguedas's novel *Todas las Sangres* (All the Bloodlines) in prison, Blanco and Arguedas started

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

a correspondence of unusual tenderness and intensity, especially considering Arguedas's history[128] and the fact that they never managed to meet in person.

In his first letter Blanco confesses to Arguedas that his heart tore apart when reading his novels, because, 'the highlands start to reach me with all their silence, with their pain that does not cry … I can see the hummingbird, I hear the small water springs sing'. In a similar way, the land seizures and parades in La Convención were able to show 'with so much happiness, without humiliations, through Quechua chants and wearing *ponchos* [traditional garments], they were able to say "death to landowners! Long live to the man that works!"',[129] a truth silenced in Spanish. Both were celebrating the Indian way of inhabiting the world in which the two considered themselves to be accomplices, Indians themselves, which is taken, in Blanco's words, in the most combative sense of the word.[130] But while Arguedas resented the word 'Indian' because it was the 'whip that the *mistis* [non-Indians] use', for Blanco, the use of the word reflected that they had taken the whip out of the hands of the landowner to smash his face.[131] The *huayno* music, the *quena* instrument, the Quechua, the *poncho*, the legends, the costumes, when used with pride, are a battle cry.[132] In these words, Indianness appears as a common radical inheritance and as a medium for the liberation of the holders of this tradition.

This enunciation of *being Indians*, of being able to share this heritage that was not originally theirs, should be read in light of the profound compromise they had both built with the Andean peasantry – Blanco in revolutionary politics and Arguedas in art. They found in each other a similar journey of two *mestizo* men who were able to adopt the Indian standpoint through their extraordinary commitment. Arguedas's first response to Blanco says: 'Dear brother, you have, like me, quite a white face, but with the most intense Indian heart. Tear, sing, dance, hate.'[133] This mutual recognition of having had access to the Indian world and merged with it was narrated as a transformation that was made possible through an emotional opening, which gave them access to the core of Indian authenticity. For Arguedas, Blanco was a 'man of steel that cries without tears, so similar to a Community Indian, tear and steel … That I knew your heart was tender, is a flower … that your blood has learnt how to cry, brother. Those who do not know how to cry do not know about love, they have not experienced it.' Blanco, in response, spoke of how the Indigenist literary tradition Arguedas belonged to had 'put a seed in his heart when he was a boy, helped to boil his blood, to see what he cannot see'.[134] In these letters, which surpass the rational recognition of the exploitation of 'the other', Arguedas and Blanco instead speak of the pedagogical path that emotions offer to the adoption of political and life commitments, which is practised simultaneously with the harshness needed on the political battlefield. This inclination to combine both revolutionary strength and solidary tenderness is synthesised by Arguedas as he speaks of Blanco as having a 'heart of stone and dove'[135] similar to 'the soul of Indians that he helped to fortify, [a soul …] they kept in the purest side of the seed, of the heart of these men'.[136] This double disposition, on the one side, resembles the hardness of a rock, as it possesses an unstoppable strength to rebel against the landowners and, on the other side, is able to act as softly and tenderly as a dove,[137] and to be profoundly transformed by the suffering of the Indian comrade.

The dream of a possible encounter, which Blanco imagined as an hours-long conversation, where they would 'sit in peace, with the placid heart, hallpando the coca leaves, losing sight on the far away mountains',[138] was shattered when José María Arguedas, suffering from a long-standing depression, ended his life in December 1969, a year before Blanco was released from prison. Arguedas did not have the chance to read the short story Blanco sent him, inspired by his work, 'to show him he had indigenous education … that he had the root born out of our land … and to make him joyful with their sad joy'.[139] It is a story about the Quechua peasant organiser Lorenzo Chamorro, injured in a confrontation with the landowners in Oropesa, who is described as follows: 'all the humiliation suffered by the Indians was out burning from his eyes'.[140] His work for the defence of Indian peasants, described as an apostolic role, did not pause after his injury, as he became 'a mentor who taught many and taught so much' and who continued to fight 'on mountains and creeks through all of us, who does not need his body because he has ours to continue his struggle, and does not need his life because he has thousands of lives to finish his work'.[141]

This transposition of lives, standpoints between those who fight, sharing the community of struggle, is also present in Blanco's short story 'Puna' (1969), written to teach students about the renter-peasant struggles. This is a story where, according to Blanco, 'at the end one does not know if the peasant or the student is speaking because they have become the same'.[142] Through the conversation between Arguedas and Blanco emerges the vital weight of the transformation occurring among those who profoundly embarked on Indian peasant liberation. That this intimate transformation was thought by

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

both Blanco and Arguedas to be a pedagogical route is an expression of their concern about its eventual dissemination, an ambitious collective dream whose potential could not be further explored.

In December 1970, Hugo Blanco was granted amnesty by the new Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces of Juan Velasco Alvarado and was finally released from El Frontón prison. The Agrarian Reform of Velasco, a state attempt to lead an agrarian transformation which La Convención helped to unleash, released monumental changes on the unequal Perú that Blanco, with all his vitality, had embarked on revolutionising in 1958. After three years in prison, as a free man, desperation filled him, Blanco narrates. He decided to travel to Huando Hacienda in the countryside of Lima, where an agrarian reform event was taking place. 'I heard the yell Land or Death,' he remembered, 'and started to cry there, as I was hearing our anthem again.' He was reproved by a Communist Party leader who mocked him by saying, 'we do not get anything from crying'.[143] Blanco's misunderstood intensity was the product of encounter and common project with the renter-peasants unions, which crafted in him the importance of the Indian heart of the Andean peasantry as both a medium and a standpoint, and which was celebrated by Arguedas in his final days. Now, after the defeat of the New Left guerrillas, the different leftist factions that embarked on the Peruvian Revolution were witnessing the first phase of the Velasco era, an unforeseen turn in that revolution they had so passionately dreamt and fought for in the early 1960s.

Notes

1 Neira, *Cuzco*, 89; Campbell, 'The historiography of the Peruvian guerrilla movement', 45.
2 Hobsbawm, 'Latin America', 31.
3 Handelman, *Struggle in the Andes*, 75.
4 Hobsbawm, 'Latin America', 43.
5 Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution*, 333.
6 Zibechi, 'Presentación de la tercera edición', 21.
7 Becker, 'Guerrilla warfare', 191.
8 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 48.
9 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 46.
10 Mitrovic and León, 'Raza y clase en el materialismo histórico', 15.
11 García Linera, *Nuestra America*, 113.
12 Here, I am referring to Andrade and Pollaloro, '!El mismo indio está hablando!'; and Wainzinger, '*Rostro algo blanco, corazón indio*'.
13 Except for a 2022 article in which the connections between Maríategui's thought and Blanco's political practice is developed. Pensado and Camacho, 'Mariátegui's thought in the peasant struggles of Hugo Blanco'.
14 Becker, 'Guerrilla warfare', 191.
15 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú*, 237.
16 Cordal, 'El primer debate en el trotskismo latinoamericano sobre la lucha armada', 47.
17 Fioravanti, *Latifundio y sindicalismo agrario en el Perú*, 36.
18 Craig, *El Movimiento campesino en La Convención, Perú*, 9.
19 Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*, 34.
20 Neira, *Cuzco*, 84.
21 Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*, 53–4; Fioravanti, *Latifundio y sindicalismo agrario en el Perú*, 21.
22 Neira, *Cuzco*, 92.
23 Pensado and Camacho, 'Mariátegui's thought', 67.
24 Fioravanti, *Latifundio y sindicalismo agrario en el Perú*, 74.
25 Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*, 35.
26 Fioravanti, *Latifundio y sindicalismo agrario en el Perú*, 11–12; Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*, 54–6.
27 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 187.
28 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú (1880–1980) en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 86.
29 Craig, *El Movimiento campesino en La Convención, Perú*, 13.
30 Drinot, *The Allure of Labor*, 39.
31 Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*, 110.
32 Edelman, '¿Qué es un campesino?', 155, 161, 167.

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

33 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 129–30, 131.
34 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 129–30, 129.
35 Chang-Rodriguez, *Pensamiento y acción en Gonzales Prada, Maríategui y Haya de la Torre*, 238–41.
36 Maríategui, 'Tesis ideológicas', 83.
37 Rénique, *La voluntad encarcelada*, 32; Vazelesk, 'De la lucha por la tierra a la protección de la Pachamama', 4.
38 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 126.
39 Vargas, *Movimiento campesino Peruano (1945–1964)*, 18–22.
40 Dussel, *El último Marx (1863–1882) y la liberación latinoamericana*, 270–4.
41 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 128.
42 Rénique, *La voluntad encarcelada*, 33–4.
43 Zapata, 'Las tomas de tierra'.
44 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 187–8.
45 Gil Aroy cited by Handelman, *Struggle in the Andes*, 14.
46 Becker, 'Guerrilla warfare', 187, 190; Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 7–9.
47 Krovel, From 'indios' to 'indígenas', 148.
48 Drinot, 'Awaiting the blood of a truly emancipating revolution', 98–101.
49 Cordal, 'El primer debate en el trotskismo latinoamericano sobre la lucha armada', 48.
50 Rénique, 'De la traición aprista al gesto heróico', 72.
51 Rénique, 'De la traición aprista al gesto heróico', 84.
52 Rénique, *Incendiar la Pradera*, 99.
53 Mealy and Shaw, *Sendero Luminoso* (*Shining Path*), 4–5.
54 Rénique, 'De la traición aprista al gesto heróico', 90.
55 Rubio, 'Las guerrillas peruanas de 1965', 150.
56 Puente Uceda, 'The Peruvian revolution'.
57 Rubio, 'Las guerrillas peruanas de 1965', 158.
58 Deustua and Rénique, *Intelectuales, indigenismo y descentralismo en el Perú*, xii, 44.
59 Whipple, *La gente decente de Lima y su resistencia al orden republicano*.
60 Lauer, *Andes imaginarios*.
61 Paz, 'El indigenismo cusqueño: 1920–1950', 68; Vazelesk, 'De la lucha por la tierra a la protección de la Pachamama', 4; Chang-Rodriguez, *Pensamiento y acción en Gonzales Prada, Maríategui y Haya de la Torre*, 213.
62 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú (1880–1980) en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 34.
63 Blanco, *De Piedra y Paloma*, 33
64 Blanco and Romero, 'Acá debemos elaborar nuestra propia política', 8–9.
65 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 75.
66 Moreno, *Prologue of 'El partido y la revolución*, 12.
67 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 245.
68 Blanco, *De Piedra y Paloma*, 41.
69 Correa, 'Preludio al 'entrismo morenista', 2896–8.
70 Neira, *Cuzco*, 90.
71 Añi, *Historia secreta de las guerrillas*, 13.
72 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú (1880–1980) en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 38.
73 Blanco, *De Piedra y Paloma*, 48
74 Flores Galindo, *Movimientos campesinos en el Peru*.
75 Rénique, *Incendiar la pradera*, 27.
76 Poole, 'Figueroa Aznar and the Cuzco Indigenistas', 46.
77 Kruggeler, 'Indians, workers, and the arrival of "modernity"', 182.
78 Rénique, 'De la fe en el progreso al mito andino: los intelectuales cusqueños', 33; Deustua and Rénique, *Intelectuales, indigenismo y descentralismo en el Perú*, 48.
79 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 132–3.
80 Craig, *El movimiento campesino en La Convención, Perú*, 16.
81 Deustua and Rénique, *Intelectuales, indigenismo y descentralismo en el Perú*, 27.
82 Villanueva, *Hugo Blanco y la rebelión campesina*, 73.

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

83 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 131–2.
84 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 37–41.
85 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 43.
86 Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*, 99.
87 Neira, *Cuzco*, 90.
88 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 20.
89 After a period in Chaupimayo and a return to Lima to work on the Confederation of Peasants of Peru, Blanco was advised by Nahuel Moreno to come back to Cuzco. Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 43.
90 Mangiantini, 'Entre tensiones y redefiniciones', 8–9.
91 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 56–7.
92 Villanueva, *Hugo Blanco y la rebelión campesina*, 73.
93 Flores Galindo, 'Movimientos campesinos en el Perú: Balance y esquema', 605–16, 638.
94 Flores Galindo, *Buscando un Inca: Identidad y utopia en los Andes*, 296–7.
95 de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos*, 191–2.
96 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 133.
97 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 134.
98 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 50.
99 Handelman, *Struggle in the Andes*, 74–6.
100 Neira, *Cuzco*, 91–2.
101 Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*, 99–100.
102 Neira, *Huillca: Habla un campesino Peruano*.
103 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 41.
104 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 42.
105 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 57–8.
106 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 43.
107 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 29.
108 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 30.
109 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 30.
110 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 30.
111 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 47.
112 Malpica, *Biografia de una revolución*, 469.
113 Neira, *Cuzco*, 188–91.
114 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 45.
115 Rojas, *La revolución de los arrendires*.
116 Fioravanti, *Latifundio y sindicalismo agrario en el Perú*, 194.
117 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*.
118 Neira, *Cuzco*, 112.
119 Villanueva, *Hugo Blanco y la rebelion campesina*, 76.
120 Craig, *El Movimiento campesino en La Convención, Perú*, 20–1.
121 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 48.
122 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 267.
123 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 55.
124 Blanco, *Land or Death*, 22; Mangiantini, 'Entre tensiones y redefiniciones'.
125 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 268.
126 Andrade and Polarollo, '!El mismo indio está hablando!', 154.
127 Arguedas, *Yawar Fiesta*, 12.
128 Andrade and Polarollo, '!El mismo indio está hablando!', 148.
129 Blanco and Arguedas, 'Intercambio epistolar entre Hugo Blanco y José María Arguedas'.
130 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 44.
131 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 44.
132 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 44–5.
133 Blanco and Arguedas, 'Intercambio epistolar entre Hugo Blanco y José María Arguedas', 36.

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006

134 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 35.
135 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 31.
136 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 31.
137 Fernandez Chacón, text on the cover of Blanco, *De Piedra y Paloma*.
138 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 34.
139 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 49.
140 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 52.
141 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 53.
142 Blanco, *Nosotros los Indios*, 80.
143 Montoya, *Tierra y política en el Perú* (*1880–1980*) *en honor de Hugo Blanco*, 77.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ruth Chavez Pacheco for her support in compiling archives and Lia Ramirez for her support in the bibliography search. I also want to thank Guillermo Rochabrún, Kelly Gómez and Alistair Bernal Holmes for their valuable comments.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

Not applicable to this article.

Consent for publication statement

Not applicable to this article.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently blind the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

References

Andrade, Luis and Giovanna Pollaloro. '"El mismo indio está hablando!": Sobre el intercambio epistolar entre Hugo Blanco y José María Arguedas', *Diálogo Andino* 57 (2018): 147–59. [CrossRef]
Añi, Gonzalo. *Historia secreta de las guerrillas*. Lima: Ediciones Más Allá, 1967
Arguedas, José María. *Yawar Fiesta*. Lima: Horizonte, 1983.
Becker, Marc. 'Guerrilla warfare'. In *Twentieth-century Latin American Revolutions*, edited by Marc Becker, 185–208. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2017.
Blanco, Hugo. *De Piedra y de paloma. Memorias de Hugo Blanco. Reyna, Carlos, Coord*. Lima: Ediciones Achawata, 2014.
Blanco, Hugo. *Land or Death*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972.
Blanco, Hugo. *Nosotros los indios*. Lima: Centro Bartolome de las Casas, 2017.
Blanco, Hugo and José María Arguedas. 'Intercambio epistolar entre Hugo Blanco y José María Arguedas (Noviembre 1969)', *Amérique latine histoire et mémoire: Les Cahiers ALHIM* 36 (1969): 1–16.
Blanco, Hugo and Vicente Romero. 'Acá debemos elaborar nuestra propia política', *Amérique latine histoire et mémoire: Les Cahiers ALHIM* 36 (2019): 1–17.
Cadena, Marisol de la. *Indigenous Mestizos: The politics of race and culture in Cuzco, Perú, 1919–1991*. Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2000.
Campbell, Leon. 'The historiography of the Peruvian guerrilla movement, 1960–1965', *Latin American Research Review* 8, no. 1 (1973): 45–70. [CrossRef]
Chang-Rodriguez, Eugenio. *Pensamiento y acción en Gonzales Prada, Maríategui y Haya de la Torre*. Lima: PUCP, 2012.
Che Guevara, Ernesto. *Guerrilla Warfare*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961.

Cordal, Sabrina. 'El primer debate en el trotskismo latinoamericano sobre la lucha armada. Polémica con el putschismo entre Nahuel Moreno y Daniel "Che" Pereyra en Perú entre 1961 y 1963', *Cuadernos de Marte* 7, no. 10 (2016): 43–82.
Correa, Emanuel. 'Preludio al "entrismo morenista": La experiencia del Partido Obrero Revolucionario en la Federación Bonaerense del PSRN', *Izquierdas* 50 (2021). [CrossRef]
Craig, Wesley. *El movimiento campesino en La Convención, Perú. La dinámica de una organización campesina*. Serie: Documentos Teóricos no. 11. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Perúanos, 1968.
Deustua, Jose and Jose Luis Rénique. *Intelectuales, indigenismo y descentralismo en el Perú, 1897–1931*. Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Rurales Andinos Bartolome de las Casas, 1984.
Drinot, Paulo. 'Awaiting the blood of a truly emancipating revolution: Che Guevara in 1950s Perú'. In *Che's Travels: The making of a revolutionary in 1950s Latin America*, edited by Paulo Drinot, 88–126. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
Drinot, Paulo. *The Allure of Labor: Workers, race and the making of the Peruvian state*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
Dussel, Enrique. *El último Marx (1863–1882) y la liberación latinoamericana*. Mexico D.F.: Siglo XXI, 1990.
Edelman, M. '¿Qué es un campesino? ¿Qué son los campesinados? Un breve documento sobre cuestiones de definición', *Revista Colombiana de Antropologia* 58, no. 1 (2022): 153–73. [CrossRef]
Fioravanti, Eduardo. *Latifundio y sindicalismo agrario en el Perú: El caso de los valles de La Convención y Lares, 1958–1964*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1974.
Flores Galindo, Alberto. *Movimientos campesinos en el Perú: Balance y esquema: 'Cuaderno rural' n° 18, Taller de Investigación Rural, Programa de Ciencias Sociales*. Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1977.
Flores Galindo. *Buscando un Inca: Identidad y utopia en los Andes*. Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1986.
García Linera, Alvaro. *Nuestra América: Marxismo e Indianismo*. Pereira: CELA, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos Justo Arosemena, 2008.
Handelman, Howard. *Struggle in the Andes: Peasant political mobilization in Peru*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974.
Hobsbawm, Eric. 'Latin America: The most critical area in the world'. In *Viva la Revolución: Eric Hobsbawm on Latin America*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Leslie Bethell, ch. 4. London: Abacus, 1963.
Krovel, Roy. 'From "indios" to "indígenas": Guerrilla perspectives on Indigenous peoples and repression in Mexico, Guatemala and Nicaragua', *Interface: A Journal for and About Social Movements* 3, no. 1 (2011): 145–71.
Kruggeler, Thomas. 'Indians, workers, and the arrival of "modernity": Cuzco, Perú (1895–1924)', *The Americas* 56, no. 2 (1999): 161–89. [CrossRef]
Lauer, Mirko. *Andes imaginarios: Discursos del indigenismo 2*. Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Rurales Andinos Bartolome de las Casas, 1997.
Malpica, Mario. *Biografia de la revolucion: Historia y antologia del pensamiento socialista*. Lima: Ensayos Sociales, 1967.
Mangiantini, Martin. 'Entre tensiones y redefiniciones: El trotskismo argentino ante el paradigma de la Revolución Cubana', *Afuera. Estudios de Crítica Cultural* 17 (2017): 6.
Maríategui, José Carlos. 'Tesis ideológicas: El problema de las razas en la América Latina'. In *La Tarea Americana*, edited by Jose Carlos Maríategui. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 1929.
Mealy, Marisa and Carol Shaw. 'Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and ethnocultural conflict in the Andes'. In *Handbook of Ethnic Conflict: International perspectives*, edited by Dan Landis and Rosita Albert, 553–83. London: Springer Science, 2011.
Mitrovic, Mijail and Sebastian León. 'Raza y clase en el materialismo histórico: Notas sobre América Latina', *Pacha. Revista De Estudios Contemporáneos Del Sur Global* 3, no. 7 (2022): e21089. [CrossRef]
Montoya, Rodrigo. *Tierra y política en el Perú (1880–1980) en honor de Hugo Blanco*. Lima: Ministerio de Cultura, 2013.
Moreno, Nahuel. *El partido y la revolución: Teoria, programa y politica. Polemica con Ernest Mandel*. Buenos Aires: CEHUS, 1974.
Neira, Hugo. *Cuzco: Tierra o muerte*. Lima: Populibros Peruanos, 1964.
Neira, Hugo. *Huillca: Habla un campesino Peruano*. Lima: Ediciones Achawata, 1974.
Paz, José Angel. 'El indigenismo cusqueño: 1920–1950', *Escritura y Pensamiento* 5, no. 11 (2002): 59–71.
Pensado, Patricia and Nayeli Camacho. 'Mariátegui's thought in the peasant struggles of Hugo Blanco', *Latin American Perspectives* 49, no. 4 (2022): 62–77. [CrossRef]

Poole, Deborah. 'Figueroa Aznar and the Cuzco *Indigenistas*: Photography and modernism in early twentieth-century Perú', *Representations* 38 (1992): 39–75. [CrossRef]
Puente Uceda, Luis. 'The Peruvian revolution: Concepts and perspectives', *Monthly Review* 6, no. 17 (1965): 12–28. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
Rénique, José Luis. 'De la fe en el progreso al mito andino: Los intelectuales cusqueños', *Márgenes, Encuentro y Debate* 1, no. 1 (1987): 9–33.
Rénique, José Luis. *La voluntad encarcelada: Las luminosas trincheras de combate de Sendero Luminoso en el Perú*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2003.
Rénique, José Luis. 'De la "traicion aprista" al gesto heroico: Luis de la Puente Uceda y la guerrilla del MIR', *Debate* 67 (2006): 77–98. [CrossRef]
Rénique, José Luis. *Incendiar la pradera: Un ensayo sobre la revolucion en el Perú*. Lima: La Siniestra Ensayos, 2015.
Rojas, Rolando. *La revolución de los arrendires. Una historia personal de la reforma agraria*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Perúanos, 2019.
Rubio, Daniela. 'Las guerrillas peruanas de 1965: Entre los movimientos campesinos y la teoría foquista', *Histórica* 32, no. 2 (2008): 121–65.
Vargas, Pedro. *Movimiento campesino Peruano* (*1945–1964*)*: Algunos elementos de análisis preliminares y una aproximación bibliográfica*. Lima: Centro de Estudios Peruanos Sociales, 1983.
Vazelesk, Vanderlei. 'De la lucha por la tierra a la protección de la Pachamama: Los caminos de la Confederación Campesina del Perú (1947–2016)', *Polis* 16, no. 47 (2017): 165–85. [CrossRef]
Villanueva, Victor. *Hugo Blanco y la rebelión campesina*. Lima: Editorial Juan Mejia Baca, 1967.
Wainzinger, Francisco. '"Rostro algo blanco, corazón indio". Narrativas de la resistencia decolonial en la correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Hugo Blanco (Perú, 1969)'. XIV Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia. Departamento de Historia de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina, 2–5 October 2013.
Whipple, Pablo. *La gente decente de Lima y su resistencia al orden republicano*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Perúanos, 2013.
Wickham-Crowley. *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
Zapata, Antonio. 'Las tomas de tierra'. *Diario La Republica*, 26 September 2013. Accessed 10 February 2025. https://clioPerú.blogspot.com/2013/09/historia-de-la-lucha-campesina-en-el.html.
Zibechi, Raul. 'Presentación de la tercera edición'. In *Nosotros los indios*, edited by Hugo Blanco. Lima: Centro Bartolome de las Casas, 2017.

https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.ra.2025.v10.1.006