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## Hugo Blanco (I)

# A visit with the opposition

by Marlene Nadle

LIMA, Peru—Hugo Blanco, leader of the Peruvian peasant rebellion, was perched on a boulder high above the prison shacks when the visitors' ferry docked on Fronton Island, five miles offshore. Wearing his rust-colored poncho and brown beard, he made his way down the slope with the authority of a man used to working the Andes.

His robust figure rounded now with prison softness, but still an extremely handsome 37, the opponent of Che Guevara's guerrilla theories greeted the three visiting revolutionaries with vigorous handshakes and instant charisma. He led his temporary disciples along the edge of the island, the peripatetic seminar circling back to the pier where Indian men hawked their prison handicrafts for survival money.

They were the same people Blanco had organized. Victims here as they were in Bolivia, in Ecuador, in the whole stretch of the Andes that was once the Inca

empire. Bringing the mountains with them to Fronton, hanging the huge cross in front of the visiting shed along with the sun, moon, and fish of an earlier religion. As Blanco's three visitors watched him and the wasted faces passing with him into the tin-roofed lean-to, they could only wonder at the difference.

No longer certain whether the fault in Bolivia was with the peasants or with Guevara's theories, afraid that, like so many young radicals raised on tales of the Sierra Madre, they had

### 'The campesino is the natural Marxist'

bought a Cuban fantasy, a heroic dream of bands of bearded men, they were going through a time of doubt, of questioning, of searching for new solutions and trying on old ones.

Their doubts were important not only for Latins, but for all of Cuba's Children, the followers of Che and Castro. For Che, through the concept of instant revolution he has come to represent, has fathered the Weathermen and the French students' rebellion, has sent young radicals around the world smashing, trashing, bombing; has sent them through the streets, certain they were catalysts for the Second Coming.

Yet perhaps the sacrilege of wondering whether Guevara had set the young on a self-destruct course had to be committed by Latin radicals. They are too close to the reality of revolution to indulge in uncritical cults of Che or

skill much in evidence during his conversation with these three representatives of Cuba's Children; for when they asked him what went wrong in Bolivia, he treated their disillusionment very gently, tempering his initial attack on Che.

"No political theory," he began slowly "can afford to ignore the nature of the people it must deal with. The Indians have a very ancient distrust of strangers. The guerrilla bands arrived as strangers and remained detached strangers. Most of the Bolivian peasants didn't even know Guevara's guerrillas were fighting for them. The army's propaganda machine kept saying the guerril-

las were monsters. The peasants believed it. They heard no contradictions."

Argument, of course, had been Blanco's business. Between 1958 and 1963, when he was captured and sentenced to 25 years on Fronton, he persuaded Peru's conservative campesinos to become radicals who refused to obey the laws or protect the order of the society that oppressed them, to become revolutionaries who wrote their own laws, ran their own courts, set up their own land reform programs. And he enforced their decisions with a mobile and disciplined militia.

His mass organizing approach

*Continued on next page*

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wondering whether Guevara had set the young on a self-destruct course had to be committed by Latin radicals. They are too close to the reality of revolution to indulge in uncritical cults of Che or to dare to repeat his mistakes.

So Jaime and Angelito and Roberto came to Fronton to risk the comfort of the myth for the perspective of a man who has always been critical of Che's kind of instant revolution and whose fame rests on his skill in doing the slow, drudging work of building a movement. Like that of so many Latins who are again finding Blanco relevant, who are considering his method as an alternative, their interest was more than just a negative swing away from failure.

There was Blanco's record. If people faithful to the cause are one of the requirements for a revolution, he is the man who has proved he knows how to produce them. In Bolivia the wretched and barefoot walked steadily into army and police headquarters to inform; in Peru they went to steal weapons.

Part of his success had come from his ability with people—a

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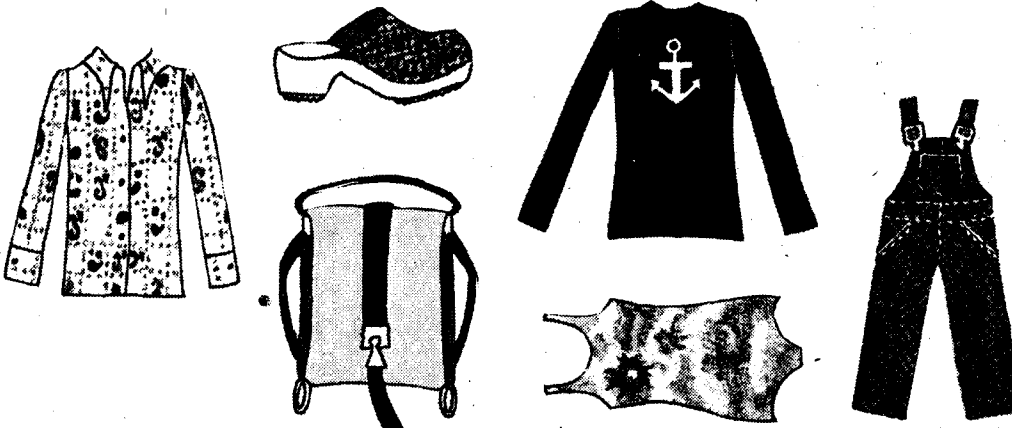
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# Opposition

Continued from preceding page  
was the exact opposite of Guevara's concept of revolution. Instead of sending an elite group of guerrillas to the countryside to make the revolution for the people, he went himself. Instead of with military, he began with political action.

And now, walking with the heirs of Cuba into the shed filled with the smell of stale urine, he was

still in action. Trying to convince these potential organizers of the need to work with the people before beginning the fighting. Saying guerrillas were not some miraculous magnet which would, as Che believed, automatically attract the peasants' support. Insisting that the fault in Bolivia had lain with Guevara's theories and not with the people. Urging that detached violence and rhetoric not understood by the people would lead to isolation and defeat of radicals in the United States and Europe as certainly as it had in Latin America.

Hugo Blanco's own faith was also inherited, but from a dif-

ferent radical tradition. Instead of Cuba, his began with the Mexican Revolution and Zapata. His older brother was persecuted as a member of a grass-roots political party of the '30s, with shock troops that waged civil war against the army. He fed young Hugo dreams of a mass movement for a liberated Indo-America along with his breakfast. Hugo's experience with the peasants who filled his father's law office seeking vengeance against the land-owning hacendados reinforced his brother's words. So did the intimate knowledge of the people he absorbed from his mother, who came from an Indian background.

So it was that with complete conviction, like some strange mixture of anarchistic priest and Harlem nationalist, his brown hair standing in cowlicks, he spoke to his temporary disciples in the prison shed.

"The image of the Indian as passive, his words had a faint echo of 125th Street, "is completely false. The Indians have been fighting for 300 years against the police, against the plantation owners, against the clergy that tries to cheat them. Haven't you ever heard of Tupac Amaru?" he asked, beginning to smile. "He was the first guerrilla and he never read Che." His voice was laced lightly with mockery, his teasing directed at the esoterica of the left which make revolution without the proper handbook unthinkable; esoterica, like the elitism, separating them from the people, preventing them from building a mass movement.

But even if Cuba's Children accepted these the premises—and they were just shopping—the question was still: how. How do you convince an illiterate man, in the sierra or in the slums, to take the most radical of all political actions?

sandals, his identity was still closer to Lima's University of San Marcos than to Pucara's rock-strewn fields. His manner was sulphurous, deliberately casual as he said: "So, you don't think the revolutionary potential of the campesino class has been a little exaggerated, huh?"

"Sure it's been exaggerated," Blanco answered with a wry grin. "It's been exaggerated by you pretty bourgeois who have idealized the campesinos and who fall apart the first time you come in contact with the reality, by you weekend revolutionaries who go into the sierra, make five-minute speeches, and are surprised the campesinos don't immediately pick up guns and become guerrillas."

But his criticism was more than balanced by his reassurances, his belief in their ultimate success, and to listen to him was to be caught in the web of his certainty. Weaving magic like some mountain magus, he made everything seem possible, simple.

A wave of Blanco's wand, and—illiteracy and political ignorance are turned to the organizers' advantage. A campesino knows nothing of governments, so he has no illusions about promises of reform. A campesino has no conception of a nation, so he has no loyalty to a state. A campesino cannot read, so newspapers cannot teach him to destroy himself.

The campesino is not a non-political man. He is the natural Marxist. The socialist without theory. The empirical politico whose life teaches him that his world—the police, the land, the courts, the stores—are all controlled by the hacendados.

Yet as he worked to make the three eclectics understand, to give them a technique, I could only wonder how much of his success was the method and how

checking with the maestro before leaving for the countryside. With well-trained preservation instincts, he folded the students' names out of sight, then spread the letter toward his visitors and began reading aloud upside-down: "Organizing points for our village . . . mayor on hacendados

Continued on page 35

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never read Che." His voice was laced lightly with mockery, his teasing directed at the esoterica of the left which make revolution without the proper handbook unthinkable; esoterica, like the elitism, separating them from the people, preventing them from building a mass movement.

But even if Cuba's Children accepted these the premises—and they were just shopping—the question was still: how. How do you convince an illiterate man, in the sierra or in the slums, to take the most radical of all political actions?

Roberto, skeptical now of everything, afraid of getting caught in another myth, had begun testing Blanco's ideas as soon as they started influencing revolutionary circles. "I tried going into the sierra and talking about revolution," he reported dubiously, very much the intellectual, wearing hornrims and angst. "The people looked at me like I was crazy. In one town they drove me out."

"Do you think the reaction to me was very different at first?" Blanco asked with a positiveness that made doubt a personal insult. "You must keep going back to talk to the same people. Little by little they will be convinced. And once the campesino is convinced he is profoundly revolutionary! The students are superficial! The campesinos act instead of talk!" Angelito bristled defensively.

Despite the rough dress and

loyalty to a state. A campesino cannot read, so newspapers cannot teach him to destroy himself.

The campesino is not a non-political man. He is the natural Marxist. The socialist without theory. The empirical politico whose life teaches him that his world—the police, the land, the courts, the stores—are all controlled by the hacendados.

Yet as he worked to make the three eclectics understand, to give them a technique, I could only wonder how much of his success was the method and how much the man. The intensity, the sincerity, the force of his concern. The determination that made him single-handedly organize a movement. The tenacity that had kept him going in Convencion. Never stopping long enough to have a home. Sleeping where he fell along the road. Walking all night to get to a noon meeting at a hacienda, and starting for the next one as soon as it was finished. But never becoming just an organizing machine. If for Che the campesinos were a necessary component of his theory, if for Debray they were his existential salvation, for Blanco they never ceased to be people.

It was his carino, his affection, his tenderness, his willingness to help and teach them, that had drawn the three young revolutionaries to Fronton, that had made this opponent of Guevara's theories so important to those looking for a new faith now that the old one was failing.

Letters come to him from other continents as well as other countries, but the one he had with him was from some Peruvian students ready to move into action and

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# Opposition

Continued from page 8

payroll . . . police steal campesinos cattle . . . campesinos no right to river water." The hand-writing crammed its way to the end of the page. Blanco struggled over the rough places and then, looking up with a glow, roared: "They plan to start a party! Magnifico!" He leaned toward the young revolutionaries. "Che said a political party apart from the fighting men wasn't necessary. I think it is crucial! Not a great party of the masses," he said, becoming excited, "but a party of the minimal number of the best and most militant of the campesinos! A party of trusted activists in a sympathetic countryside, to sustain the movement, to organize, to bring supplies, to maintain contact," he continued, edging across the table on his elbows as though trying to make his point by pure physical presence.

"You can't announce all the details of the revolution in a mass union meeting. That's one of the reasons I needed a party, but I was so busy leading strikes and land invasions I never had time to organize one."

So now, trying to help them learn from his experience, from his failures as well as his victories, Blanco kept stressing the importance of a party. He is more flexible, less likely to be guilty of the absolutism that made Che reduce the complex Cuban Revolution to the simple formula of guerrilla bands. For in Bolivia Che seemed to forget his own experiences in Cuba, seemed to forget the 26th of July movement, which was as much a party as a movement, and the important role it played in preparing the country for his and Fidel's return from Mexico, seemed to forget the organized

capture a country.

It is not a pleasant task to be a deflator of myths, a destroyer of someone's faith. But Blanco, as he spoke to the heirs of Cuba in the gray chill mist of the prison shed, knew he had to do it. He noticed the visitors shift uncomfortably on the hard benches as he drove home the irony, but he kept going, making and re-making his point, because he believed the crucial flaw in all the unsuccessful guerrilla efforts since Cuba had been the lack of organized support in the rural and urban areas to sustain the fighting men. His indictment made Che and the other Cuban mythmakers responsible for a decade of failure, not just for Bolivia.

The three heirs responded with silence—Jaime withdrawing even further into the mysteries reflected in his sensitive, brooding face, his black eyes turned inward to the artist's subterranean flow; Roberto resting his palm against

## 'Blanco's indictment made Che and the other Cuban mythmakers responsible for a decade of failure, not just in Bolivia.'

his glasses, wrinkling his forehead into the pre-plotted furrows of perpetual debate, coolly weighing the evidence; only Angelito showing anger, seeming to have made the heaviest emotional investment in Che and the romantic tradition he was now being told to throw out.

Angelito simmered quietly as the discussion began to turn to the problem of repression, a natural topic in the only partially paranoid world of revolutionaries. Then he let the anger out,

the way to greet wives in their own Quechua tongue, to trade affectionate insults with husbands, to admire children and handicrafts, all the time collecting people, creating his own whirlwind, reflecting the man in action in the valley of Lares and Convencion.

Between his excursions across the prison shed, he continued to talk about the armed wing. The young revolutionaries assumed he meant the peasant militia used for land invasions or the self-defense units used to protect the people from the brutality of the soldiers. Only gradually did they realize that Hugo Blanco, long the symbol of peasant movements, had also planned to start guerrillas, had been a partisan of the hit-them-with-everything-you've-got theory now gaining support among the eclectics.

"I never said I was against guerrillas," he answered their amazement. "I just don't think of them as the primary thing. For me they're only one part of a

mass movement. More important, they must be the consequence, the fruit of the organizing, not the starting point. They must be formed from the people who have been tested and trusted because of their work in the movement. Not outsiders, not untried recruits like some of the Bolivian miners who ran away the first time the going got rough."

Angelito, still simmering, asked Blanco whether he was not setting up a new dictate which said that in all countries, under all circum-

# letters to the editor

Continued from page 4

and in part to Jill Johnston's articles, which deal with women in true he-man, Playboy style. One wonders if this isn't what she has always aspired to be—a male writer for Playboy, and that now that homosexuality has become a marketable issue, she has found her raison-detre. It is this possibility, and not the fact she is a lesbian, that turns me off of Jill Johnston.

But the s/m Lib article is something else again. Next we'll be hearing from the downtrodden league of goat-fuckers about their oppression and how the only true democratic relationship is the one between mankind and all other forms of nature, etc, etc. Then we'll be hearing from the sex-killers, who will demand the legalization of rape and affirm that when they kill someone it's a creative, almost religious-inspired act.

Although maybe there is something cathartic in all this libidoliberation. Perhaps if all these tormented people speak their piece and do it accordingly for awhile, all their quirks will disappear, like cobwebs in the wind. And we can be sure the Village Voice will moan their passing.

—Anita Whitney  
Brooklyn

## Swan's Way

Dear Sir:

Ellen Frankfort displays incredible naivete in her review of "The Making of the Surgeon" (Voice, April 15). She shares the American public's boob tube image of the ideal doctor. She fails to consider that a doctor may be honest to the nth degree and

pension of human stool and chocolate milk to restore her bacteria to normal. Miss Frankfort is totally grossed out by this. She fails to realize:

1. Without the use of post-surgical antibiotics Mrs. Swan might not have lived long enough to get diarrhea.
2. Mrs. Swan's chocolate drink, although unorthodox, probably saved her life.
3. Had Mrs. Swan been told the exact nature of her medication she probably would have thrown it up before the bacteria had time to set up housekeeping.

There are enough real problems facing American medical care without Miss Frankfort's misinformed Agnew-like blurbs.

—William Pomper  
Manhattan

Continued on page 84

## CHORAL SOCIETY SUMMER SINGS

The New York Choral Society is again sponsoring "Summer Sings" giving all singers a chance to exercise their vocal cords in the standard choral literature, under the direction of leading choral directors in the city.

The standard works in this summer's 28 sings, which run from June 1 to Sept. 2 include: "Messiah," "Elijah," "B Minor Mass," Brahms' "Requiem," and Verdi's "Requiem." For the adventurous, there will be many off-beat pieces including: Britten's "Rejoice in the Lamb," and electronic pieces by Feliciano and Pinkham, Vivaldi's "Beatus Vir," Orff's "Carmina Burana," and Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms."

The sessions are held Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 PM at CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th Street. Admission, including the use of music, is \$2.50, and a 12 session

... seemed to forget the 26th of July movement, which was as much a party as a movement, and the important role it played in preparing the country for his and Fidel's return from Mexico, seemed to forget the organized groups on the sugar plantations and in the universities, waiting to help and to be caught by the myth, by the legend of 12 bearded men who landed in the Granma to

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for the revolution. He was now being told to throw out. Angelito simmered quietly as the discussion began to turn to the problem of repression, a natural topic in the only partially paranoid world of revolutionaries. Then he let the anger out, counter-attacking Blanco with Debray's arguments, saying maliciously that repression of Blanco's kind of mass movement was always easy and automatic because what he did was so visible.

"Repression against any group of revolutionaries is always automatic," Blanco replied calmly. "The important thing is when it comes. There is time in the early phases of a mass movement to build numbers and arms. Even the police have become used to organizers talking about revolution. It's only when the movement begins to pull illegal actions that the repression really starts."

He paused reflectively. Then in the almost religious spirit of the New Left, he confessed to an error even more critical than his failure to organize a party, the error of the young and the passionate. Like the Panthers and Weathermen in the United States, he had moved too soon. Invited repression with illegal acts of land invasion and violent attacks on police before the armed wing of his movement was developed enough to deal with it. Had himself wiped out by beginning before planning, carried away by the justice of his own cause.

He began talking about the might-have-beens, the things he would have done as part of his military strategy if only he had waited. The conversation was carried on crossed currents, communication not aided by Blanco continually running off on errands connected with the prison protest he was leading. Stopping along

the revolution. He was now being told to throw out. Angelito simmered quietly as the discussion began to turn to the problem of repression, a natural topic in the only partially paranoid world of revolutionaries. Then he let the anger out, counter-attacking Blanco with Debray's arguments, saying maliciously that repression of Blanco's kind of mass movement was always easy and automatic because what he did was so visible.

"Of course not," answered that undogmatic man. "In countries like Brazil, the repression is so great you can't organize a mass movement. Then there is no choice except a guerrilla band or kidnapping or urban terrorism. But that isn't the case in Peru. Even now a peasant movement is operating," he said, gesturing toward the letter still spread on the table beside the goat's milk cheese and boiled potatoes that had been the gift of a campesina. Like most of the people around Cuzco who had known which side Blanco was on and had protected him up until the very last, often at great risk to their own lives, she was still worried about him, still trying to help him, if only with food, making the long trip with her gift.

Blanco broke off hunks of potato and passed them to the people clustered at the table, juggling conversations with all of them while creating a sense of intimacy with each. Telling us about peasant movements in Colombia, in Guatamala, even in Bolivia, while his square, almost pudgy hand slipped food to the rib-skinny mutts swarming under the table and between the khaki guards.

(This is the first of two articles on Hugo Blanco.)

**On Mongolia**

"A Return to Mongolia," an illustrated lecture by John G. Hangin, will be presented on Thursday, May 27, at 8 p. m. at Asia House, 112 East 64th Street. Dr. Hangin, executive director of the Mongolia Society and Professor of Mongolian, Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies at

credible naiveite in her review of "The Making of the Surgeon" (Voice, April 15). She shares the American public's boob tube image of the ideal doctor. She fails to consider that a doctor may be honest to the nth degree and compassionate as all hell and still be totally incompetent. Doctors are people. Dr. Nolen may look down on his welfare patients and he may kiss his superior's asses, but this has absolutely no bearing on whether or not he is a competent doctor.

Miss Frankfort dwells on one case in particular: a Mrs. Swan develops nearly fatal diarrhea from having her normal intestinal bacteria disrupted by post-operative antibiotics. She is given a sus-

The sessions are held Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 PM at CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th Street. Admission, including the use of music, is \$2.50, and a 12 session subscription costs \$20. With this ad, each of the first 4 sings is \$2.00. Works for these evenings are:

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**Hugo Blanco (2)**

**Alternatives for Cuba's Children**

by Marlene Nadle

LIMA, Peru—On an island prison, the mere taste of goat's milk cheese brings out a wealth of reminiscence. The campesina who had brought cheese and boiled potatoes to Hugo Blanco, leader of a peasant rebellion until his arrest in 1963, shared with him memories of what led to the uprisings. Blanco is serving a 20-year term on Fronton Island, a few miles off the Pacific coast, and the two, anxious woman and still confident leader, were joined in their conversation by Jaime, one of three revolutionaries who had come for the visiting time to sit with Blanco and hear his thoughts. For Blanco did not follow the revolutionary philosophy and practice of Che Guevara, still the idol of most Latin radicals.

Jaime was homesick now for his village of adobe high in the desolate Andes where aqueducts are the veins of the mountain gods and the lurching rhythms of the flutes, capturing the melancholy, pierce to the core and swirl back to the center of time. His ordered world where the women wrapped in their ponchos and shawls endlessly weave and wash by the river. The men apart in loose groups, talking quietly or silent, impassive, motionless for hours.

In the campesina's valley of Convencion, the raw wind was softened by the tropics. The crops had changed to coffee and cocoa but the life remained the same.

belonging to the hacendados. The men rising at 3 a. m. to work it, returning only at 7 p. m., owing five to 15 days free labor as their rent. Earning, when they did, four cents a day—and work never certain.

It was at such a hacienda, belonging to Alfredo Romainville, that the initial conflict started. Speaking of the hacendado in the prison shed, Blanco and the campesina still called him the gamonale, the Quechua word for devil. Remembered with anger the beating he gave Malquides with the branch of a mango tree. And the day Gabino was sent to

**'If the organizers want to succeed they must change into the people, not the other way around. They must eat with them, live with them . . . until they not only speak, but think in their language.'**

find a horse and, when he returned without one, was harnessed with six 25-pound sacks of coffee and forced to walk to Matucancha on all fours.

Esteban, Ezequiel, Marcos—the recollections of the abuses

Blanco's wife of the revolution. Delicate as a child and tough as three cane cutters, she joined him in 1962 when she heard he was going to start guerrillas and bore his son 25 days after he was captured.

She had been one of a small but steady flow of politicians from the city who began going to Blanco's aid in the '60s after he had begun making a reality out of revolutionary shoptalk. Some of them even brought money from the bank robberies pulled by the Frente Izauerdista Revolucionario, a supporting group in the city, chaotically put together after it was already too late to be of much help.

"We were accepted by the peo-

ple because we were Hugo's friend. He was trusted because he was recommended by three of their jailed labor leaders who knew his work," Blanca explained to the eclectics. Yet as she recalled her experiences in Convencion, it became clear that a good part of the outsiders' problems were packed in their own cultural and emotional baggage.

"That first week," she continued, "I was out in the fields doing target practice when Hugo walked up to me and said 'Negrita, go into the kitchen. Here the women are expected to be in the kitchen.' So I went and peeled one yucca," she added in the

*Continued on next page*

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endlessly weave and wash by the river. The men apart in loose groups, talking quietly or silent, impassive, motionless for hours.

In the campesina's valley of Convencion, the raw wind was softened by the tropics. The crops had changed to coffee and cocoa but the life remained the same. The land, except in small patches,

find a horse and, when he returned without one, was harnessed with six 25-pound sacks of coffee and forced to walk to Matucancha on all fours.

Esteban, Ezequiel, Marcos—the recollections of the abuses went on. Arbitrary exercises in the power of the land-owners, for in those final months of 1958 the courts had forbidden unions.

Blanco had just arrived at that time. He had been organizing in the factories of Lima after picking up a loose Trotskyite line as a university student in Argentina. Adapting his factory experience to the country, he persuaded the campesinos to press grievances against Romainville in the name of the Federacion of Campesinos of Convencion. They were ignored and delayed by the courts as Blanco knew they would be, and by March 1959 a strike had begun which spread to haciendas throughout the valley.

One of the people who had been with him in Convencion was also at the table. A tiny girl with black braids who had squeezed on to the end of the bench during the second round of coffee and potatoes. She was Blanca la Barrera,

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# Cuba's Children

Continued from preceding page  
pained tones of a feminist, "then I went back to the fields and did target practice."

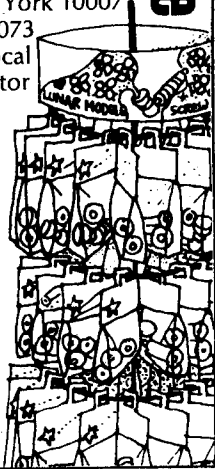
"It's difficult," said Blanco, smiling in sympathetic recollec-

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tion, "but if the organizers want to be successful they must change into the people, not the other way around. They must eat with them, live with them, understand their psyche until they not only speak their language, but think in their language."

"You forgot to think in Quechual one night, Popito," Blanca teased, taking his hand, then explaining. "We were sleeping in a house when someone started beating us over the head. Hugo got up and started swinging at whatever he could hit in the dark. Three men and a women were knocked out before he remembered it was an Indian fiesta, an old tradition of knocking heads with gourds for luck."

To ease himself off the hook, Blanco turned eagerly to Cuba's Children for a question. Any question. Angelito, who all the time Blanca had been talking had been muttering to Jaime without making a dent in his tranquility, began to amplify his remarks so that Guevara's opponent could hear them.

"Blanca was accepted by the campesinos because she was a friend of Hugo's, right?" he said surlily. "And Hugo because he was a friend of the guys in jail, right? So what if we don't have any friends? We can't organize? What is this, a method or a popularity club?"

Blanco, with a soft, amused light in his brown eyes, let Angelito rant for a while, then stopped him with palm signals. "Even without friends," he began, becoming serious, sliding into his oratorical tones, indulging in his natural tendency to make a speech, "there are an infinity of ties between the city and the country that urban revolutionaries can use. If the people in the migrant slums are worked with, then the road that everyday brings thousands out of the sierra can carry them and part of the revolution back. They aren't

small victories and going on to larger ones."

Angelito tried to interrupt, but Blanco, anticipating his argument, kept going. "What I am saying," he explained "is that the force that defeats authority is the campesino's not the paternalistic guerrilla's." He dismissed Che's theory with a reminder that it hadn't worked, that it hadn't gained support for the guerrillas even when they won early victories against the Bolivian army.

Yet not dismissing the man. Stopping to praise Che for his courage and integrity. Never seeming to compete for his cult. It was the same lack of egotism, when he was asked why he had been so successful in organizing, that had him speak vehemently about the conditions of the Indians' life, give the credit to Marx, and pass up all opportunities for self-praise.

His modesty had made him under-estimate his own importance when offers of help came from a Peruvian group that followed the Cuban line. Instead

of accepting it on his own authority, justifying it with an autocratic line like Che's "I am the chief." Blanco said he was only a disciplined militant and democratically referred the decision to an almost non-existent committee which couldn't agree enough to take it.

Although an unfortunate decision in the particular, it was very much in keeping with his belief in rule from the bottom up, not from the top down. Blanco didn't think leaders were that important. The process produced the leaders, he had said, and one man was much as good as another. His conception of leadership was so different from the elitist "great man" view Che held for himself and even more for Fidel. The difference between Guevara and Blanco lay not only in their ideas about leadership, but in their attitudes toward people. Blanco respecting them, understanding their weaknesses, after all these years of prison still making excuses for the man who had been tortured

Continued on page 35

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brings thousands out of the stria can carry them and part of the revolution back. They aren't strangers when they return to their own village," he said with a nod to Angelito, respecting the acerbic intelligence that had formulated a key question, then adding a few additional flourishes. "Transient hucksters, laborers, students like Jaime aren't guerrilla outsiders either. Once they have got the organizing under way, others can go in to make the revolution," he said, winding up in ringing tones and fist-shaking style.

Although Blanco's rhetorical manner can become wearing, sometimes getting caught in the pompous jargon of the left, his thinking rarely does. It was his pragmatism that made him urge a course that should be obvious, but that is ignored by young Latins who cannot fit migrant slums into any of their revolutionary theories, who seem as blind to the reality of the jobless and discontented in the shacks that surround every major city as their American counterparts are to the discontented populists in Queens and Kansas.

It was Blanco's pragmatism that made him impatient with Roberto's abstract questions, the remoteness with which he puzzled-solved a revolution and ignored the people. The urbane, professorial air with which he asked what would be the biggest obstacle to organizing. "Will it be the church?" he suggested. "The patron mentality?"

"The terror," answered Blanco simply. "The peasants' fear of brutal repression from the police and the army. Their fear of the war that will be waged against them to teach them not to support revolutionaries." His voice was lot with passion and the pain of remembrance. "The terror can be overcome," he said. "It can be overcome by showing the peasants they are strong. By winning

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# Cuba's Children

Continued from page 8

into betraying him. Guevara, intolerant, bitter, after only a few months in the jungle, his diary as contemptuous of the peasants who failed to support him as of the imperialists.

Comparing the two during one of Blanco's many excursions across the prison shed, Blanca said sympathetically to Angelito, "I understand your Che. I have some of the same hate and love in me. But not Hugo. A hacendado once came to me and said he was in favor of unions. He asked to

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speak at a union meeting. I let him come up on the platform and then I used him as a scapegoat. When Hugo heard what I had done, he sent the hacendado a letter. Not exactly a thank-you note for coming, but a reassuring letter saying, "The campesinos do not want to feed on the blood of the hacendados, only on the food of their land."

"Hugo is totally incapable of hating," she said, still sounding amazed at the thought. "The thing that makes him go is love. There is just no hostility in that man!"

Her face reflected her perplexity and admiration as she watched Blanco making his way slowly across the prison yard with a bashed-in carton of the handicrafts she would later sell door-to-door for him. When he got back to the table, he was apologetic about the delay. But with his errand taken care of, he gave Cuba's Children his undivided attention, rejoining them in the kind of discussion taking place in almost every cafe and campus in Latin America.

In the time they had left, he tried to use the influence he was gaining to counter the romanticism of action for its own sake. To remind them that revolutions

are not movie scenarios and must be preceded by dull, drudging organization. To urge them to give up the magical thinking that made them assume that a guerrilla band was an instant catalyst for popular support.

Although harsh, unlike many of Che's critics, he attacked Guevara's guerrilla theory only because he believed it is not sufficient. He refused to interpret the failure in Bolivia as proof that guerrillas cannot bring about a revolution in Latin America. Or, even more pessimistically, that nothing can bring about revolution in Latin America because of the more sophisticated counter-insurgency tactics.

For him the present situation is very much like the aftermath of the disastrous attack by Che and Fidel on the Moncada barracks. They didn't reject armed struggle because of a defeat, but turned it into a victory by developing a new strategy. Very much in their tradition, he kept trying to free Cuba's Children from old tactics and legends that no longer work.

Yet even revolutionaries find it difficult to change rapidly. Myths and heroes are not easily given up in an age so hungry for both. So the young visitors held back, husbanded their enthusiasm for Hugo's ideas. They seemed to have a vague, unspoken feeling of betrayal, of disloyalty to Che and Cuba that came out in small **angers and too heated defenses.** A sense of guilt despite the fact that intellectually they accepted the need for re-evaluation.

Yet as the khaki guards began blowing their whistles to signal the end of visiting hours, they were still emotionally held by the hero of the Sierra Madre, the superman of their childhood; they were still unable to separate the man from his theories. They

friends on the pier, was less an expression of final acceptance than an instant of comfort. A temporary sense of familiarity regained because of the similarity between Blanco's last remark and Che's austere dictum, "The duty of the revolutionary is to make the revolution."

Yet it wasn't the similarities but the differences between the two men that mattered. Che, aristocratic by temperament if not in politics, authoritarian, detached as one of his own guerrilla bands, an introvert unable to speak to the men in his camp, let alone do mass organizing. Blanco, the Everyman, the complete democrat, the extrovert always surrounded by people. Enjoying them; more importantly, respecting them enough to give them a piece of the revolution.

The tactics reflecting the men. And between them hangs a generation. (This is the second of two articles on Hugo Blanco.)

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Yet as the khaki guards began  
blowing their whistles to signal  
the end of visiting hours, they  
were still emotionally held by the  
hero of the Sierra Madre, the  
superman of their childhood; they  
were still unable to separate the  
man from his theories. They  
began moving out with Blanco,  
walking against the crowd  
rushing toward the exit, trying to  
stretch the time, measuring their  
uncertainties, still searching for  
some absolutes among all the  
doubts that were raised.

Blanco, afraid that in their con-  
fusion they might move into the  
cafes instead of the mountains,  
warned them against sitting and  
waiting to discover the perfect  
formula for revolution, against  
the over-reflection and theoreti-  
cal game-playing that so many  
substitute for doing. He was still  
the man of action, more cautious  
perhaps, more mature, but still as  
impatient with coffee spoon revo-  
lutionaries and, as always, the ul-  
timate organizer. "Remember,"  
he shouted after the guards had  
hustled them out the gate of the  
tin-roofed lean-to. "You begin by  
beginning."

Angelito glanced back at the  
man and smiled. The smile, which  
lingered as he picked his way  
carefully through the doughnut  
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Soloists will include soprano  
Delores Ivory Davis, tenor John  
Morrison, mezzo-soprano Theo-  
dora Wingate, bass Benjamin  
Matthews, and organist Solomon  
Herriott. Tickets are \$4. For reser-  
vations write Harlem Chorale,  
2979 Eighth Avenue, Room 30K,  
New York 10039, or call A. Greene  
at WA 6-9330, evenings.

131 Prince Street, New York City  
SATURDAY JUNE 5th, 1971 - 8:00 P.M.

\$2.00 In Advance

\$2.50 At Door

# Herbie Hancock is "Mwandishi."

Herbie Hancock. Pianist. Composer.  
Innovator. His history is "Watermelon  
Man" (which he wrote) and years as a  
sideman with people such as Miles  
Davis, Wes Montgomery, Kenny Burrell,  
Paul Desmond, Quincy Jones and  
Charlie Byrd.

"Fat Albert Rotunda," a compactly  
melodic blend of jazz and rhythm and  
blues, was his 1970 debut on Warner  
Bros. Records. "Mwandishi," the  
Swahili translation of his name, is the  
title of his newest, a free-form electric  
polyrhythmic album which seethes with  
energy. Between the poles of these two  
albums looms a giant.

APPEARING AT THE BITTER END, JUNE 2 - JUNE 7

