

Translation - Letter submitted to IIDB by Hugo Blanco being distributed in Latin America

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I am leaving for Peru tomorrow. Things are too hectic now to write an organized document. But I have to leave something in writing, in case anything happens to me.

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To the Latin American Comrades  
Notes on the Bolshevik Tendency

The oldest and most experienced current in Latin American Trotskyism is the one now known as the Bolshevik Tendency.

This fact in itself, as well as the geographic extension of this current clearly show its importance, especially for Latin America. It has a lot to contribute to building the Fourth International.

The author of these notes learned Trotskyism inside this current, and I stand by the positive things I learned from it. Among these could be mentioned the training of a dedicated active membership and how to work in the mass movement.

This particular current in Argentina arose around 1945. It was represented by Comrade Nahuel Moreno, who is still the central leader. On a world scale Trotskyism was much weaker at that time than it is today, in quality, as well as in numbers and geographic breadth; as a result, this tendency developed in an almost completely isolated fashion, in one of the regions most cut off from the rest of the world, and whose industrial development is in no way comparable to that of Europe or North America. These factors undoubtedly hampered the political and methodological development of the current. Some of its weaknesses were probably related to this fact, for example, it does not promote the education of the membership; arguing that "we are training activists, not intellectuals," the rank and file is immersed in super-activism. In contrast to other sections of the International the bulk of the theoretical work of the Bolshevik Tendency is the work of a single comrade, who writes on everything from an analysis of the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal to a document on sexual morality. The lack of education as a part of the party's overall political activity, which is characteristic of the Bolshevik Tendency, is also a clear product of our semi-artisan societies.

There was another factor that contributed to the isolation of this tendency. In the 1950's there were two important currents in Argentine Trotskyism; the so-called Moreno current and the Posadas current. The international leadership supported the Posadas current and took it under its wing. Today, as we know, this current is advocating a united front with flying saucer people and raises other themes of similar importance. Toward the end of the 1960's there was another debate, this time between the current led by Comrade Moreno and that of Comrade Santucho. And we know what happened to the guerrillaist current. So no one should be surprised that the members of the Argentine PST think that all you need to do to work out a correct line is to listen to what the International leadership says, and then do the opposite.

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The Bolshevik Tendency thinks that it is the only capable leadership for the International, and that Latin American Trotskyism thus has nothing or nearly nothing to learn from the Trotskyists in the rest of the world. According to Bolshevik Tendency mythology the sections that are not led by the Bolshevik Tendency are falling apart and in disarray. The Bolshevik Tendency members believe that none of the other Trotskyists know how to work in the mass movement or build revolutionary parties.

So, the development of the Bolshevik Tendency is not viewed as part of the general development of Trotskyism in our time, but as a Bolshevik Tendency product exclusively. The geographic isolation of Latin America, the language factor, and the lack of adequate information all help to keep the myth alive; but it begins to break down whenever the Bolshevik Tendency envoys see other parts of the world. As a result, no other important non-Argentine leader of the Bolshevik Tendency (maybe there is an exception) has stayed with the Bolshevik Tendency after having had a period of time to observe sections which are not led by the Bolshevik Tendency.

The Bolshevik Tendency has a monolithic conception of building the International and the sections. It does not believe it is correct for different positions to coexist inside the party; for the Bolshevik Tendency this is an obstacle that must be overcome. So, if the Bolshevik Tendency is in a majority it tries to crush the opposition. The various maneuvers it has used towards this end have been denounced many times, and it is not the object of this document to discuss them. But we can point out some of the basic theories that are used to justify this.

"Leadership discipline." According to this Bolshevik Tendency concept, the members of a leadership cannot present their own positions to the rest of the party, but must present the position of the majority in the leadership; if they tell the ranks what they themselves think, this is a serious violation of discipline. The Bolshevik Tendency is more flexible, of course, if it finds itself in a minority in the leadership.

The members of the Bolshevik Tendency have been convinced that it is a Trotskyist concept to compel tendencies to dissolve after a congress, and that they can exist only in a pre-congress period. The correct criterion that the leadership determines the periods for discussion, during which the bulletins are published and the internal party discussions are organized, is extended to stifle dissent. There is a dangerously Stalinist aspect to this.

According to the Bolshevik Tendency every deviation has a class origin. A deviation is any discrepancy with the Bolshevik Tendency leadership. Thus, those of us who are not with the Bolshevik Tendency are petty bourgeois or lumpen. The Bolshevik Tendency, of course, always has a "proletarian" position.

According to the Bolshevik Tendency, there is one comrade who is never wrong, Comrade Nahuel Moreno. If Comrade Moreno ever made an error, it was discovered only after he himself pointed it out. There is no other possibility. These errors, of course, do not have a class origin.

Unfortunately, of all the leading members of this current during its initial phase, only two remain, Comrade Moreno and Comrade Anibal. The rest all broke with them, one by one--in general because they suffered from petty bourgeois deviations. As a result, the gap in knowledge and experience between these two older leaders and the new cadres becomes wider and wider. Since everyone with a disagreement is treated as a political enemy and crushed, there is no way to build a tendency without a split.

When Bolshevik Tendency policy leads to failure this is not attributed to an incorrect line or a deficient methodology: the fault lies with those who carried it out. It is not unusual to hear Bolshevik Tendency comrades say, "I'm an idiot, that's the problem." The road is full of scapegoats.

It is common to make turns of 180 degrees, without making any balance sheets. This has broken many people.

The obligation to make "self-criticisms" is another ugly characteristic that the Bolshevik Tendency unfortunately shares with Stalinism.

The Bolshevik Tendency has correctly criticized the search for "shortcuts" in party-building. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik Tendency conception also seeks shortcuts.

\* There is no time to educate the minority opposition, which stands in the way of carrying out the "correct line." So the minority is to be treated like an enemy and crushed.

\* When the Bolshevik Tendency is in a minority, even more time would be lost in trying to educate the majority from within while following its discipline. The best course is to split, in order to gain the freedom of action to apply the "correct line," which, carried out successfully, will show the others.

\* The role of the international leadership is to "set the line" for all the sections, including the tactical aspects. "It is criminal" to allow the sections or young groups to develop through their own experience and their own errors. There is no time for that.

\* When the class struggle intensifies in some country "aid" has to be sent "urgently"--consisting of a line, material resources and cadres. Not to do so is to shirk internationalism, and since the present leadership is not doing so it is "inept."

This Bolshevik Tendency logic has done a lot of damage to the real development of Trotskyism, especially in Latin America.

Our parties and their respective leaderships cannot develop

if their maturation is stunted by Bolshevik Tendency paternalism which promotes an artificial growth and development, but which fails in the end; even more so if a balance sheet of the failure does not point out that the Bolshevik Tendency method is at fault, but rather a scapegoat--which, of course, is never Comrade Moreno.

Unfortunately our parties in Latin America, precisely because they are weak and inexperienced, are easy prey for the Bolshevik Tendency apparatus.

It would be incorrect to impose other cadres, other means, and another line to counteract Bolshevik Tendency colonialism; this would only be to fall into the methodology that we have to combat.

The road ahead is more difficult. We must resist, even though we are at a disadvantage, but we have to have the courage to do it.

Now that the danger of ultraleftist deviation has been overcome in Latin America;

Now that the two major international tendencies have been dissolved;

Now that Latin America is experiencing an upsurge that offers us magnificent opportunities for the development of Trotskyism;

Now, the main obstacle to this development are the negative features of the Bolshevik Tendency.

When I speak of negative aspects I am referring mainly to the colonialism and factionalism of the Bolshevik Tendency. The struggle against this takes place through the struggle for the unity of Trotskyism and against interventionism.

It is not a matter of excluding the comrades of the Bolshevik Tendency from our respective sections; it is a matter of teaching them how to live in the same party as those of us who are Trotskyists "despite" not belonging to the Bolshevik Tendency. In this sense I believe that the Mexican section has made a big advance.

The growing interrelation between Latin American Trotskyists, the interchange of experience, will help us to win the battle. We should not be sectarian toward the Bolshevik Tendency comrades. Let us not forget that among those who are today fighting against those harmful methods are some of us who were once the favorite sons of that current.

Peru 1961. A great upsurge of the peasant masses. Our group is heading up the process and learning to build itself through its own mistakes.

Then comes the "aid" from the current that is today the Bolshevik Tendency--with a line, leading cadres and material resources.

The initial "aid" and then the withdrawal of that "aid" later on, led to the destruction of the organization.

Scapegoats were found, myself included. At the request of Comrade Nahuel Moreno, I was "expelled" from the organization.

I didn't have to make a self-criticism, nor go through a period of re-education, in order to get back into the party, because, unfortunately, the organization disappeared.

Peru, 1978: A great upsurge of the masses. Our group proves to be "the outstanding force on the left" in the elections, learning to build itself through its own errors.

Then comes the "aid" from the Bolshevik Tendency, with a line, etc.

The rest of the story remains to be told...

Paris  
14 July, 1978