

The Future Is Indigenous~ The Government Is Everyone

Hugo Blanco grew up in the Cusco region of Peru, speaking the indigenous language, Quechua. At 83, he has been a peer of such Marxist Latin American revolutionaries as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara (he and Guevara were on opposite sides of a few debates). In the early 1960s, he organized peasant unions to seize land from feudal-style hacienda owners in the central Andean sierra. He was imprisoned for years by the Peruvian government and spent years in exile in Chile, Sweden, and Mexico. In recent years, he's been able to return to Peru. In 2007, he founded the periodical *Lucha Indígena* (Indigenous Struggle), which covers the political and economic forces that conflict with indigenous groups.

I've always fought for social equality. But now there's a more important problem: the survival of my species. One hundred more years of rule by transnational companies and they're going to exterminate the human species as they've exterminated other species.

The objective of these large transnational companies is to make the greatest amount of money possible in the shortest time possible. These days the attack on nature is strong, so there are more people defending ecosystems. And ecologists have respect for the indigenous because they defend nature, and give less importance to things like money.

I'm a Quechua indigenous person, and we have a principle of love and the worship of nature, which in Quechua we call *Pachamama*, or Mother Nature. But there are indigenous people all over the world in Oceania, in Africa, in Asia, and in the north of Sweden and Finland. And the characteristics of indigenous peoples are that they have a great love for nature, solidarity, and collective rather than individual mandates.

The faculty members at a university in Cusco who study agronomy have learned that when they go to the agricultural fairs of the *campesinos* [peasants], they shouldn't give prizes to the person who makes the biggest potato, or the largest quantity of potatoes, but instead to whomever produces the most varieties, because the indigenous think that's more important. And when you ask, "What do you produce on your land?" they say, "Everything," because they've got avocado next to the river, all the way up to the potato at the peaks.

Some people call us indigenous people "primitives," and they're right. Because we preserve the primitive organization that all of society once had, which is horizontal. They call us "savages," and I think they're right there, too, because the savage is the one who's not domesticated. The condor is a wild animal, but the rooster is domesticated. I'd rather be a condor than a rooster.

I'm for the idea that the global population self-governs. It's the only salvation against global warming and against the destruction of nature. For that reason, indigenous peoples have more esteem than ever. I don't believe in leaders or

caudillos [strongmen] or managers. But I think that what we need to push forward is the movement for collectivity. That's what I believe in: power from below. And that organized society can be like that.

I liked what one comrade told me: "They elected me. If they'd elected me as a community manager, it wouldn't have mattered, because then I could still cook for my husband and my kids. But they elected for the municipality. So what was I going to do? I had to travel. I had to teach my kids how to cook, and that was good, because now my sons' wives can accept a post far away, and my sons know how to cook." So they're advancing.

The Zapatistas have three levels of government: the community, the municipality, and the region. Many thousands of indigenous people govern themselves democratically with the principle of "lead by obeying." The people choose a group of women and men as governors, but they don't choose a president or a secretary general; all those chosen have the same rank. After a period of time they change out everyone, there's no reelection, so everyone is at the head and there's no indispensable person. When there's a very important question, they convene a general assembly so that the collective decides. No authority at any level gets a cent. They're like farmers and each gets their ration. Drugs and alcohol are forbidden. I don't know if you would call this socialism, anarchism, or communitarianism.

There are also indigenous people in a town called Cherán, in Mexico, who chose to self-govern. One day, when there were municipal elections across Mexico, and parties came to do campaign propaganda in Cherán, the citizens said, *No, we don't want parties, we don't accept any propaganda.* And then they decided to elect somebody of their own choice, so they elected another governing council, also without general secretary or president who governed everything. And Mexican President Peña Nieto had to recognize them and say, "Well, since they're an indigenous population, they have the right to follow their customs and traditions." And so they have the municipal council, which has at its command the armed municipal guard protecting the frontier and the internal order.

In Greece, I've seen that in face of the government austerity, there's a rise in activity from the base. For example, the government abandoned the state television channel and in Thessaloniki the workers took it in their power and they interviewed me. Later, because they were closing clinics, health workers—nurses and doctors—met up and made clinics. There is also a publishing house in the hands of its workers. There are many restaurants in Athens that are in the hands of their workers. There is a cooperative that receives goods from the countryside and sells them, avoiding intermediaries. And I told them, "You're doing here in the city what the Zapatistas are doing in the countryside: creating power."



So that's it. The government of everyone. Not the government of one party, one person, or one leader. You can see activism in the United States with the fight against the [Keystone] pipeline, where not just the indigenous but other defenders of the water came from all over the US. Of course, Trump has now ordered that they [build the pipeline]. But there is resistance. What's more, I believe that the strongest part of the resistance has been the Women's March. The greatest anti-Trump protest was the Women's March. In Peru, the biggest march in the history of the country was the *Ni Una Menos* march in Lima, a women's march. In Rosario, Argentina, there was a march of women. In Poland, too, they're fighting for their right to abortion. I think that women are an important part of the vanguard now.

We're constructing a new world here. Not only us, the fighters for social justice, but also those who work to produce ecological products, those who practice alternative medicine and alternative education, those who take over factories and become their own managers. All of them, too, are fighting for a new world.

We have to defend [nature rights] because we form part of nature. The New Zealand authorities have taken an important step in the defense of nature and humanity, which should be followed by other governments. The Whanganui River [on the North Island of New Zealand] is now a "legal person." Also, in 2014, Alberto Acosta [former minister of energy and mining in Ecuador] called for recognition of nature rights here in Lima. He said we're not going to wait for the neoliberal governments to do this, because they're never going to recognize them. And he organized a meeting for the defense of nature here in Lima.

There are indigenous struggles on all continents against the racist and colonial mentality and politics that defend the capitalist system. What's been happening for twenty-three years in Chiapas, Mexico, in the Zapatista zone, makes me optimistic. I hear what the Zapatistas say: "Please don't copy us. Everyone in their place and in their time will know how it's done."

HUGO BLANCO

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Venezuela's New Digital Currency

President Nicolas Maduro announced that Venezuela will launch a digital currency to combat the ongoing attempts by the U.S. and its partners to damage the Bolivarian Republic with sanctions.

The digital currency – called the '**PETRO**' – will be backed by Venezuelan reserves of gold, oil, gas, and diamonds, he said.

The **PETRO** will allow Venezuela to "advance in issues of monetary sovereignty, to make financial transactions and overcome the financial blockade... This is going to allow us to move forward to new ways of international financing for the country's economic and social development," said Maduro.

The announcement reveals a novel method through which the Bolivarian Republic hopes to sidestep Canadian, European and U.S.- sanctions that have been imposed on tens of top-ranking officials, making it increasingly difficult for Venezuela's to move money through international banks.

Any involvement with these officials would prevent banks from carrying out transactions with their international counterparts due to regulations outlawing the acceptance of money tied to sanctioned officials, leading to the financial isolation of their clients.

Maduro's attempts to throw off the shackles of U.S. dollar hegemony come amid the spectacular rise of bitcoin – as well as multiple offshoots of the cryptocurrency – which have gained traction in the mainstream investment world. Cryptocurrencies typically are not backed by any government or central banks.

The **PETRO** will be different from bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies because it will be backed by hard assets, some 5 billion barrels of Venezuelan oil reserves will be used as financial backing for the **PETRO**, according to the nation's oil ministry. That oil can support financial instruments worth \$267 billion, the ministry said in the statement. By comparison, bitcoin, the largest cryptocurrency, has a market capitalization of about \$246 billion.

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