

“El Pelado” Klachko, an old Argentine militant of the Fourth International, has died

Olivier Sabado and Olivier Besancenot published an article yesterday in which they pay their respects to “El Pelado”. The text says:

We used to call him “El Pelado”. His name was Mario Raul Klachko. The son of Ukrainian Jews who emigrated to Argentina, born in 1945, El Pelado belongs to that generation of Latin American revolutionaries who committed themselves body and soul in the 1960s to the advent of a better, more egalitarian and more humane world. Enthused by the Cuban revolution and the internationalist appeals of Che Guevara, viscerally resistant to Stalinism, he joined the ranks of the PRT-el Combatiente and the ERP-Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, along with Argentine revolutionary and guerrillero Mario Roberto Santucho. When the PRT takes a verticalist road and excludes the Trotskyists from the Fourth International, Pelado forms the red fraction of the PRT-ERP, of which he is one of the leaders.

El Pelado fought against the Argentine military dictatorship. He actively participated in political resistance and took up arms, multiplying the blows against the regime: organization and armed protection of strikes, “expropriation” of the banks, attacks on prisons, kidnapping of the big bosses. Having become a man to defeat and the number one public enemy of his country, Mario had to go into exile in Paris, where his comrades from the Communist League took him in. Without ever renouncing the revolutionary perspective, he critically reviewed this epopee of armed struggle.

He continued this strategic evaluation and interrogation during the 1980s, after a brief return to Argentina, in dialogue with Nahuel Moreno and Hugo Blanco, Argentine and Peruvian Marxist revolutionaries.

In France, El Pelado returned to his education as an architect and became an urban planner. He closely followed current social and political affairs and regularly participated in the militant and political activities of the Communist League. In particular, he helps his comrades understand the revolutionary uprising of 2001-2002 that set Argentina ablaze. As soon as he could, he participates in social and political mobilizations, such as the 2016 'Nuit debout' (Walking Night) in his commune of Pantin."

"His health problems were multiplying and exchanges were increasingly rare. El Pelado remains and will remain a reference: that of a revolutionary militant who fought and risked his life for his convictions, in the Argentina of the 1970s, without ever sinking into blindness and sectarian impasses. In an interview with the Argentine magazine Página 12 on March 12, 2018, in which the journalist asks him to define himself, he replies, "Historically Trotskyist."

"With him goes a part of our history that is also leaving. We are thinking of his family and friends. Also his comrades, the Argentines, the Basques and those from all over the world. And we are proud to be among them."

I met "Pelado" in what became for me a historic encounter. A year and months earlier, my brother Luis Pujals, an ERP Trotskyist militant like El Pelado, had been kidnapped. Days earlier, in the last meeting we had, he had told me about the need to defend the Fourth International against the top-down Castroism to which Santucho aspired.

The historic meeting with "El Pelado" was at the act that we of the PST (Socialist Workers Party) did at the Caixa

Federation at the end of 1972. It was the first public act of a revolutionary party held when the Lanusse dictatorship was coming to an end and had decided to open elections as a consequence of the Cordobazo, a workers' insurrection in the city of Cordoba.

In the middle of the event, those of us in the organization were informed that there was a group of armed militants from the Red ERP who wanted to come and greet the event. We didn't hesitate for a minute to let them in; we just asked them to leave their weapons with our order guard at the entrance of the event. "El Pelado" appears in the front row to bring his Trotskyist solidarity, I don't think he used the word (it wasn't tactical), but his presence was marked as a historic gesture of recognition between opposing Trotskyist fractions in the IV.

We met again in 1980 in Argentina and in Paris. We remained comrades and friends. He became a major international supporter of the MAS in Argentina. He got angry with me when the inevitable split from the MAS happened in 1992. I never saw him again. History has now tragically recovered us and placed us on exactly the same side; as Sabado and Besancenot say, an exponent – one of the best – of that youth of the sixties who embraced the cause of revolution and armed struggle without lowering the flags of Trotskyism.