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Sergio Rodriguez Gelfenstein
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The Deception of Progressivism

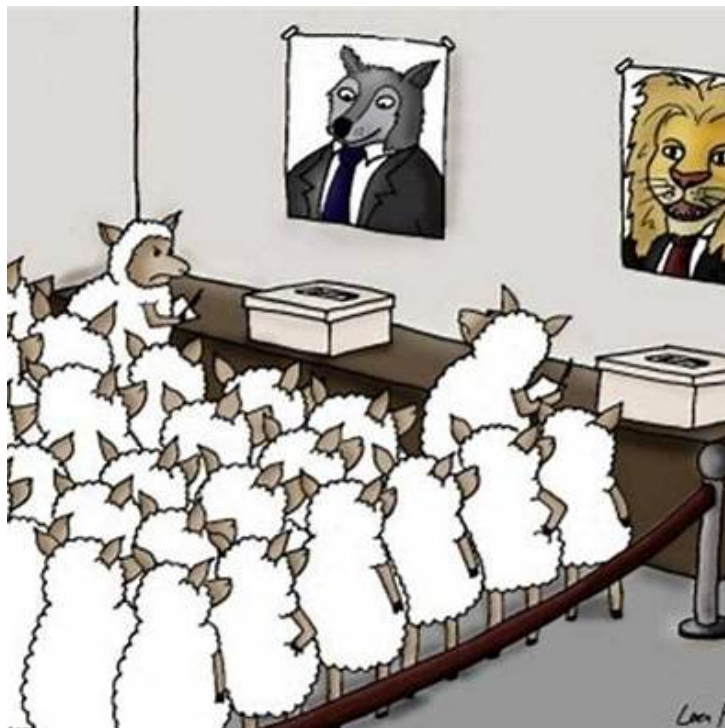
Once again, the ideological dispute is raised around the path that Latin America and the Caribbean will have to travel.



As in the decades of the 70s and 80s of the last century when Latin America and the Caribbean struggled to shake off the national security dictatorships *made in Washington*, the popular movement of the region is debating around the political and ideological orientation that the struggles against neoliberalism and imperialism will have. It must be said that this is much more than a theoretical debate.



Although the situation is different now, given the dialectical development of events, once again the revolutionary forces are faced with the search for reformist solutions to the crisis. This thinking is grouped under the ideas of doing politics "as far as possible" or the satisfaction of havin



g brought to power the "lesser evil".

Both hide the inability of the most advanced political sectors of society to rise above the difficulties that lead to building a popular and revolutionary alternative. No one will be able to say that this is happening because of the abandonment of the peoples of their struggle for democracy, peace and equity. It is very easy to blame the people when in fact it has been some political elites who have paralyzed the processes. Even in view is what happened in recent years in the region when left-wing organizations, once the government was obtained, have prioritized alliances with the bourgeoisie and the right, displacing the popular sectors to a marginal role of "object" of government measures, when in reality the share of power obtained should have been used to transform the people into the subject of the change of society.

In the case of the coup d'état against Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, this situation was more than evident. After the president's departure from the popular movement, no one came out to defend the PT, her government or herself when she was defenestrated.



["It's not an impeachment, it's a coup," Dilma Rousseff said.](#) Getty Photo

A fundamental element that marks the difference between the last century and this one, is that those struggles took place within the framework of the cold war and the bipolar world in which the ideological pattern was the one that ordered politics and therefore international relations. Today, a large number of social movements have emerged fighting for sectoral demands, suggesting that the need for radical transformation of the social structure that oppresses and excludes the majority is no longer relevant.

At the international level, the principled policy of the cold war, which emanated from an ideological orientation of governments, gave way to the national interest (which in some

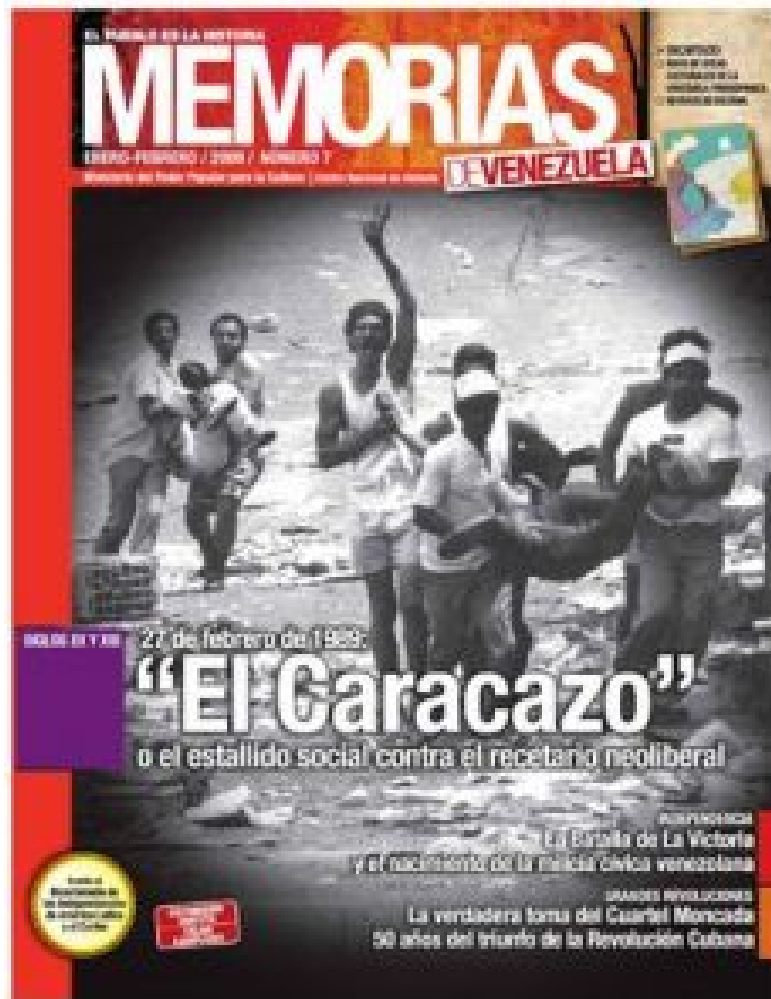
cases has become a necessity of survival) to define the international action of some countries.

Thus, in the transition from dictatorships to systems of representative democracy of a neoliberal nature, in most of which the doctrine of national security as an instrument of domination and control of power by the elites is still present to a large extent – if not in its entirety – the doctrine of national security as an instrument of domination and control of power by the elites, the reformist sectors emerged victorious, initiating processes of persecution of trade unions, free press, social organizations and political parties, under the assumption of the need to defend the negotiated, accepted and established status that has been called "rule of law", only that it works only for a sector of the citizenry.



To a large extent, this was made possible by the domestication of once popular, left-wing and revolutionary leaders who succumbed to the charms of social democracy and European Christian democracy that turned them into their battering rams for the destruction of everything that smelled of revolution and socialism. In the second half of the 80s, Washington discovered with pleasure the work that these European parties had done and welcomed the possibility of leaving the already discredited dictatorships to make way for Gatopardian options that kept their interests unscathed. To that extent, he welcomed the transitions and even fervently supported them, appeasing the possibility of popular solutions to the crisis of democracy that had covered almost the entire region.

It is worth saying that in the midst of this complicated and difficult situation, Cuba remained in a hurry, defending its revolutionary process and achieving – I say this without any rhetoric – to be a beacon that radiated light for those who fought throughout the region, including the domesticated converts in Europe who shamelessly took advantage of the solidarity of the Caribbean island.



The implementation of neoliberal governments exacerbated the conflicts of society since capitalism was not able to solve the most elementary needs of citizens. The "caracazo" of 1989 in Venezuela and the Zapatista uprising of 1994 in Mexico – two countries that were not under pressure from the military boot in the government – were a clear expression that neoliberalism could not only be associated with the direct domination of the armed forces in power but with the entire legal and political framework that capitalist society entails.



In these conditions, Hugo Chávez emerged as an expression of the people and military sectors tired of being used for repression and the maintenance of the order of the elites. The electoral victory of 1998 was the trigger that exploded a feeling and a will for transformation that history made coincide in leaderships of leaders who in several countries in the words of Cristina Kirchner "are more similar to their peoples".

The evident successes in social matters that these governments obtained to a greater or lesser extent and that together allowed the region to move towards integrationist processes that assured its presence and prominence in the world of the XXI century, awakened -once again- the concern of the White House that mobilizing the regional oligarchies, to the mercenary institutionality that was not removed, the large transnational media of incommunicado detention and the subordinate minds of the right, managed to temporarily stop the process begun in the last years of the last century. This time it was not necessary to resort to the armed forces, it was enough to put the media to work, to "justice" while exacerbating internal conflicts between the popular sectors to destroy everything that had been achieved in the first three decades of this century.



But the neoliberal influence that returned to power at the hands of Macri, Añez, Bolsonaro, Lenin Moreno, Piñera and other characters of similar ilk have not been solid, since they are based on the endorsement and support of the United States internationally and on the support given by the management of the media to build false truths on the one hand, in addition to the weight of the military and police who act as gendarmes, on the other. To the extent of the learning of the peoples, their awareness and their superior (although still insufficient) organizational capacity, the return to the moment of flow has been much shorter than that between the fall in combat of Allende in 1973 and the electoral victory of Chávez in 1998.

Expression of this has been in recent years the electoral victory of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico, the return of the Peronists to the government in Argentina and the MAS in Bolivia, the victories of progressive candidates in Peru, Honduras and Saint Lucia, the defeat of neo-fascism in Chile, at the same time that Barbados broke away from the postcolonial subordination of Great Britain, transforming itself into a republic and appointing Sandra Mason as its first president. In the same logic, it could be added that Lula in Brazil and Petro in Colombia, candidates of the progressive opposition lead the polls ahead of the elections that will be held this year in both countries.

It is worth saying – and I want to reiterate this – that all this has been made possible by the resistance to the imperial domination of the peoples of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Had these countries fallen, the imperial avalanche would have passed mercilessly over Latin America and the Caribbean. This reminds me of José Martí when on May 18, 1895, on the eve of the combat that led to his death, in a letter to Manuel Mercado he said: "I am

already in danger every day of giving my life for my country, and for my duty - since I understand it and I have the strength to do it - to prevent in time with the independence of Cuba that the States spread through the Antilles. United and fall, with that force more, on our lands of America." More than 125 years later the situation is the same although now Cuba is not alone.



But lo and behold, the right and especially the United States have also learned, they also draw accounts and also move their cards. Thus, they are working to divide the left and separate it in order to facilitate its task, which at the strategic level is aimed at preventing Latin America and the Caribbean from configuring a global power bloc.

To that extent, a new danger lurks in the peoples of the region. As in the last century, the mediatization of the struggle of the peoples is sought so that their successes do not overcome the cosmetic changes that allow the elites to continue holding power, while certain sectors wrapped with a leftist discourse can continue to do politics "as far as possible".

This is clear from the article written by Andrés Oppenheimer, spokesman for the US extreme right, published in the Nuevo Herald of Miami on December 25 and in which under the title of: [Will Gabriel Boric lead a new Latin American left?](#) The author quotes Heraldo Muñoz ineffable foreign minister of the government of Michelle Bachelet – whom the author places in the vicinity of Boric – who would have affirmed that Boric "has referred to the regime of Venezuela as a dictatorship and has been critical of Nicaragua's electoral fraud", adding that: "He has quite solid convictions in matters of democracy and human rights". Ready, the United States and the Chilean right have certified the role that the new president of that country will play, not only at the domestic level, beyond, at the international level.



"If Boric decides to promote social changes and, at the same time, defends democracy in Chile and in the region, he could become the leader of a new democratic left."
(Illustration: Raúl Rodríguez)

Later the article states: "Boric must show independence from the Communist Party. His critics have painted him as an inexperienced young man who will be controlled by the Communist Party. Boric would lose many of his more moderate voters if he turns out to be a peleele of a party of the Jurassic left."

The discourse that aims to create a "new left" away from Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela has been gaining strength, even in "progressive" sectors of the region. From "socialist" authors such as the Chilean Roberto Pizarro to intellectuals such as the Brazilian Emir Sader of whom there can be no doubt about his intellectual honorability, they have written articles in which they are quick to visualize a Latin American left detached from Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

The emergence of "progressivism" as an idea of liberation, although not new, has regained strength in recent times. The Progressive International, supported by the sectors of the "left imperialism" of the United States that aspire for their country to return to the path of "democracy" and social justice, in order to make the empire more efficient in its intention to overwhelm the world, has assumed the baton of this current.



We must not forget that the idea of progress emerged from the possibility that is given to the transformation of society gradually. In reality, progress must lead to the total liberation of the human being from the forces that oppress him. As long as this is not proposed, it is a hollow and misleading concept. The Progressive International has had its counterpart in Latin America and the Caribbean in the "Puebla Group", in which although prominent and honorable political leaders of the region participate, it generates doubts because it is led by a Chilean mercenary of very dubious reputation who has made "progressivism" a business and who also has close friendships with senior leaders of Chavismo as with former President Mauricio Macri. Suspiciously, neither instance involves Cubans, Venezuelans or Nicaraguans.

Once again, the ideological dispute is raised around the path that Latin America and the Caribbean will have to travel. We settle for the "lesser evil" or we are able to build a political and social force that produces the profound changes that society needs. Instead of being content with what can be done "as far as possible," work should be done to transform the impossible into reality. As I said in a previous article quoting a friend, the "lesser evil" must be opposed by the "greater good."

That means that our effort must be directed to play on our court, not on the one that the enemy imposes on us. At a time when many do not want to assume a position and politics is intended to be defined between center-right, center-left or center, it is the responsibility of the most advanced sectors of society to build the new scenario of combat as has happened in the streets of Chile and Colombia.

Progressivism is not the liberating future of peoples. It is and will continue to be in the revolution. I understand that on the road to victory tactical alliances must be made to join efforts, but they will only have that character if they are assumed from hegemony and power. Any alliance built on weakness or subordination leads to subordinating popular interests to others, from sectors or minority groups.

It is to be hoped that those who assume these mediating positions will understand the difference between the concepts of strategy and tactics and apply them correctly without forgetting that making mistakes in the application of them, leads to painful errors and of unthinkable dimensions for the popular movement.

Sergio Rodríguez Gelfenstein for La Pluma, January 19, 2022

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

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