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02.02.2022

Dilemmas and reality in Latin America and the Caribbean

To make the Chinese saying good, the sensible thing is to "plow with the oxen you have".



Politically opting for "the lesser evil" can be considered an exercise in realism when one's own forces do not allow major advances and even more so when it comes to preventing the triumph of the considered main contender. It can be interpreted, however, as a kind of comfortable renunciation to promote one's own forces, as an unacceptable abandonment that opens the way to political opportunism and the renunciation of strategic objectives.



In the same way, the justification of certain political decisions can be interpreted by claiming that progress is made "as far as possible" which can be in some cases a sign of wisdom or also as another way of being content with what the opportunity offers, as an exercise in opportunism and accommodation.

It helps to advance the debate if one analyzes not only the maturity of the contradictions of the system - the objective conditions - but also the development of one's own forces, in particular the degree of political consciousness and organization of the social agent of change as well as the effective capacity of the vanguards (parties, unions, popular organizations, etc.).



Of the Latin American and Caribbean panorama from a leftist perspective, Cuba stands out in the first place, which is openly committed to socialism and is currently promoting a series of reforms to enhance its human and material resources, adapting its strategies to the

profound changes that are currently registered. In Venezuela, everything indicates that the attempts (internal and external) to destroy this process have failed and not only the party that guides the process but a popular organization of a certain solidity is consolidated, both factors that have so far allowed to succeed in the harsh imperialist blockade and the sabotaging action of the local right. Apparently, an intelligent management of international alliances allows the government of Venezuela to resolve for the moment the most serious forms of the crisis it has gone through so far. In Cuba and, with important nuances in Venezuela, there is then not only a solvent political vanguard but a sufficient organization of the social forces that support the project. The advances here then allow "to advance as far as possible" and in certain cases to opt for "the lesser evil" without compromising the future of your project. The same could be said with important differences in the cases of Bolivia and Nicaragua where there is sufficient citizen support for the measures of their rulers and with more or less consolidated forms of popular organization; progress is also being made in establishing new international relations to overcome the open hostility of the metropolises.



What about the rest of the countries in the area? Where the government can be described as progressive – or at least alien to the harshest forms of the neoliberal model – as is the case with many nuances in Mexico or Argentina, the revolutionary left cannot but register the existence of a fairly strong social and political right, in contrast to a very dispersed popular movement with degrees of organization that can be improved. Supporting López

Obrador or Peronism would undoubtedly be an exercise in "choosing the lesser evil" in order to move forward "as far as possible." Nothing indicates that there are conditions that allow a strategy different from the left there because it does not have a party of sufficient entity or a social movement that is in a position to impose structural changes to the current capitalist model. It is basically a question of avoiding the advances of a right that is determined to maintain and even deepen the neoliberal model and international relations of gross dependence on metropolitan capitalism. The new progressive governments in Peru, Chile or Honduras also do not have sufficient social support to expect them to promote radical measures. There is not a revolutionary party there that is mature enough to be able to promote a project of greater scope; we will have to be content with "the lesser evil" and take good advantage of the circumstances to move forward "as far as possible". The many limitations of social movements or their limitations in organization and coordination capacity in these three countries would justify the left choosing to prevent the hard right from returning to government or sabotaging the current one. It should not be ignored that the right maintains control of the main springs of the economy and dominates in such decisive apparatuses as justice and repression (the power of the barracks remains intact, like a card up its sleeve that the Creole bourgeoisie and its foreign allies can use at any time).



What to say about Brazil and Colombia, countries in which progressive candidates could win the next elections? Neither Lula nor Petro have behind them a social movement that is in a position to impose measures that go beyond modernizing and democratizing the current order. This was the case when the PT ruled in the past and nothing suggests that it will be different now. The sensible thing is to conclude that the Brazilian left, very divided

and weakened, will intelligently opt for the "lesser evil" in the face of the danger that Bolsonaro will repeat in government; here would then be the slogan of advancing "as far as possible" because more ambitious objectives would not go beyond good wishes and nothing more.



And if Petro triumphs in Colombia – if he is not killed before as is so usual in this Andean country – his economic program, although it is quite moderate, does propose a certain protectionism and changes in the use of natural resources that give his project a fresh air of modernity. In addition to the risks of exposing life doing politics in Colombia, the left must face a broad, systematic and permanent abstention that affects the whole of society but above all the popular sectors, the same ones that commit themselves with enormous enthusiasm and outstanding heroism in the protest mobilizations but then do not go to the polls, thus giving a huge advantage to the right. Supporting Lula or Petro would then be the most reasonable option for the very divided and scattered left in these countries.

The need to advance in the consolidation of a political organization that plays the traditional role of vanguard appears again as an indispensable task to decide correctly when to decide for the "lesser evil", when to advance only "as far as possible" or when to propose the "assault on the heavens". A vanguard that collects and synthesizes the most urgent needs of the social majorities (immediate program) and at the same time advances in the proposal of an essentially different social order for the future. This pedagogical exercise must go hand in hand with advances in organization and political education -own and the social bases that support the project-. To make good the Chinese saying, the sensible thing *is to "plow with the oxen you have"*.

Juan Diego García Para La Pluma, January 28, 2022

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

La Pluma.net 31.01.2022