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The "lesser evil", the "cowardly left" and then somewhat more

Perhaps there resides the art of revolutionary politics of these times remembering Fidel who said that: "Revolution is the art of joining forces."



It is known that the concepts of left and right in politics had a casual origin that refers to the location of the delegates to the National Assembly created in France after the revolution of July 14, 1789, when the conservative sectors sat at the right hand of the president of the great parliament, while the revolutionaries were placed in the opposite area.



The storming of the Bastille: the inception of the first social revolution in history.

Anonymous author

Faced with the reality that was lived, when the monarchy had been overthrown to establish a republican political system, those who were located on the right proposed to safeguard the interests of the nobility and the clergy, while their antagonists advocated liberal and democratic ideas that were linked to a republicanism that defended greater equality and fraternity between and for citizens.

The notion of the existence of a left and a right as unifying elements of political ideas began to disperse outside France as early as the nineteenth century, first to Europe and then to the rest of the world. At that time (fourth decade of the nineteenth century) began to talk about socialism. Marx was born in 1818 and in 1848 the Communist Manifesto was published in which he precisely establishes the differences between socialism and communism, although already in 1847 in the Program of the League of Communists, predecessor of the Manifesto, Frederick Engels had referred to the subject.



Manifesto of the Communist Party of [Karl Marx](#) and [Friedrich Engels](#). Cover of the first German edition (1848).

In the light of current events, it is interesting to recall that [Engels established that there were three types of socialists](#): the former, whom he calls "reactionary socialists", were supporters of feudal and patriarchal society manifesting a "feigned compassion for the misery of the proletariat" while shedding "bitter tears [...] for this reason"

The second category was constituted by the followers of bourgeois society, whose evils "necessarily provoked by it inspire fears as to the existence of it." Therefore, they proposed to maintain this political structure, although eliminating their calamities, that is, according to Engels, in reality what they were considering was "simple charity".

Finally, a third group is that formed by those self-described "democratic socialists" who did not bet on a revolutionary transformation of society and the state or on ending the misery and misadventures of bourgeois society, despite the fact that many of them were proletarians unable to see clearly the circumstances of their own liberation.

Under these conditions, without abandoning the discussion and criticism around the discrepancies, Engels opined that it was the task of the revolutionaries, to understand with those who had some point in common, at the time of the actions "provided that these socialists do not put themselves at the service of the ruling bourgeoisie ...".

The development of society and popular struggles over the last few centuries established a deceptive similarity between being left-wing and holding socialist ideas. This fact has caused such confusion that it has even become a paralyzing condition for the actions of revolutionary organizations and parties. The incorrect analysis and use of the categories "correlation of forces" and "existence of a revolutionary situation" has lent itself to the decapitation and lethargy of the popular movement. In the recent cases of Chile and Colombia, it has been "left" forces that have played the most important role in the paralysis of vanguard social struggles.

On the other hand, in today's world, in which neoliberal hegemony has spread with the firm pretension of holding the "end of ideologies" as an expression of the end of the class struggle, these ideas must be studied in their necessary dimension to be adapted to current conditions as an instrument of struggle that has not lost validity.



Ideology is inseparable from the class struggle, hence the intention of the intelligentsia at the service of the empire to define them as an antiquity that must be placed in a museum. The postmodern idea has tried to imply that socialism has lost all validity, in order to facilitate the imposition of an ambiguous, hesitant and incapable of leading to decision-

making in favor of the people and to give strength to overcome adversities from the awareness and creation of a necessary revolutionary leadership.

This has given rise to the concepts of "doing politics as far as possible" and settling for the "lesser evil" as a way of renouncing the construction of the revolutionary option on the basis of a supposed impossibility that emanates from adverse objective conditions that prevent any progress in that direction. It is rejected in this way, that the subjective conditions that exist and others that must be created, are the foundation that allows to transform that unfavorable objective situation. That is the difference between one type of socialist and another.



To paraphrase Engels, we could say that today, in general in the world, but especially in America, there are three types of left. The first is the revolutionary one that has never lowered the banners of socialism. Its resistance has earned it the harshest attacks of imperialism and neoliberal forces because they guess in it the force to overcome, since its unyielding will to struggle points a way forward. If there is a left in Latin America today, it is thanks to the fact that these sectors led by the peoples of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela have had the tenacity, fortitude and intransigence to face adversity despite the great risks and limitations that this has meant.

A second left, accommodating, strives to discover the "positive things" of class society, while it thrives on it in order to "find a place in its parnassus" and get "a little corner in its altars" according to Silvio. They settle for the "lesser evil" while leading the workers and peoples to surrender, or at least to a subordinate position in the struggle against their enemies. It is a social democratic left, "cowardly left" President Maduro called it.

Perhaps more diaphanous is the definition recently made by former French presidential candidate Jean Luc Mélenchon when referring to the Argentine president he wondered if the left should continue to elect "a moderate who does not scare anyone like President Fernández of Argentina who spends his time making concessions and gives in to the essentials."



In this category is also inscribed the socialist Michelle Bachelet, who has arrogated to be of "extreme center", so as not to assume responsibilities, not to take risks, going through life in a cowardly and mediocre way only with the aim of obtaining the prizes that Washington has given her to serve as a bloodsucker in international organizations. Perhaps it is Bachelet, the epitome of the "left" person who serves an imperial master to achieve his personal good.



Finally, there is the "imperialist left", especially the American one that swarms in the bowels of the Democratic Party, but also the European one, even one that vegetates in certain "communist" and "workers" parties living on assuming liberal measures while granting crumbs while defending and sustaining the neoliberal ideal. Finally, this position leads her – especially in international politics – to subordinate herself in a doggy and shameful way to the orders emanating from Washington. They disguise themselves as liberals within their countries and imperialists and interventionists outside them.

In spite of this, learning from Engels, we must work with everyone, looking for those loopholes that can lead to coincidences, even knowing that times have changed and that unlike what happened in the nineteenth century, it is difficult that -finally- these doubtful lefts "do not put themselves at the service of the ruling bourgeoisie ...".

Perhaps there resides the art of revolutionary politics of these times remembering Fidel who said that: "Revolution is the art of joining forces."

Sergio Rodriguez Gelfenstein for La Pluma, May 12, 2022

Edited by [María Piedad Ossaba](#)

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