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What do we do with "liberal democracy"?



Sources: Rebellion

Today we are faced with the dilemma of returning to "insurrectionary dreams" or deepening our revolutionary and transformative actions within the framework of "liberal democracy".

On the occasion of the occurred in Peru with President Pedro Castillo (set-ups, political siege and media, and immediate parliamentary vacancy) and in Argentina with the Vice President Cristina Fernández (sentenced to 6 years in prison and disqualified to hold public office for alleged corruption), the blows of State or other forms of overthrow of progressive and left-wing governments in Latin America, and there is again debate about whether it is possible to promote and achieve changes Structural in favor of the popular majorities within the "democracy" liberal."

Brief historical account

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After the collapse of the USSR (1989), Fidel Castro proposed that any project A politician emerged from an armed insurrection of a popular type that affected the interests of the US empire in Latin America, it would have no conditions to succeed or sustain oneself to build an alternative model of life to the neoliberalism and existing capitalism. Therefore, it was necessary to rethink the Strategy of the Latin American (and Third World) peoples to confront That problem that life imposed on us. In Colombia, Jaime Bateman had foreseen that situation since 1980.

In 1994 the The autonomist path of the indigenous peoples of southern Mexico led by the "Zapatistas" and in 1999 the "peaceful-electoral" triumph began in Venezuela headed by Hugo Chavez. In 2002 he suffered the coup d'état that the people Venezuelan reversed decisively, which became a benchmark important for the region. The elections of Lula (Brazil 2003) followed, Kirchner (Argentina 2003), Tabaré (Uruguay 2005), Zelaya (Honduras 2006), Evo (Bolivia 2006), Correa (Ecuador 2007), Fernando Lugo (Paraguay 2008), and now, AMLO (Mexico 2018), Pedro Castillo (Peru 2021), Boric (Chile 2022), Xiomara Castro (Honduras 2022) and Petro (Colombia 2022), in addition to the "successions" in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Bolivia with Dilma Rousseff, Cristina Fernández, Pepe Mujica and Luis Maple.

Learning to that electoral/peaceful route and, in parallel, of the coups d'état promoted For the American Empire comes from the President's Experiences Sukarno in Indonesia (1967) and Allende in Chile (1970); which are the most Relevant. However, we cannot forget the many political interventions, U.S. government economic and military in Latin America for impose oligarchic governments subordinate to their interests and prevent projects from and democratic and nationalist leaders will gain access to power governmental.

En la actualidad, frente a lo que ocurre en el mundo y a los cambios ocurridos a todo nivel, es necesario revisar no solo las experiencias de los intentos realizados por diferentes pueblos por construir autonomía y autodeterminación frente a las potencias imperiales, sino que se hace imperativo repensar la estrategia de los pueblos y trabajadores que anhelan superar la enorme desigualdad e injusticia social que genera el capitalismo, y además, enfrentar los retos de un modelo de desarrollo basado en el consumismo obsesivo que nos obliga a sobreexplotar los recursos limitados que nos ofrece el planeta tierra, lo que nos conduce al riesgo de la extinción como especie.

During the last 23 years we have lived a series of popular experiences within the "liberal democracy", which is based on the (formal) principles of equality before the law and

respect for due process; separation of public powers; the right to liberty, integrity and mobility of persons; Freedom of expression, press and information; Guarantees for meeting and social association and politics; freedom of worship and secular education, etc. In that context, the oligarchies and the empire devised strategies to provoke and compel Left-wing and/or progressive governments to violate that legality and thus justify coups d'état, and when they did not achieve that goal, they devised and applied legal wars ("lawfare") relying on the corruption of parliamentarians and judges.

The list is long and diverse. Coup d'état or coup attempts using the armed forces (police and/or army) against Chávez, Correa, Evo and Zelaya. Parliamentary coups ("soft", "soft") against Fernando Lugo, Dilma Rousseff, and now, Pedro Castillo. Wars legal proceedings against Lula, Cristina, Evo and Correa. And media sieges of all kinds against progressive and left-wing rulers, using hoaxes, traps, inventions and lies, without ignoring that in some cases some alliances with traditional sectors and/or unreliable allies (Temer, Moreno), or politicians errant (extractivism that distanced leftist governments from the communities), allowed these media campaigns to discredit Some leaderships.

Political theory and "dreams" insurrectionaries"

Since the Political theory of the region's lefts was influenced by what I call "Insurrectionary dreams", the possibility of making these structural changes By peaceful and electoral means it seemed (and still seems, to some) a illusion. The insurrectionary dream is the belief that the only way to Defeating the empire and building democracy and socialism, part of overthrowing the **ruling classes by force**, expropriating the accumulated social wealth and unleash the creativity of the oppressed classes and exploited to begin the construction of the new society.

The "dreams" insurrectionaries" feed the illusion that with "blows of hand", "paths short" and "tactics of opportunity", the resistance of the oligarchies and consolidating people's powers, in the style of what has been done in Russia in 1917 by the Bolsheviks. The legacy of the Cuban Revolution (1959) continued orbiting in the minds of the popular and democratic leaders of the region. Himself He thought that peoples and workers led by "minorities" enlightened", they could "make the revolution" and start the construction of the Patria Grande Latinoamericana, following the dream of Bolívar, and in parallel, "Build socialism."

With that legacy theoretical ("ideological") one arrives at the learning scenario of the Venezuela of 1999. The immediate record was positive and encouraging. The outbursts social and popular mobilizations that since 1989 ("Caracazo") have been presented in

Latin America during the 90s and following, which were result of the reaction and rejection of the neoliberal policies applied by the oligarchic governments mandated by the "Washington Consensus" were read in many cases with an insurrectionary gaze. The electoral and peaceful route It was conceived as a way of "combining all forms of struggle", where the Liberal ("bourgeois") democracy was seen as a temporary instrument for access to "Power" and not as a permanent component of that process transformer. The goal was "people's democracy," contrary to "bourgeois-liberal".

Today we see how This conception is still valid in many sectors of the Latin American left. There are those who, for example, explain what happened with Pedro Castillo in Peru, not with based on a class analysis, on the real correlation of social forces and policies, and in the study of the situation that is the result of a history accumulated and concrete, but they explain everything with the argument that the Dismissed president "did not listen to the people" who "demanded that he reverse the situation, he mobilized for the Constituent Assembly and clearly warned its president: 'close the Congress', 'put your hand in that nest of vipers', 'put on the pants, teacher.'" And When he wanted to do it... they knocked him down!

They are the same that today they demand Gustavo Petro in Colombia that he does not know – for a moment to another – a whole history of commitments by the Colombian state to the U.S. Or I mean, they want him to openly confront the U.S. empire with the support from half of the "voting" population, which only amounts to 27% of the Total population. And, in addition, they are dissatisfied because the government postponed for the 2023 the presentation and debate in Congress of reforms such as the Pensional, Labor and Health, which touch substantial interests of the oligarchy financial (banks, fiduciaries, insurers, EPS), since it requires accumulating and concentrate forces, go step by step, and win new social sectors to achieve the proposed objective.

Also, they question that Petro has built a broad political coalition, including parties traditional to build governance, or that has called José Félix Lafaurie (Uribista leader of the cattle ranchers) to make a Purchase agreement for 3 million hectares of fertile land for reform and, in addition, integrate it into the peace dialogue table with the ELN. They still do not understand that in order to – at least – move forward with the peace processes and Approve some democratic reforms that could not be achieved for more After 50 years of armed insurgency, it is necessary to lead a great "unity" national" that isolates the warmongers and coup plotters.

Detailing some experiences from Latin America

If we look towards The immediate past We can observe that the reality of two (2) decades of Exercise of left-wing and progressive governments, has proven that not only it is a question of displacing political power (governments, States, institutions) from political power (governments, States, institutions). The ruling classes, which today are real financial oligarchies intertwined globally with enormous blocking and destabilizing power But the task requires designing a strategy that achieves mobilise peoples and workers at local, territorial levels, national, regional or subcontinental and global, where governments and states are instruments of society and not the other way around, and where the construction of New associative and collaborative economies, the generation of clean energy and the strengthening of cultures that care for life, be a reality palpable and permanent.

The President Chavez raised it, tried to do it and did it very partially. His "short-term" look and "statist" was an obstacle. He had great confidence in the role of the State and in the power of money. The "mobilization" for him was reduced to massive. Gatherings to listen to their speeches. It had a price bonanza of oil, believed to solve internal problems with subsidies and embarked on regional integration (Alba, Unasur, CELAC, etc.). After the coup of State (2002) that the Venezuelan people reversed, radicalized in the face of the Empire and wanted to advance towards the "socialism of the XXI century", ignoring the rejection popular expressed in the referendum of 2007. His "socialist acceleration" made the bourgeoisie dizzy and little by little it was isolated from the rhythms, times and needs of the peoples and nations of the region.

Somehow the same happened with Correa in Ecuador and with Evo in Bolivia. In these two Nations The indigenous and popular movement had a strong organization and power of mobilization and on that basis the "plurinational" Constitutions were approved. Both governments openly clashed with the U.S., not just following Chavez to counter the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) but because the anti-imperialist flag was a nationalist slogan that It mobilized the peoples and workers. And of course, Washington at the head of George W. Bush helped with provocations and meddling to generate a climate of tension he used to keep allies in the region and do politics internal.

What happened to Venezuela is more than sobering, and although "Chavismo-madurismo" boasts of that they have not been able to remove them from "power", the obvious thing is that the process initiated by the President Chavez not only failed to build the slightest "socialism" but that, on the contrary, today we have a semi-failed state, a nation impoverished, a semi-destroyed people, a dollarized economy, a government delivering

the riches to the highest bidder, and a political environment where the peoples and workers see no alternative even to achieve rights they enjoyed in pre-"revolutionary times."

And if we look experiences where popular outbursts had higher degrees of social organization as are the cases of Bolivia and Ecuador, the situation that Today we live can help us understand how much damage the "Short-termism", eagerness and impatience, in addition, not knowing how to differentiate what it is the Power, the State (inherited) and the Government. We have leaders who think that to accede to the government is to reach the "power", or that they are convinced that with only change the letter of the Constitution, the task is done or at least, The road is cleared. What has happened in these countries shows that this is not the case. without ignoring the progress and achievements of these processes and governments, of which We have learned a lot.

Likewise we could detail the experience of Brazil and Argentina, where –undoubtedly– the traditional political parties of the "left" (Partido of the Workers and "Peronism"), play a decisive role. In these Experiences It seems that the "social movement" is very far from the expressions Bureaucratism and "state management" has concentrated the role of militants, who reduce their action to the field electoral and institutional limiting itself to what I call "pragmatic reformism" or conservative." This explains, for example, Dilma's repressive attitude towards to the youth protests and mobilizations against the realization of the Olympic Games and the World Cup, and the disconnection with broad sectors city social that was later channeled by Bolsonaro and the "right" libertarians."

Some constants in experiences "Peaceful-electoral"

In terms In general, we can affirm that there are common characteristics and constant attitudes in the experiences of left-wing government and/or progressive, which serve to elaborate some lessons learned. See:

– We have not fundamentally affected the Structure dependent on big capital in relation to big capital transnational. We continue to export raw materials, we have not managed to boost Sustainable dynamics of industrialization and social appropriation of chains productive, and the extraction of value and surplus value generated with our Natural resources and workforce continue to fuel the centers of financial power of the developed world.

– The subsidy policy ("transfers") conditional monetary measures" in terms of the WB) aimed at the so-called "population vulnerable" have served to partially mitigate the effects of policies neoliberals and capitalist logics, but by being handled with vision Paternalistic and welfarist, they have not managed to "lift our citizens out of poverty". people, and,

most seriously, when resources are scarce or not enough for everyone, The "beneficiaries" do not hesitate to support those who offer to maintain the "help" without maintaining any kind of loyalty to the "process".

– Bureaucratic practices have been developed and politicking that has deteriorated unity and collective dynamics and community of social movements and organizations. This has led to the cooptation of leaders that has affected their autonomy and independence from the State, generating all kinds of problems and rivalries between communities and leaders, weakening the organized social bases and the same "processes of change." The inadequate management of the sectoral interests of the various Communities (peasants, indigenous people, miners, workers, etc.) have contributed to the intensification of this phenomenon of weakening of the social movement.

– No strategies have been designed to attract and win over important sectors of our current societies that are not interested in "welfare subsidies" (and reject them), such as the so-called "middle classes", composed of small and medium-sized producers, traders and entrepreneurs, precarious professionals, and formal workers of large companies, which in recent times are being attracted by projects of the neo and proto-fascist right. The phenomenon is no coincidence Bolsonaro in Brazil.

– The "statist" vision has predominated and "Legalistic." We have not been able to promote real mobilization processes popular in the area of building new solidarity, collaborative and associatives, and to promote true processes of cultural transformation that face the dynamics of compulsive consumerism imposed by predatory capitalism. The "Pragmatic reformism" has prevailed over "revolutionary reformism." To the Reaching governments is imposed by our "conservatism", we let ourselves be carried away by the media pursuits, surveys and practices of the "Media electorerism" and the "candidate syndrome". In this way, Various types of corruption and moral decay creep into our ranks.

– Somehow we have "fallen in love" with the "formal representative democracy" and we have not been able to strengthen the Germs of "other democracies" that communities have built in the midst of their struggles or that they inherited from the past. We have not been able to "revolutionize the democracy and democratizing the revolution" as Boaventura de Sousa puts it Santos, what it means to empower "direct" democracy (assemblies participatory with decision-making power), the "enlightened" (expert advisory councils, majors, knowers), the "deliberative" (debates, discussions, dialogues open), transform the "representative" (revocable positions, without so much privilege, "command by obeying", informed management and accounts renderings, etc.).

– All of the above, in one way or another, is turns into "dry grass" to be burned by our enemies or Contradictors. When they launch their coup attack they find us unarmed, distracted and/or confident. We usually point to the empire and the oligarchy to orchestrate those coups (and that's right, it's logical), but we don't show ourselves self-criticism to explain why our peoples do not come out to defend us in those critical circumstances. Simplistic explanations emerge such as the "Doña Florinda syndrome" (class careerism) or "structural racism" to try to hide our own responsibility for what happened.

The real problem: What to do with the liberal democracy?

We are today faced with the dilemma of returning to "insurrectionary dreams" or Deepen our revolutionary and transformative actions within the framework of the "liberal democracy." In Colombia, in one way or another and on the fly, It is trying to walk new paths. Gustavo Petro has stated that "rejecting liberal democracy leads to dictatorship."

After Hopeful For 50 years with the peasant insurgency, the people's war from the countryside to the city, the worker-peasant and popular insurrection, and/or to get excited about a "Guarantee" and "progressive" Constitution of 1991 that was used by the factual powers of the landlords and financial capitalists to Impose the neoliberal model on ourselves, today we are looking for and building ways to "undermine the fortress" from within and from without, from below and from above, with pragmatic sense but without giving up dreams of change.

It's about doing converge the efforts and knowledge acquired "from below", "from the periphery", "from the community processes", with the actions carried out "by above", from and with the institutionality, but without getting excited about the "development plans", the "new ministries", or simple laws and decrees, which in themselves transform nothing.

We know that only Permanent popular mobilization, in all areas of life, not only to to protest but to transform our ways of producing, consuming and Relating to each other, is the guarantee that governments and States can be placed at the service of the majority. That's what we've been asked to do. taught the experiences of Latin American peoples and countries that Somehow they are ahead of us.

The main The Venezuelan people offered us a lesson at the time (2002): Any coup d'état at the hands of anti-democratic minorities can be defeated by the irrepressible strength of peoples and organized workers and Aware. But, that strength must be nurtured and strengthened every day, with democratic and transparent practices that maintain mystique and Trust between the social bases and their leaders. Here in Colombia, just Started.

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