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Luis Casado  
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## Chile to choose a pedal boat captain\*



Luis Casado

Übersetzt von [Supriyo Chatterjee](#) সুপ্রিয় চট্টোপাধ্যায়

The French philosopher Michel Feher has just published a book ([Le temps des investis. Essai sur la nouvelle question sociale](#)) in which he analyses the way in which capitalism's centre of gravity has displaced the industrial firms for the financial markets. According to Feher, this calls for reorganising the social battles as a consequence of the shift.

Vladimir Ilich Ulianov — known as Lenin — on his part wrote in 1916 and published in 1917, exactly a century ago, a work titled, 'Imperialism, the highest form of capitalism'. In this book Lenin writes the following:

“Imperialism is capitalism that has reached a state of development which affirms the control of the monopolies and of financial capitalism in which the export of capital has acquired an importance of the highest order, in which the division of the world began among the international trusts and in which the distribution of the entire global territory is completed among the biggest capitalist countries.”

I point this out because Feher seems to have discovered gunpowder a century later, while the so-called political class behave like it hasn't. It is difficult to find a trace of this fundamental fact in the political reflection, apart from some banalities about a globalisation that started centuries ago.

Thanks to the boundless creativity of the powerful, we take part in each election in a dispute between options — to put it in a manner — that coincide in the essential: maintaining the masses, the small fries, the individual at the margin of real decision-making.

The forms have changed with time. Census suffrage made way for universal suffrage, the separation between the active citizens (the property-owners) and the passive citizens (the wretched) disappeared, at least formally. Nevertheless, the centres of power and decision-making are in a safe place, far from the unwholesome influence of the plebs, the riff-raff.

The crushing ideological victory of capitalism has achieved that all options, or to put it in the coarse and brutal language of the modern leaders, all the electoral offers, coincide in the essential.

The absence of reflection, debate and critical analysis of an essential fact, namely the shift first to industrial capital from merchantile capital and then later to financial capital, is extraordinary. The economic programmes such as are put forward are based on absurdities like growth, quality of employment, modifications of the productive base, structural surplus and opportunity for all, without touching on the essential: neither the mode of distribution of wealth which David Ricardo considered as the only important question in the economy, nor the bases of sovereignty and the exercise of power. Chile still lives under the reign of Pinochet's constitution. Thanks to whom?



In Chile, the candidates take great pains in not talking of copper or the basic riches. The breakneck destruction of the environment, the contamination of the sea and the air, the plunder of nature, the submission of labour to big capital, the commercialisation of just about everything, the conception of human relations as a purely commercial contact, the absence of the most basic rights (men are born and remain free in rights...), and the sovereign right of the citizens to adequate the constitution and the laws with what they believe is the best are themes that are judged, a priori, as uninteresting or too complicated for a primitive and uncultured people incapable of reaching the levels of those who certainly know and can: the leaders.

The Chilean presidential elections turn on ancillary, secondary, irrelevant and ridiculous issues. It is enough to read what remains of the Press, subjected as it is to money power, and lacking the slightest hint of pluralism. Language was reduced to that of a functional smokescreen of the message that was sought to be propagated. In this case, it is worth remembering that etymologically propagate and propaganda have the same origin.

Thus, Mercurio can repeatedly put on its first page headlines such as this one: "The majority of Chileans have come to believe that their welfare is their own responsibility and not that of the state." Or, even, "Workers who want an increase in their salary prefer to turn to their boss than to their union."

To accept that it were so... what would the point be in a presidential elections? The state, definitely subsidiary, only occupies the margin of the system. The politics of focalisation is constructed on this base. The market resolves the rest, that is everything. Margaret Thatcher decreed that society did not exist and if proof were needed she had Chile at hand. Only the individual exists. Mercurio has taken upon itself propagating the good news.

Currently, the Parliament is a registration centre of what big capital wants. The Deputies receive the articles of legislation that have to be voted upon directly from the governing bodies of the largest businesses. More than one have confessed to not even reading the laws they vote for. Even when there is a parliamentarian reproached for such behaviour, a journalistic investigation would find it harder to find exceptions to the venality than in identifying the obliging mass. Such being the case, what is the point of choosing the parliamentarians?

Less than 40% of the registered voters participated in the last presidential elections. Little by little, the establishment has managed to arrive at the equivalent to the census suffrage. Indifference and resignation reign among the masses. It is what we have: this is the standout phrase with which the immense majority responds to the questioning of the system or of their own disinterest. The most audacious in the parasitic political class propose a return to compulsory voting, a form of democratic harassment. Explanations have been lacking on why the citizens should be compelled to do what they do not want, in what could be taken to be a violation of their conscience.

If, as it has been said, the centres of power and decision-making are not in the fray, it is easy to understand the disinterest of the population in what appears to be a game of musical chairs: Bachelet gives the chair to Piñera, who vacates it for Bachelet, who relinquishes it for Piñera...

Some star journalist or the other proclaims: It has all been decided. A progressive web publication calls only to vote for the lesser evil, that is what this sector has been suggesting for more than 25 years without questioning the results of the political action in which it has participated.

The plethora of candidates offers a mirage of abundance. From the philo-fascism of Juan Antonio Kast to the paleo-communism of Eduardo Artés, a Stalinist who does not fear to show his sympathy for Kim Jong-un; from the arch-neoliberalism of Piñera, a financial delinquent who has been judiacially condemned more than once, to the neoliberal integrationism of Guiller, an independent (it is not known of what) supported by the ... Socialist and Communist Parties! In between, the zoo offers up eveeverything, from ME-O (Marco Enríquez-Ominami), Macron's friend financed by Pinochet's son-in-law (in its defence it has to be said that practically all the parties were), to that unruly Alejandro Navarro, who wanted to be someone but does not know who to be and doubts between Groucho and Karl: both have sworn eternal love to the coalition that has managed the brothel for a quarter of a century. Finally, a variety of nicoise salad in which the ambiguity and lack of moral compass of candidate Beatriz Sanchez is surpassed by the numerous legume and vegetables that comprise the salad.

For the first time in the country of Salvador Allende there is no democratic, republican, revolutionary and humanist option, which allows the grade of the local political delinquency to be measured.

The main worry of the experts, not to speak of the candidates, is the post Chile occupies in the World Bank's Doing Business 2018 ranking. The second in order of importance is not to displease the investors.

It matters little who is elected, even as distinguished journalists comment on the opinion polls from morning till night.

The words of David Roghkopf in his book, *Superclass: The Global Power Elite and the World They Are Making* (2008), reappear before my eyes. The author tells of a conversation with one of the monarchs of the dozen families which control the Chilean economy and politics. "David, if you want to comprehend Chile, you have to understand that this is not a country. It is a private Club and we are the owners of that private Club". Who will be the next pedal boat captain\*? I don't care.

\* During the French electoral campaign of 2011, candidate Jean-Luc Melenchon had asked why the Socialists had "elected, to enter in a storm zone, a pedal boat captain like Francois Hollande" [Tlaxcala note]