

# Pink Tide, Muddy Waters: Whither 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism?

ROBERT AUSTIN

**Abstract:** A wide-ranging study on Latin America's "pink tide" governments, and the social formations underpinning them, raised again the debate on 21st Century socialism. If the period 1990-2010 saw renewed popular insurgency after the Soviet bloc collapse, progressive forces have lately been confronted by low intensity reaction from the combined might of local and imperial bourgeoisies. US hegemony faces renewed anti-neoliberalism, but now assails popular regimes via constitutional rather than military coups.

**Keywords:** 21st Century socialism. Pink Tide. Imperialism. Social movements. Latin America.



## “Maré rosa”, águas turvas. Definhamento do socialismo do século XXI?

**Resumo:** Um amplo estudo sobre os governos da “maré rosa” na América Latina e as formações sociais subjacentes a eles, recolocou o debate do socialismo do século XXI. Se no período de 1990 a 2010 houve nova insurgência popular após o colapso do bloco soviético, ultimamente as forças progressistas são confrontadas por uma reação de “baixa intensidade” do poderio combinado das burguesias locais e imperiais. A hegemonia dos EUA enfrenta renovado antineoliberalismo, mas agora ataca os regimes populares mediante golpes constitucionais, ao invés de militares.

**Palavras-chave:** Socialismo do século XXI. “Maré rosa”. Movimentos sociais. América Latina.

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**ROBERT AUSTIN**

Historiador. Honorary Associate,  
Department of Peace & Conflict  
Studies. University of Sydney,  
Australia.

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*In memory of Roger Burbach (1945-2015)*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

To paraphrase Marx, a specter is again haunting the Americas. And again it is socialism, albeit in new garb. In a comprehensive co-authored work on theme — *Latin America's Turbulent Transitions* (2013) — Roger Burbach, Michael Fox and Federico Fuentes set out to analyze two related, volatile processes: the gradual demise of US hegemony in Latin America and the Caribbean (hence Latin America), and the advent of a Left alternative generally known as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism. But — and again the authors borrow from Marx — neither process is complete, hence the metaphor of transitions which, once in motion, encounter and must negotiate turbulence. The twin intellectual tasks of critical engagement with their arguments, and simultaneously with the fluid Latin American conjuncture they address, beckon Marx's assertion that dialectical thinking is the key to engaging society and changing it; or in the words of an eminent Marxist literary critic, both tasks require us "to praise and to criticize in the same breath." (EAGLETON, 2009, p. 236).

Whilst the authors' interpretation of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism relies heavily on Chilean philosopher Marta Harnecker's 2012 account, all acknowledge its debt to Michael Lebowitz, borne out by his definitive *Build it Now: Socialism for the Twenty-First Century* (LEBOWITZ, 2006, p. 13-30; 61-72) and later integration of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez's 2007 definition of an "elementary triangle" of socialism: "[a] social ownership of the means of production, which is a basis for [b] social production organized by workers in order to [c] satisfy communal needs and communal purposes." (LEBOWITZ, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. Lebowitz's interpretation of the new project reflected his immersion in the unfolding class struggle within Venezuela combined with a high level of theoretical understanding of Marxism and socialisms. Subsequently Lebowitz (2010) added that:

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<sup>1</sup> Email from Michael Lebowitz to Robert Austin, sent on June 01, 2010, citing his paper to conference in Mexico, in 2009. The content is based on the manuscript for Lebowitz (2010).

Social ownership of the means of production is critical because it is the only way to ensure that our communal, social productivity is directed to the free development of all rather than used to satisfy the private goals of capitalists, groups of individuals, or state bureaucrats. Social ownership is not, however, the same as state ownership. Social ownership implies a profound democracy -- one in which people function as subjects, both as producers and as members of society, in determining the use of the results of our social labour.

Production organized by workers builds new relations among producers -- relations of cooperation and solidarity. As long as workers are prevented from developing their capacities by combining thinking and doing in the workplace, they remain alienated and fragmented human beings whose enjoyment consists in possessing and consuming things. And, if workers don't make decisions in the workplace and develop their capacities, we can be certain that someone else will. Protagonistic democracy in the workplace is an essential condition for the full development of the producers.

Satisfaction of communal needs and purposes focuses upon the importance of basing our productive activity upon the recognition of our common humanity and our needs as members of the human family. Thus, it stresses the importance of going beyond self-interest to think of our community and society. As long we produce only for our private gain, how do we look at other people? As competitors or as customers--- i.e., as enemies or as means to our own ends; thus, we remain alienated, fragmented, and crippled. Rather than relating to others through an exchange relation (and, thus, trying to get the best deal possible for ourselves), this third element of the elementary triangle of socialism has as its goal building a relation to others characterized by our unity based upon recognition of difference; through our activity, then, we both build solidarity among people and at the same time produce ourselves differently.

In essence, *Turbulent Transitions* (hence *TT*) is about a clash of survivals in the Americas. On the one hand, if US capitalism is to survive and expand — its only option, given the logics of capitalism and imperialism — it must renew its hegemony over Latin America. Without it, more so now given the rise of the so-called BRICS economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), US capitalism is probably doomed. Two facts alone eloquently demonstrate the point: Latin America has 43 per cent of the world's water reserves but only 7 per cent of its population to defend them (BORÓN, 2014). And Venezuela has overtaken Saudi Arabia as the site of the biggest oil reserves on the planet, while its gold reserves rank second, its diamonds sixth, and it is one of just seven countries on the planet with known commercial reserves of coltán (columbite-tantalite), essential to electronic devices like laptops and mobile phones, as well as the armaments industry (GIUNTA, 2015). On the other hand, Latin America's "Second Independence" — as distinct from the incomplete Wars of Independence in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century — rests on precisely the opposite scenario. Political, economic and cultural liberation require the defeat of US and allied imperialisms operating in the region — including British, Spanish, Japanese and Australian — as a precondition to the fulfillment of the socialist transformations now tentatively underway.

Twenty-first century socialism, then, arises in the context of, and interacts with, a particular historic conjuncture: the weakening of the US Empire, the irruption of anti-neoliberal social movements, a new wave of Left or populist governments, and the growing integration of the region on its own terms (*TT*, p. 04). By the end of the short twentieth century in 1991 (see HOBBSAWM, 1997), the Washington Consensus — IMF loans conditioned by neoliberal structural reforms — was under pressure across Latin America, as the new social movements, combined with the internal contradictions of late capitalism, challenged its neoliberal regimes to the point where most presently collapsed (whether dictatorships or formal democracies). This paved the way for the pink tide of Left or reforming nationalist regimes in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, and for Cuba's reintegration into the region as the Organization

of American States slid into oblivion. The 1989 “Caracazo” (see SUTHERLAND, 2011) — a bloody, popular, anti-austerity uprising in Venezuela — was the spectacular announcement of these movements, although Brazil’s Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST: Movement of Rural Landless Workers) and Uruguay’s revived Frente Amplio (Broad Front) were also already simmering.

Simultaneously, US imperialism shifted strategy across the region to support for proxy regimes — like Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Guatemala — combined with increased naval presence and burgeoning military bases. Counter-insurgency gave way to a “war on drugs” as the pretext for a new wave of surrogate armed intervention, and ramped-up investment in cultural imperialism through media, popular base and party-political projects. Where opportunity arose, established Washington ploys of aiding military or constitutional coups have also been implemented: witness Venezuela (2002), Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2012) and Brazil (2016). Sobered by this history until publication in 2013, the authors are cautious not to overstate the revolutionary potential of their focus countries.

## 2 THESES

The first three chapters of *TT* consider globalization and its Latin American discontents; the rise of the so-called “pink tide” of anti-neoliberal regimes; and the complexities of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism. These chapters also elaborate the authors’ theoretical position, in which they downplay any conceptual primacy for class, instead defining the new socialism in post-Marxist terms drawn from identity politics, Hardt and Negri’s notions of “the multitude” and “the swarm”, and the postmodern philosophy of unarmed social movements like the once Marxist-Leninist Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), or Zapatistas, in Chiapas since 1994. The next four chapters present case studies of four countries in the vanguard of regional integration in the new century: Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador. Cuba is considered in a final case study, given its distinct history. As the Conclusion, “Socialism and the long Latin American spring” — a poignant seasonal metaphor

written, deliberately if not tentatively, in lower case — offers a balance sheet on the transitions considered.

Chapter 2's discussion of the pink tide considers how China's displacement of the US as chief trading partner to Brazil and Chile has contributed to regional economic independence from US capitalism, combined with the rise of regional trade alliances like the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR - 2008), alongside political-economic alliances like the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA - 2004) and its Banco del Sur. But the consummation of the Community of Caribbean and Latin American States (CELAC) in 2011 may be the lynchpin of the new alignments. Its combined regional political and economic platform includes "preferential trade tariffs, collaborating in energy and environmental projects, and ending illiteracy in every country in three years." (*TT*, p. 28). During CELAC's gestation, the "group of one" which Venezuela had constituted a decade earlier at Bush II's launch of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) — baptized by Fidel Castro (2003) as "a meeting between a shark and some sardines", mutated and then crushed the FTAA by 2005, assuming the lead role in a new Latin American integration project which even "Berlusconi con poncho" — Sebastián Piñera, rightist Chilean president (2010-2014) — found attractive. Venezuela's entry into the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) was ironically achieved thanks to the 2012 Paraguayan coup, whereby Paraguay's suspension removed the only obstacle to Caracas's seat at the table.

Chapter 3 poses the question of whether or not the pink tide is a genuine anti-capitalist challenge. The negative thesis is argued by the neoextractivist school led by Uruguayan ecologist Eduardo Gudynas, who argues that no pink-tide government has significantly modified its extractive sector, nor has any moderated its social and environmental impacts by pursuing alternative development not dependent on primary exports such as copper or petroleum. The cautiously-positive thesis is put by leading revolutionary intellectual and Bolivian vice-president, Álvaro García Linera: namely, that the majority of Bolivians now benefit from the exports generated by those industries, which result from

diversifying external markets and stimulating the home market. Both positions speak to the central question of the role played by the state in the pink-tide governments, which the authors link to benign or hostile interplay with the social movements, and which they presently survey as a question of class and production within capitalist state formations. Revamped constitutions, they contend, have to compromise and are limited within this framework.

The chapter concludes with a synthesis of major theoretical positions on the origins, achievements and directions of the pink-tide nations. Cuban politician Roberto Regalado adopts a critical stance, pointing to contrast between Brazil and Uruguay on the one hand, where Left parties came to power after decades of struggle and internal reform; and Bolivia and Venezuela on the other, where the party system fell into discredit and social movements were the lead catalyst for change. Their goal, he argues, should be nonetheless identical: socialist transformation. Chilean philosopher Marta Harnecker's perspective is similar as to ends, but dwells more on the performance of the subject governments. This approach risks over-emphasis on the transient character of the political regime as against the permanent features of the capitalist state (PETRAS; MORLEY, 1992, p. 148). That is, analytically speaking, we must separate capitalist state and political regime; failure to do so blinds us to broader structural realities and their role in preventing socialist transformation. As history has repeatedly shown since Thermidor<sup>2</sup>, this can open the door to a merciless counter-revolution such as that underway from the Venezuelan oligarchy and imperial allies, or its counterpart in Colombia since its oligarchy's CIA-orchestrated assassination of progressive president-in-waiting Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948 (GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ, 2003, p. 276).

In the current conjuncture the chapter on Venezuela takes on heightened import. Geopolitically, Venezuela sits between a mature revolution (Cuba) and a mature counter revolution (Chile).

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2 Thermidor takes its name from the month in the calendar of the French Revolution in which counter-revolutionary elements executed the Jacobin leader Robespierre; it has since come to signify internal counter-revolution (see HARMAN, 2008, p. 298-300).

However, as the post-Chávez April 2013 election scenario demonstrates, sooner or later revolutionary processes reach a fork in the road, expressed as a class confrontation. Multitudes and swarms play less of a role in this struggle than do the organized working class and peasantry. They are now arguably structured in novel and promising ways built on epoch-making social advances, but are nevertheless part of a participatory democratic process expressed by the Chávez-initiated vehicle of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela PSUV, and now led by a new working-class president. It is no coincidence that the Venezuelan Left — exemplary host to the 100,000 Chilean exiles who arrived after the 1973 coup — retains a keen interest in 20<sup>th</sup> century Chilean political history. Venezuela itself now confronts the conjuncture in which the peaceful road to socialism was disastrously immersed. Although it is playing out in a continental context far more favorable to Venezuela than was true of Allende's Chile, its parameters are essentially twentieth century: the theoretical and economic contest between endogenous development and neocolonialism-cum-imperialism, and the political struggle between reformism and revolution.

The chapter itself is comprehensive, both in theoretical and political-economic detail. It explains the various stages in Venezuela's post-Caracazo development, from a realist historical perspective. Recognizing the steady move to the Left in Chávez's world view — and its relation to his 2005 declaration that the Bolivarian Revolution would be socialist or it would be nothing — the authors document the multiple expressions of reaction within non-or-anti-socialist Chavismo, embodied in the layers of corrupt officialdom and state sector employees whose feudal mentality is as amenable to a counter-revolution as are the Chilean armed forces. Current analysis has also highlighted this "boli-bourgeoisie's" link to major sources of economic corruption, including a disparity between regulated and unofficial market prices, and the rent from fictitious capital (ELLNER, 2016). If any single event captured Chávez's political maturing — arguably marked by an emerging Leninism (GILBERT, 2013) — it was his 2009 call for a Fifth International in the tradition of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky.



While the concrete steps which the Chávez administration effected to redistribute wealth have often had breathtaking success (such as the public health, public education and popular market missions, parallel to inefficient state bureaucracy), they have been consistently met with sedition by a well-organized opposition, opulently funded by Washington (see GOLINGER, 2006a, 2006b). But the internationalist perspective of the ALBA and CELAC groupings has provided economic and political reinforcements, complementing the Bolivarian Revolution's growing emphasis on communal councils at the neighborhood level and workers' control over the production process.

Unlike Allende and the dominant Popular Unity (UP) block, Chávez and the Popular Assembly understood the essential nature of audacious initiatives at key points in the transformational process when the balance of forces is favorable, such as straight after major tactical defeats of the opposition (like the failed capital strike, 2001, and failed coup, 2002) or major electoral victories (generating the PSUV's formation, 2006, and renewed nationalizations, 2008). Whilst the chapter ends with the re-election of Chávez in 2012, later editions will have to deal with the mounting challenges of a post-Chávez scenario, eerily flagged in the near-deadlocked April 2013 election. In a notable shift from the theoretical eclecticism of earlier chapters, this one understands that the turbulent transformation in Venezuela is "an ongoing process whose fate will be determined by class struggle." (TT, p. 75).

Bolivia's "communitarian socialism" also benefits from a wide-ranging review, pivoting on the symbolism of its largely-indigenous population electing its first indigenous president in 200 years of pseudo-independence from colonial rule. Wisely this chapter recognizes the centrality of Andean oral traditions, noting that the election of Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) presidential candidate Evo Morales in 2006 "reflected the fact that the party encapsulated and built upon Bolivians' historic memory of struggle: the *long memory* of indigenous resistance to colonialism and the *short memory* of revolutionary nationalism" (TT, p. 79). These concepts underpin the communitarian socialism described by García Linera as an amalgam of two sources: the working class, science and

technology; and communitarianism, derived from the historic peasant agrarian structures. In the current conjuncture, an “integral state” mediates between capitalism and Bolivian socialism. MAS’s broad project is “a democratic and cultural revolution”, aiming to nationalize the economy and decolonize the state. As the authors depict the process underway, it has begun to roll back neoliberalism by industrializing its mineral resources rather than exporting all as primary resources, promoting manufacturing and agriculture, redistributing wealth, and “strengthening the organizational capacity of proletarian and communitarian forces as the two essential pillars of the transition to socialism in Bolivia.” (*TT*, p. 82).

From Morales’s inauguration as president, the MAS has argued that “the state does not control the state and its institutions” (*TT*, p. 82), although the first “state” here might best be understood as the government, not the capitalist state of which it is momentarily custodian. Like the Bolivarian Revolution, once in power the MAS won support for a constitutional reform to abolish the traditional bourgeois parliament and replace it with a constituent assembly (as Allende had proposed to seek by plebiscite, to be announced on 11 September 1973; but the coup prevailed). In turn, this heralded a massive influx of indigenous and popular representatives. Nationalization of resources has certainly placed enormous revenue at the government’s disposal for social programs such as job creation, as well as base-run and indigenous development projects like agricultural cooperatives, food processing, gold and cardboard production. While it is not stated, the emphasis on production rather than distribution alone can only strengthen the socialist project. Indigenous-popular forces, the authors argue, have initiated the nationalization of the state by taking control of key positions of power and moving to break with international finance agencies. A multi-sided project, reducing foreign control over the economy also allows the implementation of an increasingly-independent foreign policy, itself a component of the new communitarian socialist economic model.

Predictably the unfolding social process has run up against the political economy of the late capitalist state, financially and

militarily fortified by imperialism. *TT* details the major instances of that tension, ranging from the Right-wing secessionist movement in resource-rich Santa Cruz to US-backed coup plotting in 2008 and the failed Morales recall referendum in the same year. It also argues that MAS electoral advances in 2009, giving it almost two-thirds of the presidential vote and an even greater number of regional governors, obliged it “to deepen the process of transformation” (*TT*, p. 92). Along that path, however, internal contradictions arise, whether as wage demands by the national union council or demands for greater indigenous autonomy. Indeed, in the 2010-2011 period, more protests took place than at any time since the 1970s. García Linera views these, however, as necessary and creative tensions, an argument well elaborated by the authors (*TT*, p. 92 - 95).

Marc Becker’s chapter on Ecuador’s “buen vivir” (good living) socialism is a lucid account of another Andean variant of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism. It also highlights the evolving but so-far unsettled definition of the concept. As the author notes, president-since-2006 Rafael Correa is more prone to say what 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism is *not* than what it is. Here Becker echoes Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who defines it as “a metaphor for something to which one aspires but does not know exactly what it is.” (*TT*, p. 100). Correa has so far proposed seven revolutions: economic, social, political, ethical, integrationist, environmentalist, and judicial. His notion of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism seems to draw on the historical pantheon of Marxist and idealist or utopian socialism, including José Carlos Mariátegui.<sup>3</sup> As a distinguished Brazilian intellectual argues, Mariátegui’s work is characterised “by the fusion between the most advanced European cultural heritage and the millenary traditions of the indigenous community, in an attempt to assimilate, in a Marxist theoretical framework,

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3 This Peruvian-born Marxist of Spanish-Incan birth developed a heterodox analysis of both Peruvian and Latin American society, integrating indigenous Andean social constructs and European socialist thought, especially Gramscian, to Latin American reality. Of his prolific output in a short life, *Siete Ensayos de Interpretación de la Realidad Peruana* (1928) is the iconic expression of that synthesis.

the social experience of the peasant masses.” (LÖWY, 1979, p. 12). However, Correa rejects “class struggle, dialectical materialism, the nationalization of all property, and refusal to recognize the market.” (*TT*, p. 101).

Poignantly we learn that Correa “had a catholic education that gave him a strong concern for social justice but did not provide him with as sophisticated an understanding of Marxism as his counterparts, who were products of the public school system.” (*TT*, p. 103). This Catholic Left background has led to conflict with Left feminists in Ecuador on social issues like abortion and gay marriage. Moreover, there has been an underlying tension with the mainstream Left and key elements of Ecuador’s well-organized social movements, over issues such as his capitalist agrarian policies and social programs which favor his electorally-supportive urban areas over rural ones. On the other hand, his default on a three billion dollar debt in 2008 and expropriation of around 200 companies belonging to a collapsed major bank won Left acclaim. So too a series of economic measures which recognized the class character of the Central Bank and subordinated some private property to the public interest. But his refusal to nationalize natural resources and tempered actions against the bourgeoisie suggest a social democratic program with nationalist economic tendencies, not a socialist program. A comprehensive major study has since verified that conclusion (see MUÑOZ JARAMILLO, 2014).

Yet Ecuador’s anti-imperialist credentials during Correa’s reign have been impressive, consistently to the Left of most pink-tide governments and sometimes, such as non-recognition of the Honduran coup-based regime, even of Bolivia’s and Venezuela’s. They include refusal of a US military base at Manta unless Ecuador could establish one in Miami; breaking off diplomatic relations with Colombian narco-president Uribe’s regime after its lethal cross-border raid on a Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia FARC base in Ecuador (2008); active promotion of integrationist organizations like ALBA, UNASUR and CELAC; and granting of political asylum to Wikileaks founder Julian Assange (2012).

In contrast, Correa has used the full force of the capitalist state’s repressive apparatus to crush popular and indigenous

mobilizations against oil exploration and its social and environmental impact. His government has pursued an export-oriented model for primary resources, despite its historic failure to enrich any group beyond the local oligarchy and transnational corporations. As Becker concludes, “more than any other issue, the conflicts over mining illustrated the wide, growing, and seemingly insurmountable gap between Correa and social movements.” (*IT*, p. 110). This leads him, quite rightly on the evidence presented, to position Correa’s project for Ecuador as ultimately to the right of Bolivia’s or Venezuela’s socialisms, and akin to Lula’s in Brazil or the Concertación’s (now Nueva Mayoría) in Chile, neither of them a threat to capitalism and indeed its loyal ally.

Brazil’s initially democratic-socialist manifesto (1981) had already eliminated reference to socialism and red symbols by the time Lula first contested a presidential election in 1989. Chapter 7 deals with the background and unraveling of that key decision, in a country whose economy outstrips the combined economy of the rest of Latin America and was at the time in the top five globally. Ever present, we learn of US military officers training torturer-assassins during the dictatorship (1964-1984); the national strike which catapulted Lula to prominence in 1979 and foreshadowed the dictatorship’s collapse; and the painful rise of both the Workers’ Party (PT - 1980) and MST (1984). Their relationship developed around loosely-defined anti-capitalist, pro-socialist but anti-Stalinist affinities — that is, rejection of the post-Lenin deformity of dialectical materialism (‘Diamat’) into apologetics for Stalin’s corrupt political practice — the PT limiting itself largely to electoral politics while the MST practiced massive peasant occupations of fallow land and the development of popular democracy in practice.

With Lula’s ascent to president in 2002 the PT-dominated progressive coalition government struck out on a radical internationalist foreign policy to some extent at odds with its domestic support for neoliberalism (reminiscent of both Correa’s recent, and the Mexican PRI regimes’ historic international Left solidarity, but repression of the Left, its natural allies, at home). This “prioritized South-South cooperation, regional integration, and multilateral

institutions such as the G-20 and the BRIC" (*IT*, p. 122); and has increasingly reflected PT theorist Aurélio García's views on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism, which emphasized a humanist internationalism. Still, the USA remains Brazil's second-largest trade partner after China, and the two resumed military agreements for the first time in three decades in 2010.

Further major contradictions have arisen, and are well expounded by the authors. Despite longstanding PT policy on annulling imperial-imposed foreign debt, once in power it repaid the IMF, even ahead of time. Corruption emerged in 2005, finally convincing a significant PT sector to split and form the Partido Socialismo e Liberdade (PSOL: Socialism and Freedom Party). Transnational agribusiness, mortal enemy of the MST and any prospects for socialist agriculture, has boomed since the PT took office. While Brazil's renewable energy sources abound — at around 50 per cent of national requirements — they power among the world's largest neoextractivist sectors at staggering human and environmental costs. As in the case of Chile's Concertación/Nueva Mayoría administrations, the advent of an apparently-progressive government has tended to weaken the Left. From the perspective of class struggle and emancipatory socialism, dramatic and profound changes in approach to the now-hegemonic and domestically-neoliberal PT will need to occur. It bears recalling that dependency-linked poverty alleviation and genuine social liberation are opposites, like charity and solidarity. The PT's obfuscation of their meaning is hopefully not permanent.

Given the high profile which Revolutionary Cuba has enjoyed, this final case study is a helpful comparative tool alongside the preceding chapters. Cuba is at a crossroads, where the contradictions of post-Soviet socialist development face the seductions of the post-Maoist Chinese road. The positioning of this as the penultimate chapter also bookends an engaging historical sweep. Cuban society now finds itself, perhaps ironically, moving away from the revolutionary socialist model it embodied while much of the region was officially hostile, at precisely the most favorable conjuncture in The Americas since the 1960s. In a compact study, the authors consider both national and international factors

which have contributed to the need for socialist renewal, while reminding us that the historical development of Cuban socialism preceded the pink tide by forty years and therefore has, one might expect, better prospects of a resolution which ensures its survival with a modernized rather than overturning-the-past socioeconomic project.

### 3 ANTITHESES

Firstly, what is wrong with post Marxism? Theorists like Hardt and Negri (2000) and Holloway (2010) promote a Eurocentric vision of Nuestra América, either voiding the working class and peasantry of centrality in a revolutionary struggle for independence and socialism, or constructing an empire without imperialists. The literature on which Hardt and Negri rely is a mixture of French philosophy and North American social science (BORÓN, 2005, p. 23), French philosophy having also spawned Harnecker's long-discredited Althusserian interpretation of Marxism (see CERDA CRUZ, 1975; SÁNCHEZ VÁZQUEZ, 1978; THOMPSON, 1981). It also relies on an idealist interpretation of Gramsci's concept of hegemony, removed from the realm of production; as Gramsci argued: "while hegemony is ethical-political, it cannot also fail to be economic, it cannot fail to have its foundation in the decisive function that the leading group exercises in the decisive nucleus of the economic activity" (cited in SIMIONATO; NEGRI, 2017). As Mariátegui and Juan Antonio Mella have shown, joined more recently by Celia Hart (2006), Silvia Federici (2010) and Néstor Kohan's integration of feminism (2013), a Bolivarian reading of Latin American history through a Marxist lens is eminently doable.

Like the chapter on Venezuela, that on Bolivia shows the futility of Eurocentric post-Marxist theories. García Linera, like the mature Marx and mature Chávez, gives primacy to class and the relationship between class structure and production. His understanding of imperialism is Leninist, albeit with the strong influence of Andean indigenous philosophy. In turn this makes the absence of Mariátegui's cultural Marxism quite odd. Further, comparative historical reference to the Nicaraguan Revolution or latest stage of

the Cuban Revolution might have placed the descriptive account of the mixed (“plural”) economy in a more dynamic perspective, given its topicality and the challenges encountered by both. And the chapter lacks the tabulated and helpful economic data of the Venezuela chapter.

Secondly, there are occasional factual errors. For instance, “Chile’s bi-weekly magazine *Punto Fijo*” (TT, p. 41) is, presumably, the enduring Left fortnightly periodical *Punto Final*. And Import Substitution Industries (ISI’s) took root in the region in the 1930s — roughly corresponding to the North’s adoption of Keynesianism — not in the postwar decades as the authors suggest: so variously 1945–1970 or the 1960s and 1970s (TT, p. 14; 40).

Thirdly, sporadic references to the USA as “America” are curious given the political orientation of the authors, and hint at an Occidentalism evident in their regular choice of non-Latin-American theorists to underpin their analysis (cf. AUSTIN, 2004). Future editions might consider Latin Americanizing the theoretical sources, or at least hybridizing them to a greater degree, consistent with De Sousa Santos’s (2014) denunciation of the 520 year-long “epistemicide” against Latin American culture, and the book’s *independentista* leitmotif.

Fourthly, depiction of the US Agency for International Development as only lately involved in financing political sabotage of pink-tide countries is misleading: alongside the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations, USAID has been a major conduit for cultural and political intervention on behalf of US corporate interests since the Kennedy administration set it up in 1961 as part of the Alliance for Progress, which was designed to reverse the influence of the Cuban Revolution throughout Latin America and stimulate the development of liberal capitalism as the alternative. Constantino (1978) once convincingly revealed these same forces at work in the post-Spanish US-colonized Philippines. USAID has historically operated in tandem with the US State Department, CIA and the United States Information Agency or Service (USIA or USIS) in lavishing financial support on all manner of state and civil society organizations, to secure and normalize support for US interests. (AGEE, 1975; AUSTIN, 2004; JULIEN, 1969: 268-270;



307-341). NGOization has lately been a favored tool. (see PETRAS, 1999).

Fifthly, the authors appear to endorse the social democrat US historian Brian Loveman (1993) and renovated socialists in post-dictatorship Chile who support the Christian Democrat interpretation of the fascist 1973 coup as somehow brought on by Popular Unity itself, echoing the line that if only the Left had made major concessions to imperialism and the local bourgeoisie — that is, abandoned the goal of democratic socialism “a la chilena” — the coup may have been avoided. Citing no evidence and echoing their methodological ambiguity discussed above, the authors put it rather sweepingly, thus:

Moreover, the singular hemispheric experience in advancing workers’ power and economic democracy via a peaceful transition— Salvador Allende’s Popular Unity government (1970-73)—was by and large viewed as a failure. Most of the left in Chile, as well as the rest of Latin America, came to believe that the Chilean quest for socialism had contributed to the destabilization and overthrow of the Allende government. (*TT*, p. 40).

But most major critical works on Chile since 1973 beyond the Communist Party (PC) intelligentsia reject this tautology. To one degree or another, they situate a combination of the neocolonial bourgeoisie and US-led imperialism as the responsible exogenous agents, combined with the PC-dominated regime’s failure to respond appropriately to the heightened class struggle and prepare the people for armed defense of their advances, as Fidel Castro had famously advocated during his 1972 tour of Chile [Unknown (Ed.), 1982, p. 8; 125; 132; SMIRNOW, 1979, *passim*]. Key PC-UP ministers like Mireya Baltra have since conceded as much (see MÁRQUEZ, 2008). Despite Allende’s co-foundation of the Socialist Party (1932), its policy of armed insurrection was, in fact, not implemented at all by Popular Unity. Instead it left that option to a willing oligarchic military under Washington tutelage.

With notable exceptions like the Venezuelan PC, communist parties in pre-1990 Latin America promoted the peaceful (and paradoxically bloody) road. The Chilean PC was archetypal

in this context, even when its own cadres belatedly demanded arms to defend Popular Unity's frontline defenders from imminent massacre. For instance, some 200 determined students of mixed Left affiliation lay pointlessly awaiting arms in a Universidad de Chile hostel near the presidential palace on the day of the coup. Ironically it was not until the same PC created the multi-party Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR, 1980) that armed struggle attracted new adherents, in the wake of the widespread realization among workers and peasants that unarmed resistance was doomed against a sophisticated state-terror apparatus (ROJAS, 2011; CARRERA, 2016). To borrow from the 1970s' women's movement in the West, why ask for negotiations when you're being raped?

#### **4 CONCLUSIONS**

Basque dramatist Alfonso Sastre has analyzed that hegemonic group of the Left intelligentsia obsessed with fashion and prone to opportunism. "The massive displacement to the Right of intellectuals who yesterday formed and were formed by the Left, especially the extreme or ultra-Left," has exposed the historic unreliability of that strata of writers and intellectuals "seditiously situated on the Left and even extreme Left" during better times in the 1970s. These form a caste or lineage of "progressives", one wing of which, the "bienpensantes" (right-thinking) eventually triumphed over the "Izquierdistas" (Leftists). Both, however, coalesce over their robotic adherence to fashion: then revolutionary socialism, now uncompromising democracy; then blood and fire, now pacification; then smashing the capitalist system, now supporting a reformist neocon pseudo-democracy; then an immediate and radical structural change, now a democratic process towards "progress and modernity". (SASTRE, 2005, p. 84-86).

Chilean sociologist Marcos Roitman (2007) has identified similar intellectual conformism, reminding us that "in the struggle for liberation and socialism, ethics and politics navigate and constitute part of the same project: the common good and social sense of the militant task of the Left." He argues for a pedagogy of emancipatory

anti-capitalist struggle, “where the unity of ethics and politics is practiced. Recovering this liberatory practice — in the words of Paulo Freire — would situate us in building a democratic alternative and XXI century socialism.” *TT* takes us along paths which, when devoid of fashion, pose comprehensive answers to such concerns. And as a collective its authors have established records as activist-intellectuals, not a profile for the career-conscious in places capitalist.

Prior to his untimely death, *TT* continued Roger Burbach’s three-decade trajectory in solidarity with true Latin American independence and as an author of major works in English on contemporary Latin America, beginning with *Fire in The Americas* (1987), co-written with iconic Sandinista intellectual Orlando Núñez. Prophetically given the post-1990 tapestry of struggle, triumph and setback for Nuestra América, its chapter on the internationalization of struggle in the region begins: “The Americas, more than any other part of the world, possess the social raw material for a new revolutionary vision.” (BURBACH; NÚÑEZ, 1987, p. 81).

Michael Fox is coauthor of *Venezuela Speaks! Voices from the Grassroots* (2010), once edited *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, and works as a freelance journalist, translator, radio reporter and documentary film-maker. Based in Brazil, Fox has also been a staff reporter for the pink-tide website *Venezuelanlaysis.com*, and his work has been widely published in alternative and progressive media sources. Brazilian philosopher Sílvia Leindecker and Fox were among the cofounders of the internet *Radio Venezuela en Vivo*, and have reported for some years on Latin American politics and social movements, particularly in Brazil and Venezuela (FOX, 2017).

Australian-based Federico Fuentes also works with *Venezuelanlaysis.com* and has an enduring involvement in the international solidarity movement with Latin America. Whilst reporting on the Bolivarian Revolution for the Australian periodical *Green Left Weekly* he was based at the Centro Internacional Miranda in Caracas, a Chávez-government funded research institute. Prior to *TT*, Fuentes also co-wrote three books with prolific intellectual Marta Harnecker on the radical Left projects unfolding in Paraguay

(HARNECKER; FUENTES, 2008a), Bolivia (HARNECKER; FUENTES, 2008b) and Ecuador (HARNECKER; FUENTES, 2011). .

Marc Becker, the sole other literary contributor, has won a place in one-time Marxist and now long-time Zionist David Horowitz's 2006 book *The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America* (that is, the United States). Such an honor is surely sought by any self-respecting academic to the Left of Genghis Khan. Horowitz, an avowed defender of Senator Joseph McCarthy's post-war witch-hunt politics, has also alleged that Ecuador is "one of Latin America's most stable democracies." As Becker responded: "next to Haiti and Bolivia, Ecuador is the *least stable* democracy in Latin America. Since Independence from Spain in 1822, Ecuador has only nine constitutionally elected presidents who have successfully completed their terms in office and passed the banner on to a duly elected successor. In the last 10 years not one chief executive has completed an elected term in office, and there have been at least three extra-constitutional changes of power." (FREE EXCHANGE ON CAMPUS, 2006, p. 21; *emphasis added*).

In the world's premier continent for acronyms, the book's helpful table of abbreviations will quickly show the signs of wear and tear; the images are sensibly chosen and well placed in the text; endnotes are adequate; sources are around 300 in number; and there is a useful index. *TT* is a major contribution to the new social history of contemporary Latin America, containing an encyclopedic amount of poignant detail on each case study, presented in a way amenable to both expert and non-expert. At its best it is written from the perspective of the vast majority and in solidarity with the post-colonial popular classes and millenarian indigenous civilizations. As is clear from the growing popular resistance to constitutionalist coups in Brazil (2016) and potentially Venezuela, they in turn are famous for not waiting for intellectuals to have their theories up-to-date before forging, in Burbach's words, "new revolutionary visions".

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