

# **The enemies of the left**

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• **RUNNING** out of enemies is the worst thing that could happen to the left. In a world in which those at the top fear those below, and the supreme law of the land continues to be "every man for himself," the ideas of the left can do nothing other than scorn executives and rain on the right's centennial parade.

The boundaries, of course, are a different problem. In the French Constituent Assembly of 1789, the defenders of the king positioned themselves to the right of the president of the Assembly, while the most radical revolutionaries were on the other side. From then until today, the discussions about where each positions themselves have not ceased.

The ability of the right to define itself as opposed to a left with recurring identity crises is striking. If the powerful know anything it is how to distinguish their people from those who seek a more just distribution of wealth, reject the naturalization of inequality and believe that "human rights" are extensive to all human beings.

When revolutionaries are marginalized, and their programs are only discussed in small circles, the right often tolerates them to present an image of plurality and openness. But these sectors soon show their true colors when social discontent explodes and they perceive the slightest possibility of losing their privileges.

The dictatorships across Latin America during the last century, the assassination of social leaders, and the destruction of trade union organizations were the elites' response to the real possibility of the rise to power of the left, as had happened in Cuba in 1959.

Advised by the United States, they prepared to shut

down any popular insurrection. Although they saw some results, Sandinista Nicaragua and the efforts of other Central American and South American peoples demonstrated that change could be achieved through armed struggle.

However, few believed a victory was possible in their own land. It seemed impossible to shift liberal democracy, designed to benefit the oppressors, to the left. Salvador Allende proved otherwise in Chile and paid a high price. More than two decades later, Venezuela experienced a similar situation with Comandante Hugo Chávez, who opened a cycle of progressive victories that soon spread throughout almost all Latin America.

The right, hit by the catastrophic results of neoliberalism and corruption scandals, did not give a minute's respite to the new governments, as it retreated to reorganize the counteroffensive.

The left, unlike its predecessors, was respectful of the rules of the game and didn't flip the table even after the coup attempts in Venezuela in 2002, in Ecuador in 2010, or the secessionist initiatives in Bolivia during the first stage of the Evo Morales government.

Although the political processes were, and are, different in each country, from the objectives outlined to the extent of the transformations in practice, the scenario in which they have developed is very similar.

In order to reach political power, it was necessary to make deals with various forces, in many cases reactionary and motivated solely for their own benefit, which ended up curbing the changes demanded by the masses.

A sector of the Latin American left, accustomed to dreaming of the Revolution in philosophical gatherings, ended up on the opposite side after losing

disquisitions regarding the particular shade of red each represented. At times due to opportunism, and at others the inability to understand the historical moment, they fell into what Lenin called "ultra-leftism" and described as an "infantile disorder."

Over the last decade, the power of the media to construct realities, to function as a political actor and to influence public opinion was also demonstrated.

Just how far the right is willing to go to achieve its goals was also seen. Those, who in Venezuela described Chávez as a populist dictator, immediately dissolved all democratic institutions as soon as they took control of the country for a few brief hours in 2002. Those, who today oppose the Constituent Assembly convened by Nicolás Maduro, demanded it just a year ago.

There have been no qualms about the use of non-conventional warfare; parliamentary coups, economic boycotts or any other destabilizing method.

Above all, it was learned that it is not enough to reach the presidency to achieve major changes, or to improve living conditions to achieve political awareness. Corruption and clientelism inherited from the Latin American "democratic model" are even more fiercely rejected by the people when they have the hallmark of the left, and neoliberal adjustments are no less unjust when they are made in the name of progressivism.

But perhaps it is healthy to have these enemies. No revolution is worth anything unless it can defend itself. In any case, they help make things clear. To those who speak of the end of the leftist cycle in Latin America, we should remember that apocryphal phrase that some put in the mouth of Don Quixote: "Let the dogs bark Sancho, it is a sign that we are moving forward." •



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