

A new field of dispute on continent: A contribution to building it

by Pedro Fuentes ((PSOL International Relations Secretariat))
| September 19, 2020

This text is about the policy and orientation for Latin America and America. It has the character of an outline to debate in the ranks of the PSOL and the anti-capitalist organizations of the continent.

The opening of this debate is essential in the face of the new situation that our continent (and also the USA) is experiencing, in the midst of a deep crisis exacerbated by the pandemic, the fires in the Pantanal and Amazon and the entire west coast of the continent. The continent is caught on fire by the denialist and predatory policies of the dominant classes. But there is another fire that is that of social and political struggles; with them one can put out the fire of genocidal deniers and open a new course in our America.

There is a space to build a new alternative. There is a vacant field: the old progressives cannot respond to this new situation. A new space is opened for this, and the PSOL could contribute to build a new alternative in the face of the crisis. This new continental space opens before the inability to respond to the new crisis by the so-called progressiveism in its two aspects. The PT's alternative that at the time built the São Paulo Forum, and on the other hand due to the end of Bolivarianism and the ALBA project that madurism failed to encourage. Nor can it occupy organizations of the "denunciative and self-proclaiming" left that isolate them from real processes.

In the new situation, multiple demands are being added, and

sectors of the masses are moving beyond the workers. This is creating a social and political vanguard that can be the material for the construction of an alternative that will occupy this space.

The PSOL and other Latin American organizations have gained national and international recognition to occupy this space that can be built as a network. Reality is acting in this direction and discussing it both in the instances of the PSOL and other Latin American and US social and political organizations in the search to confront neoliberalism and imperialism is possible.

The PSOL could take this first step by debating with political and social organizations of the continent; in this way encouraging common campaigns and solidarity as a step towards a network that embraces movements and organizations that are independent of old progressiveism and sectarian groups. These points are to contribute to this debate.

1 / The Americas are part of a new world situation

The American continent as a whole, despite the different character between the US and Latin America, is part of a new global situation, a reality of the world in which the systemic crisis is worsening and where mobilizations and revolts – almost always semi-spontaneous – are growing. Faced with the inability of the dominant classes to respond, the populations respond with great mobilizations, insurrections, revolts, which are neither frightened nor cease in the face of repression, increasingly used by sectors of the ruling classes in power to confront the social mobility that is becoming political. Recently we had the revolt of the black people that still continues in the US, the uprising of the indignant people of Lebanon taking away the Prime Minister. And now we are witnessing a true democratic revolution where women are playing a fundamental role in the face of Lukashenko's autocratic dictatorship.

Our continent is part of this new situation. And we speak of a continent because we include in this characterization the Latin American countries and the United States, a country that is "Latin Americanizing".

The reality is showing that the situation in Latin America and North America has been and continues to be dynamic despite the pandemic. Proof of this is the black uprising in the US and the general strike with road cuts to prevent the blocking of elections in Bolivia.

The Coronavirus has cooled and almost frozen the most advanced processes in Chile and Ecuador, the most prominent points in Latin America, and in the U.S. the enthusiastic mobilizations for Sanders' candidacy ended (the necessary isolation gave arguments for him to withdraw his candidacy). But reality is showing that the forced confinement has cooled for two months the mass mobilizations, but without stopping them. At the same time, it has accelerated the structural (systemic) crisis of our countries, creating desperate situations in the poorest sectors of all them. It showed the corruption of the rulers who, instead of saving the health of the people, used part of the money to enrich themselves. The pandemic has not stopped corruption, and on the contrary has shown the most perverse side of the lumpenization of government agents in different countries. The current struggle of the people of Bolivia against the coup government was detonated by the indignation with it.

In the U.S., the blacks suffered the most, and this created the favorable atmosphere for the Black rebellion to begin with the assassination of George Floyd. A movement that can only be compared with that of 1968. This mass uprising, by striking the most important imperialism in the world, caused the antiracist wave to spread to other countries that took the banner of the antiracist struggle with mobilizations and even with the destruction of the monuments of the "heroes" of colonialism. And this is how the US has put in the world's

agenda the antiracist struggle.

In Latin America, Bolivia is today the brightest point, where confrontation is most open. With the massive blockades, the Bolivian masses went on the offensive. The COB now had to mobilize in the face of the attempt to perpetuate the coup and the Mining Federation under a new generation of leaders, which groups the most skillful workers with dynamite, began to play a prominent role, although they do not have the numerical density of other epics. (It is worth remembering that these miners made revolutionary journeys that have gone down in history).

The social and political crisis in the USA

It is worth mentioning the USA. The situation of our continent will not be the same if Trump wins, if it occurs it would strengthen all this protofascist current, and will be another different if Biden wins. The authoritarian right will be weakened and this is positive. But the social and political polarization will not stop, the class struggle will continue very much alive. The Democrats have in Biden a candidate of "transition" for his age who has as Vice President Kamal Harris who is black, but is a senator of the establishment, who when she was a prosecutor in California was an instrument of systemic racism. If the Democrats win, it will be a government that does not touch the interests of the great imperialist bourgeoisie (just like Obama's). And it will have to face a very polarized country with a greater political and social crisis. Trump's government was and is a break from the old way of governing the imperialist bourgeoisie on the basis of "two bodies but one head. Its organically authoritarian character led to a polarization and radicalization of the mass movement, to the growth of the antiracist organization, to the growth of a socialist consciousness, and to the emergence of new African-American and Latin American deputies in rupture with the establishment (like Ocasio-Cortez, Jamal and many more).

In the midst of the worsening crisis of the pandemic and the structural "Latin Americanization" of which we will speak later, it seems difficult to return to the old normality of bourgeois democracy. On one hand, because if Trump loses, it will not mean the end of the ultra-right course that today hegemonizes the Republican Party. The ultra-right will remain with political and social strength. And on the other hand, because Biden's government, which would win by expressing a kind of democratic front that in fact transcends the structure of the Democratic Party dominated by the establishment, has no other possibilities than to maintain U.S. imperial policy and the defense of the big corporations that dominate it.

Within the framework of the worsening conflict with China, the government of the imperial power cannot make fundamental, structural changes, which the vast sectors mobilized to put an end to social inequality and racism are demanding. Inevitably it will take measures of adjustment against the workers and the exploited sectors that are the most discriminated ones. It will then be that the organized and non-organized sectors critical of Biden, which supported Sanders against Trump, begin to make their voices heard with the imperial democratic government. The social sectors like the Black movement, the workers who have led important strikes in recent years, and the political and social movement that has built itself around Sanders program and candidacy will have to follow a course independent of the Biden government.

2 / Faced with social and political polarization, an alternative direction needs to be built

In Latin America (LA), as in the rest of the world, we are not facing an avenue or a path of roses towards revolution. Faced with the radicalization of the mass movement, the bourgeoisie responds (or tries to respond) with a hard hand. So it was in Chile with Piñera and they are trying this now in Bolivia. In other countries intense selective repression is being practiced. In Colombia, where there is an important ascent,

Duke is multiplying the disappearances of leaders of social and political movements (more than 500 this year). In Honduras a dozen of the leaders of the Garífuna black people have disappeared. In the US, where bourgeois democracy is stronger, President Trump is not only trying to sabotage the vote by mail, but has the possibility of doing so.

The crisis has given rise to new ultraconservative proto-fascist totalitarianisms that already have fascist behavior and ideology (anti-communist, racist, denialist, sexist, with militias on the Internet and in the case of Bolsonaro and Trump want to facilitate arming that could give rise to future militias). Their social bases are the bourgeois sectors of the right to which a social base is added in middle class and working class sectors desperate for the crisis. One of the characteristics of this ultra-right when in power is the lies, manipulation of information (alternative facts before reality), manipulation of social networks stirring up a pseudo-populism, and hatred of those who oppose it.

This new right has found room to develop because it has been facilitated by the politics of conciliation that follow the old progressives. And this translates into the fact that fundamental popular sectors that make or have made the experiment with these directions, which we call "old progressiveism," can now find a new way to form a new alternative direction, independent, based on a program of rupture with capital. There are new conditions for this to be generated: this helped the massive use of the Internet because of Covid-19, which strengthened networking. A vertiginous global communicational advance that helps to counter the difficulties of advancing in a new democratic and socialist consciousness that gains ground to the backwardness that produced the lack of an alternative model to capitalism through the failure of "real socialism". Although a new socialist wave has emerged in the United States, the great advance that Sanders' program has meant has not yet overcome

the programmatic weaknesses and inconsequences about a new model of society, a question that we must take much into account when formulating a new program. However, the new thing in our continent is that the conditions are beginning to exist to create this program that does not yet exist.

For these reasons we can define the new situation as undefined, open, there has not yet been a change in the correlation of forces between classes as occurred in 1968, for example. However, there is a space of dispute to advance in its construction.

3 / Build a program to respond to the new situation.

The mobilization of workers, the resistances and rebellions are creating the conditions to formulate a new program that is not a repetition of the old reformist formulas (of possible improvements in this model) and the abstract propagandism of socialism.

The structural crisis (now multiplied in its gravity by the pandemic) has put old and traditional demands and newer ones on the agenda, while at the same time the social agents who mobilize are multiplying. There are multiple tasks, democratic, economic against inequality, ecosocialists, anti-imperialists, that give content to a new program of transitional demands, that is, that attack parts of the system and thus question it as a whole.

These demands are common to all our Latin American countries and partially extend to the US. This places the anti-capitalist vanguard in the need to build a program that unifies all these demands in the common task of a new Latin America, that is, to refound Latin America on other bases, an independent continent, with democratic and equal relations between all its countries, with social, racial and ecosocialist equality. The commemoration in important countries (Mexico, Peru, Guatemala, Dominican Republic) of the

bicentennial of independence will have continental transcendence, it is a fact that updates the struggle of the Latin American peoples for their "Second Independence" that can only be conquered if it faces together the old and new contradictions of the continent that the pandemic shows.

The rupture with imperialism that means the nationalization of its natural wealth and the banks. Agrarian reform, which now also has to put an end to the new landowners of agribusiness, is also of all Latin America because it has ceased to exist in some countries that have achieved it. The defense of mother earth, in which the original peoples play an outstanding role of resistance to extractivism and agribusiness: central elements of the global plan of capital, the confrontation with the climate crisis for which a new model of production is needed; the defense of the Amazon basin (one of the greatest riches of our continent) from predatory governments and imperialist interests is of interest to all of South America, and in particular to the ten countries that form it. Urban reform, the nationalization of health, the strengthening of public and free education; the achievement of social equality.

Only governments that represent the interests of the workers and the poor in rupture with the bourgeoisie in power can carry out these basic measures. And they can only be carried out in the joint struggle of the workers, peasants, original peoples, women and the oppressed races. A Latin American revolution is possible and urgent.

Here we want to contribute with some points of a work that necessarily has to be collective and part of the most urgent tasks that are placed.

A/ Facing totalitarianism and proto-fascist dangers. Although there is no doubt that the ascent or resistance is spreading unevenly among countries, the dominant classes are neither in retreat nor on the defensive; they respond by restricting democratic freedoms. The father of this process – and the

greatest enemy – are the Protofascist totalitarianisms that have Trump, Bolsonaro, Añez, Duque, Piñera, Ortega as their exponent (although the last one with another class origin and arise from the betrayal of a revolutionary process). These characters who express the crisis in the bourgeoisie are the first enemies we have to defeat. The bourgeoisie, in order to maintain its domination, needs to harden the regimes in the face of the crisis of bourgeois democracy and its parties in order to confront the action of the masses.

Not all the bourgeoisie is now behind proto-fascism, but they are not the ones who will stop. It is the mobilization of the masses as occurred in Chile or now in the U.S. from the black rebellion in the northern country. These days in the streets of Bolivia this confrontation is being decided. In the US it is the mobilizations that the workers (teachers, services, etc.) are doing that have gained strength with the antiracist movement and that will continue in the November presidential elections.

Making the necessary unity of action from an anti-capitalist strategy

In the face of the proto-fascist threat, it is necessary and possible to unite tactical action with bourgeois and progressive forces to confront it. This is the possibility of striking together (where one can) but marching apart. Only by radically changing the system with the mobilization of the masses is it possible to extirpate the fascist danger. But this does not deny the possibility of unity in action when there are bourgeois sectors that differentiate themselves with the totalitarian course. In Bolivia, there is no bourgeois sector with which this unity of punctual action can be realized, but in other countries this is necessary. In Brazil and now in the U.S., for example, without committing to the program and the future government of Biden (if it wins), the possible electoral action is to vote for Biden to defeat Trump.

B/ The fight against racism that also has a continental character. The fight against racism, the new racial segregation, in defense of the original peoples is a struggle against the unresolved legacies of colonial and neo-colonial oppression and exploitation.

Our America was submitted by empires except for partial periods in certain countries and today in Cuba. The capitalist accumulation by European countries was done – to a great extent – by submitting slave forms to the original peoples and the Black people brought from Africa. The antiracist struggle is systemic because through another form of exploitation it continues to exist. The fight against racism unites our entire continent. It is the “African American” and the “Latin American” of the USA, the Black population that is the majority in Brazil and in a large proportion of almost all countries, especially in the Caribbean and northern Latin America, of all the indigenous peoples who are expropriated by big business and its governments whose populations are throughout the continent. Therefore, the Latin American revolution has these sectors as a fundamental social group, which is confused and part of that of the workers.

There have been historical struggles against racism, and now they are lit with the multidimensional crisis that capitalism is experiencing. As they have never been resolved, they are now turning, in less brutal forms than colonization, not less exploitative, discriminatory and oppressive. It is not only the black people of Brazil, the US, the Venezuelan Caribbean and Colombia. In Latin America, there are thousands of native peoples who defend themselves against the permanent aggression of capitalism. The native peoples are in the front line of the defense of Mother Earth, facing extractive companies and deforestation.

The Mapuche people of Chile are standing up against the rural landowners in southern Chile, the garífuna community in Honduras, the diversity of ethnic groups in Brazil that defend

their territories against the demarcation of Bolsonaro lands, and today in Bolivia the indigenous people who – as we have already seen – are blocking paths by calling into question the coup government and defending their Plurinational State.

C/ Fight the health crisis that the pandemic has worsened. Nationalization of the health system. Production of generics by the state to provide free medicines.

D/ In the face of growing unemployment and the anti-worker offensive: that the rich pay for the crisis. Basic income, defense of wages, reduction of working hours, public construction plan, taxation of large fortunes...

The economic crisis – aggravated by the pandemic – is at the center of the demands of the workers and the exploited, which turn into political struggles against governments, regimes and corruption. (With Covid-19, abominable negotiations of the corrupt political castes were made). Misery, the product of an irreversible growing inequality and unemployment are the scourge of the workers and the people of all America, including the US. These are points of a transition program to face the crisis.

E/ For a new production model that saves the planet and life. "To change the system and not the climate".

The fight against the climate crisis means facing the system: that's why we are ecosocialists, but we are not propagandists of a new better system only. There are mass actions against the crisis. Against extractivism and the defense of Pachamama the original peoples are rising. In Peru, the most notable of Tía María and Conga, in Venezuela there is a vanguard that denounces the Arco Minero promoted by the government of Maduro. Also in Latin America, the new ecological movement is being built from the World Assembly for Amazonia.

An important part of the fight against the climate crisis is the fight against predatory agribusiness and the fight for

agrarian reform, which is also the basis for a model of production in the countryside that defends nature and life.

E/ The public debts and nationalization of banking.

The crucial issue of foreign debts, which although not affecting all countries equally, is the yoke on their necks that our countries are asphyxiated by international financial capital and imperialism, a vampire that sucks the blood of our countries. We cannot move towards a solution to any problem if we continue to pay off a scandalous debt that governments have made.

F/ The feminist struggles against patriarchy.

Women are in the front line in the new situation. They are at the vanguard of social struggles, they fight for life, since they are the ones who are responsible for social reproduction, and for confronting the sexist violence that was made harder by the pandemic.

G/ The defense of education and youth without a future...

H/ The struggle of new precarious workers (applications, telemarketing, internet sales)

4 / A Latin American revolution is needed that breaks with imperialism and the dominant classes.

These continental claims – which have a common denominator – face neoliberalism, the capitalist model of this historical period, that is, the domination of large corporations. The native bourgeoisies are minor partners in the interests of financial capital and the mega corporations. This financial capital, which today dominates the world economy, is in fact and in law who controls the economies of Latin American countries directly or indirectly.

The question is: are there native bourgeois sectors capable of carrying out these claims that have become immediate? Without

a break with the dominant native classes it is impossible. At the beginning of the new century Bolivarianism emerged, which was a political and partially economic break with the old dominant classes. We have to start from this frustrated experience in its successes and mistakes. Bolivarianism could only develop with its continental extension. Imperialism, the native bourgeoisies, and the class conciliation government of the PT were obstacles to its extension. The governments of the PT defended the sub-imperialist interests of the bourgeoisie wanted to extend the business of Odebrecht and the other construction companies and corporations and for this they had to halt the expansion of ALBA and minimize the possibilities of a South American Bank. The path of Bolivarianism to definitively break with imperialism and advance towards socialism could only be realized with the support of the whole of Latin America. And in this line of Political-Economic Independence the governments and political organizations of the São Paulo Forum were not committed. Faced with this fundamental need, it was not possible to guarantee the continuity of national liberation throughout our continent. The independent countries (Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador) were isolated because of the governments of Brazil, Argentina, Colombia and Mexico.

ALBA intended to be a new continental economic model and was – as we said – sabotaged. On the other hand, the process of socialization or mixed economic management was stagnated, banking was not nationalized, which resulted in the bureaucratization of the regime.

Nor is there any progressive world block

Historically, US imperialism considers our continent its backyard. It is the one who guides the embargoes on Cuba and Venezuela and the co-manager of state coups . However, American imperialism is experiencing a decadence in its world domination, due to the loss of its hegemonic power gained after World War II. For its debilitation, “its backyard” is

now economically disputed by the emerging economic power of China, an imperialism in gestation that has already conquered countries in Asia and Africa.

The Chinese government with its companies and other large private corporations in China have a strong presence. Its goal has no other character than that of the USA and Europe. They take advantage of the extraction of natural resources, dominate economic sectors and take advantage of the exploitation of workers.

The reconstruction of Latin America cannot advance by believing that we have a friendly partner in China. The world dispute between the US powers and China only serves to open the vanguard's eyes to develop an independent policy. Just as in Latin America old progressiveism is not an alternative, we do not have a progressive field in the world that can be a strategic ally. And although its economic hegemony is in question and its weakened domination returns to the burden with the new forms of undercover democracy in Paraguay, Honduras and more recently in Bolivia.

Our allies are the American workers and peoples in struggle in the world.

The old vanguard and the degenerate old progressives in their politics focused all the problems and crises in our countries on imperialism and saw the whole American country (not only its governments) as the enemy. The world reality showed that the main ally of the Vietnamese people was the anti-war movement in the northern country. And now, with their deeper "Latin Americanization" the door has been opened to have them as allies by the withdrawal of their troops as in the case of Vietnam.

The workers' movement, the antiracist, and the new socialism that is on the rise in the US are strategic allies of Latin Americans. This alliance becomes more concrete because the

structural "Latin Americanization" (increase in inequality and poverty) can be built with the powerful American working class and especially with the large Latin and black populations that are in the US. Chicanos and Blacks have many points in common with us and around them we have to build the bridge that unites us to break the Trump wall.

5/ The role of progressives in the face of the new situation

If PT, especially at the beginning of 2000, was responsible for the liberation of our continent to be stagnated and receded, now they are even more on the right to fulfill a progressive role: they are assimilated by the dominant classes. This is what recent struggles are showing. They are betting only on elections and not on mass mobilization. PSOL had to take the independent initiative to bring the impeachment against the Bolsonaro to Congress. When this impeachment could be combined with the first mobilization in the streets under the pretext of the pandemic, they did not call. In Bolivia, when the coup was consummated, they played no relevant role and in Chile, in the midst of the great mass mobilizations, they supported the negotiation with Piñera.

Nor is the Progressive International playing this role: it did not appear in the US, nor in Bolivia, nor in Chile. It is an alliance of individuals and leaderships and the government of Finland (some valuable) with no relation to the ongoing movement. Even less in Latin America.

6 / The social and political vanguard can build a new internationalist alternative.

The struggles on the continent have revived old fighters, new leaders have emerged, and put youth and women in charge. Without going into many descriptions we can say that with this change there is an important reanimation of the Latin American vanguard and that it is organizing itself in social and political movements. The new political processes of our

continent like Bernie Sanders and the DSA in the USA, Social Convergence in Chile, MNP in Peru, PSOL in Brazil were the most outstanding.

At the same time, reality is showing that, in the wake of the multiple social struggles, old sectors are reanimating with the new vanguard layers in the organizations of workers (or outside of them), youth, and women who have put themselves at the head of the struggles.

These events are parallel to (or outside of) the political processes. The Cabildos of Chile, the indigenous and student movement in Ecuador, BLM in the US, feminist movements and coordinators, the Pan-Amazonian Assembly, the strike in Bolivia headed by the Mining Federation, the self-organization of the High Bolivian, the new center under construction in Mexico, the reorganization of the union movement (which unifies old people with new leaders) especially in the service workers (Health and Education) and so we could give multiple examples. The limitation of political action by the pandemic has not stopped the mobilizations (Bolivia, Colombia) and has caused the vanguard movement to recreate itself in virtuality. Although it has the limitation of the absence of forceful impact on concrete action, the social and political vanguard has used them to group itself. And the most notable example is the unique front of different sectors and of small or large organizations and activists is the Pan-Amazonian Assembly. There is also a multiplicity of feminist organizations that are in Latin America, where Chile, Argentina and Mexico are the vanguard.

New political organizations cannot exist as an instrument of the Latin American revolution if they are not built by collaborating and being part of these movements. Participation in the electoral political struggle is important to politicize the movement, but whenever they do it by opening up to social organizations. It is a reciprocal necessity. The participation of political organizations in social movements and their

struggles and, at the same time, opening their political tasks and electoral campaigns to the new social movements that emerge.

7/ Where to start? Campaigns and meetings to build a new Latin American social and political network.

The new space for building a new anti-capitalist alternative in Latin America (and the U.S.) if, as we have said, outside of Foro de Sao Paulo, Madurismo and the new Progressive International. In the struggle against the right, they can be tactical allies, but there is no possibility of unity, neither political nor programmatic, to confront the right.

The task of the Latin American vanguard is to group around common campaigns and a new program that puts the need for a new anti-capitalist Latin American integration. This program begins by responding to the worsening crisis caused by the pandemic that highlights the structural crisis of our Latin American continent and also of the USA.

The common Latin American struggle can begin by supporting the Federation of Miners of Bolivia, facing the protofascism of Bolsonaro, and other initiatives that place common tasks. This experience has already begun with the campaign in defense of the Amazon, in joint actions against Bolsonaro, in solidarity with the kidnapping of the Garífuna leaders of Honduras to mention some examples.

These campaigns can delimit the tactical allies of the most strategic and thus strengthen a Latin American network of anti-capitalists.

A meeting called by PSOL is possible and this new internationalism can be assumed by PSOL, a party that has already held several international seminars that have called many of these sectors. The campaigns and a meeting would open the way to build this new alternative.

Translated by Alice Maia