

Colombia: The new July 20th and the 30th anniversary of the Constitution

Via [Insisto y Resisto](#)

The cycle of war is wicked, and those who destroy the peace, who do not invest in education and leave children in the hands of the criminals who recruit them, are wicked.

H. Morris, Historical Pact, ET, 1/07/2021, 1.14.

“The escalation of violence in some parts of Bogotá as a result of clashes between youth groups and the security forces is assuming worrying proportions that need to be dealt with immediately... In this scenario, it is authority that must impose itself... making it clear that this same authority does not have a political bias nor does it protect ideological adventures...”

Cercar Bogotá, ET editorial, 1/07/2021, 1.14.

Official historiography credits July 20, 1810 as the beginning of New Grenada's independence, attributing it to a “cry,” different from the one immortalized by Edvard Munch in distant Scandinavia, uttered by the Creole elite who, with Camilo Torres, wrote a “Memorial of Mourning,” and in no case an act of independence.

Others, placing the emphasis on the subaltern people, emphasize the same date by putting at the head José María Carbonell, a “decrepit” Creole from the fickle ways of the señoritos of naive Bogotá, still attached to submission to the Spanish imperial colonial order. These alternative historians do so by focusing on what happened in San Victorino, the meeting place and marketplace of the heterogeneous mass of the

people of Santafé, who lived far from the center, or on the outskirts of that city nestled and isolated on an Andean plateau.

It was there that Carbonell proved his talent as an orator and agitator of the dolamas and tax burdens that distinguished Antonio Villavicencio's visit. A riot was organized, ready for a rebellion with hints of insurrection, but which in any case did not escalate. It was only with the Cundinamarca Constitution of 1811 that Antonio Nariño and other Creole patricians made greater advances than a year earlier.

The popular revolt of the (Pre) Republican Santafé

"Do not think that this day is the most unhappy, but the happiest of my entire life." He said to the executioner, "I forgive you from my heart, it is not your fault."

José María Carbonell, before his death.

On that July 20, José María and the Chisperos, between afternoon and night, gave shape and existence to the popular junta of San Victorino. He was responsible for the arrest of the Viceroy Amar y Borbón, and the Viceroy was the object of insults from the tumultuous people, as the pacifist Pablo Morillo recalled years later.

During the following days, the fight did not last long, as it pitted them against the self-styled Junta suprema of Santa Fe de Bogotá. The result was that Carbonell ended up in prison along with his fellow rebels, the brilliant Eduardo Pontón and Manuel García, on August 13.

The charge was true of participating in and encouraging the popular revolt in Santafé de Bogotá, but the real fear was due to the risk that the governmental structure of rich Creoles and sons of Spaniards, who supported the freedom of Ferdinand VII, imprisoned by Joseph Bonaparte in Bayonne, would

effectively give way to the participation of the masses in the government of the city, based on the newly created model of the Popular Junta.

In any case, the arrest did not last until December because the subalterns who had been mobilized since July 20 demanded his release. Carbonell himself was arrested again for his agitational and organizational work in the slums of Bogotá's poor and artisans. This is what happened to him on January 18, 1811, when he was imprisoned for a month.

But he was already a recognized leader with notable popular support, and this was recognized by the Creole elite, who appointed him on April 30 as Major Officer of the Royal Treasury of Cundinamarca, as well as Captain of the infantry militia. These were appointments made once, not of the Republic, but of a Constitutional Monarchy established in Cundinamarca, declared on March 30, 1811, with its own Constitution promulgated on April 4, 1811. It also stated that the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion was the religion of the new state.

Thus, the new political form did not completely break with the sovereignty of Don Fernando VII, who was now appointed king of the people of Cundinamarca. At the same time, he appointed Jorge Tadeo Peralta as President of the province of Cundinamarca, at the same time as Vice President of the King's person.

This episode was the main trigger for the Patria Boba episodes, which pitted Federalists and Centralists against each other until the Spanish reconquest. The centralists were led by Antonio Nariño, while the federalists had Camilo Torres as their champion, who did not hide his sympathy with the republic of the United States of America. This political project won a majority in New Granada, creating the Federation of United Provinces on November 27, 1811.

Carbonell was sentenced to death by hanging on June 19, 1816, and by order of Pablo Morillo was burned at Huerta de Jaime (Square of the Martyrs), while his co-religionists, Vargas, Contreras, and Leyva, were shot on the spot as an example to rebel subalterns. Carbonell was buried in the Church of La Veracruz.

A leap in time? The 1991 Constitution

"We have not been able to interpret what young people are asking for."

Alejandra Barrios, promoter of the Constituent Assembly and director of the MOE.

"We need, through voting, to elect a government that has the fulfillment of the Constitution as the main axis of the exercise of government."

Antonio Navarro, former president of the 1991 Constituent Assembly.

After 180 years of that almost independent state that actually took the form of a Constitutional Monarchy, in Cundinamarca and Santafé de Bogotá, which also annexed the provinces of Mariquita and Neiva; and which then succumbed in the internal civil war between 1812 and 1813.

Finally, Colombia experimented with a transitional political form of statehood through the Constituent Assembly of 1990-91, which led to the constitutional death of the centralist order of 1886, which gave Antonio Nariño's project a chance. But it did not give way to true political decentralization, but to deconcentration formulas; and, yes, to a relative decentralization of the ties of presidential neo-presidentialism, with which the initial neo-presidentialism controlled Congress.

Nor did that 1986 centralism disappear now, in 1991. It

retained the republican form, which, however, has since concealed "the wolf of the monarchy": with the figure of a very powerful, though constitutional, presidentialism with full powers to subdue the opposition. Since then, it has been a bad copy of the supposed model of American presidentialism.

In fact, as former Foreign Minister Vásquez Carrizosa recalled, it was a kind of constitutional Caesarism, whose first occupant was Simón Bolívar himself. Its ghost, although degenerated, because we don't have Caesars, but "alvaritos" and their progeny, became a permanent blockade of democracy in Colombia, including its minimal version, the so-called representative democracy.

Now we have in sight, by the hands of the 1991 voter, the social rule of law, which has in its womb the promise of real and effective equality. A promise that the Covid-19 pandemic took to its paroxysm, when the demands for equality in freedom covered the streets, squares, avenues and roads cut off, to denounce and condemn the lordly republic that sacrificed not only Rafael Uribe, but also Gaitán, and the chain of reformist political leaders of the 1980s, with Luis Carlos Galán.

The last to be sacrificed, before he died, symptomatically, also decided to return to the fold of conservative liberalism, handing over the flags of what he called New Liberalism, thinking of the mirage of the "new frontier" that also had its martyr with the assassination in Dallas of the Camelot of the "fabulous" sixties. Now his dolphins are trying to revive him and, they hope, that the guardianship being settled in the Constitutional Court will give life to an unburied corpse, to paraphrase the title of a novel by a Colombian narrator of the subaltern cause, Arturo Alape.

However, it is clear how much we are a republic after thirty years of this experiment that resists giving reality to social equality, and with great weaknesses seeks to guarantee certain fundamental individual rights, but almost none of an

effectively social or collective nature. With a constitution voted in by a minority, without being the object of a referendum that would have given it the strength of mass publicity and rooting, in fact, popular from the start.

It also had the "luxury" of tying the new politicians forged on the battlefields to the two-party centenarianism of the dolphins of Laureano and Alfonso the Elder, renouncing the right to be elected to Congress. Thus they sacrificed the new constitution on the altar of the counter-reforms that are already 55, if the numbers on the record of those who want progressive things had to be torn to shreds.

Such is the unfeigned mission of the war party that spread its wings as wide as possible, starting with the Samper/Pastrana binomial that handed the baton of command to the captain of the lordly republic, who, instead of making a revolution like the Mexican one, became the shadow captain of a counter-revolution to tame the rebellion in arms of the subaltern insurgency.

But since total defeat was not possible, given the bestiality of the human rights violation, which for 20 years broke the guarantee of individual and collective rights, with the hecatomb of the "false positives", whose count is now over 4000, then the rancid bipartisanship put in the place of honor the neoliberal peace officer, Juan Manuel Santos, who received the award alone.

Why? For preventing the subaltern peace from thriving from the start, in what was agreed in Havana and counter-reformed in Bogotá, once again, on the pitiful Colón stage. As it did in 1948, when it sanctioned the exclusion of internal opposition, and surrender to the regional hegemon, co-winner in World War II, making Colombia, and much of Latin America, the backyard of the US.

Beyond the counter-reformed constitution: the youth and the

poor

"No element of the constitution is an obstacle to achieving peace...A new constitution is not necessary to overcome the current difficulties.

Humberto de la Calle, ET, 07/14/21, p. 1.6.

Contrary to the claims of one of the gurus of the neoliberal order, De la Calle, who rendered his well-paid services, first to Gaviria, and then to Santos, and in both cases to cajole and intimidate with his juridical car his legal cart the subalterns and the terrified middle class, which he tried to represent literarily, when he started with Nadaismo, it is not true that a new constitution is not necessary.

The opposite is what the youth and the poor who have taken to the streets throughout these 21 years of the 21st century have proven and are proving. So who is right, and knows why, is Alejandra Barrios, who was part of another rebellion and ended up as a guardian and watchdog, halfway through the electoral frauds with which the will of the national electorate is being mocked and disrespected.

She, who was once young, says now when gathered on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Constitution, "we cannot interpret the young." But, in fact, it is about more. The youth of today have learned well the lessons of the assassinations of the 1980s, and the betrayals of the popular will that followed in different guises.

Seeking to alienate participation in the most diluted and corrupted form of political representation in the known capitalist, and not a few socialist, orders, in view, of course, of their differences, regarding the living conditions of the many subalterns.

These young people of the new era who turned the strike into

the backbone of the denunciation of a degenerated presidential regime, that is, the reigning para-presidentialism, which Nobel Prize winner Santos also did not want to dismantle, who, on the other hand, managed to order the death of Alfonso Cano, a student leader from the 1970s, who joined the ranks of the FARC.

These young people are the real peace bloc, with the fuel of radical reforms that the poor have learned to want and demand, if they want to have another life, and not die at the hands of Covid-19, the white guards, or starve to death, and survive in the strings of misery of Colombia's capitals.

The New July 20: "Front Lines" and Social Subalterns Together

The so-called "front lines" are proof of a new leadership in the making, which dares to stand up to the official violence that continues to massacre them with impunity. They are the ones who challenge the old subaltern leadership of political representation that is fading away in its bureaucratic exercises of winking. It is with them that they will take to the streets on this new July 20.

By then there will be not one José María Carbonell, but thousands of them, and with the poor's chant of freedom and equality they will finally break the back of the para-presidential regime, which already exhibits two new proofs of its criminal strength by holding the military in the JEP responsible for the attacks against the rebel groups in Catatumbo/Norte de Santander and César.

Places where the peasant users of the 1970s began to assert that the land is for those who work it, and not for the absentee landlords, of whom Uribe Vélez has been the bloodthirsty guardian. As the current mayor of Bogota reminded him, as a combative journalist and fearless congressman who was not afraid to call him a "leech" more than once, when he ran away from the debate and could not answer another

question.

Yes, July 20 will define whether Colombia is ready to sign a truly historic pact that the Buendía lineage has not seen. A historical pact that we talked about in a special issue of *Contravía* magazine in the 1990s. And one that has joined the ranks of the renovating leadership of Colombia Humana and the democrats, for whom the discourse of the progressives is not enough.

So the next elections will be the test of renewal, and of the urgency to make way for the Social Constituent, postponed for thirty years with the murderous battering ram, quasi-impunity of the para-presidential regime, which at all costs wants to extend the para-public, agreed in Ralito to all of Colombia, subduing the rebellion of the cities.

That is why, this July 20, Bogota, Cali, Medellin, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Popayán, Pasto, a sign of dignified rebellion, cannot be besieged, nor their young people sacrificed, nor the poor who protest and demand the end of privileges and the sinking of the new fiscal counter-reform. They demand free education at all levels, if the social constituent is to be viable, and the order agreed upon in 1991 is not a bundle of mockery, but a true historical pact.

Long live the new July 20th. Ephemerides of the Subalterns, of the San Victorino People's Junta, and of the new forms of organization rehearsed before and after the three months of the civic, youth and popular national strike. This is what the throats of the marchers who unite the city and the countryside in the civic and civic battle of the true democratic revolution that is taking its first steps will sing.