

Radical Democracy

THE NEW LEFT- WING UTOPIA FOR LATIN AMERICA

ANIBAL ROMERO

(1996)

THE LEFT'S DEMOCRATIC COMMITMENT

Does it make sense to worry about the present-day Latin American Left?. Don't we all more or less agree that the Left learned the right lessons after the hard experience of the 1960s and 1970s—the failure of guerrilla movements, the unraveling of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions and, above all, the collapse of socialist utopia in the USSR and Eastern Europe? Certainly, as Cavarozzi rightly points out,¹ the Latin American Left is currently undergoing a period of weakness and growing heterogeneity, both in an organizational and a programmatic sense. Nonetheless, there also exists something of a consensus among analysts that the Latin American Left has extracted positive lessons from a process that in the past thirty years brought it all the way from the illusions of Che Guevara's guerrilla foco theory and the utopia of a revolutionary new man to its present commitment to democracy.

Here are some examples extracted from recent literature:

Most of the political Left and sectors of the Right (in Latin America) have engaged in a positive, authentic reevaluation of democracy. Political democracy in the strict (i.e., institutional) sense of the word—linked to the liberal-constitutional model, with its guarantees of individual rights, the right of association, and truly competitive elections—is no longer disdained as being purely "formal."²

Democracy, despised and decried by the Left during the 1960s and into the early 1970s as an empty procedure, a fallacious formality, was discovered anew in the prisons and torture chambers of diverse dictatorships. . . . Procedural democracy—discovered through their painful learning process—was not the empty shell it had once seemed.³

1. Marcelo Cavarozzi, "The Left in Latin America: The Decline of Socialism and the Rise of Political Democracy" in J. Hartlyn, L. Schouitz, and A. Varas, eds., *The United States and Latin America in the 1990s: Beyond the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 101-02.

2. Guillermo O'Donnell, "The United States, Latin America, and Democracy: Variations of a Very Old Theme" in K. J. Middlebrook and C. Rico, eds., *The United States and Latin América in the '1980s* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986) 358.

3. Gustavo Gorriti, "Commentary on *Utopia Unarmed*. Beyond the Epics of Failure: The Post-Utopian Left," *Journal of Latin American Studies and World Affairs* 1 (Spring 1994): 170

The new democratic commitment of the Latin American Left has been embodied in the pluralistic concept in which interparty unity encompasses a greater diversity of ideological positions on the Left than it did during the popular front period of the 1930s.⁴

A vital experience—the sufferings under authoritarianism . . . led (the Left) to rediscover the value of the institutions of political democracy.⁵

The process of political democratization acquired a life and value of its own, which turns out to be one of the most valuable legacies of various dictatorships.⁶

According to the now-dominant interpretation, the Left has embraced with deep and sincere fervor the same political democracy that in times past was contemptuously dismissed as "merely formal." Jorge Castañeda speaks of the "democratic imperative" of the Left, and has brought matters to the point of affirming, with a certitude that all but takes one's breath away, that "in the immense majority of cases, it has been the Left that has played the most responsible role in the struggle for democracy, both under authoritarian regimes or in periods of transition."⁷ As Rénique sums up the matter, the unifying theme of the Left is "the replacement of democracy for revolution as the central theme of the political and intellectual debate;"⁸ It would seem, then, that the Latin American Left has undergone a fundamental transformation, a species of revelation, a kind of newborn Christian revival expressed in an enigmatic code that is not, as we shall see, easy to decipher.

In effect, the revisionists of the Left make two claims: First, that the Latin American Left has undergone a process of creative political apprenticeship. And second, that this apprenticeship has led to a more adequate understanding and a fuller defense of democracy.

It is my view that these affirmations are incorrect. Rather, I believe—and in this article I shall attempt to demonstrate—that in fact the Latin American Left has learned precious little. By this I mean not that its recent commitment to "formal" democracy is fraudulent or deceptive, a temporary result of the difficult and still recent experience with authoritarian repression. Rather, I argue that the learning process is incomplete and simplistic, sustained by a limited and erroneous vision with respect to the content and meaning of democracy in its contemporary expression, as well as the persistence—in left-wing circles—of a confused and dangerous thralldom to socialism, a thralldom that puts in danger the scant progress made toward a genuine commitment to democracy.

4. Steve Ellner, "The Latin American Left since Allende: Perspectives and New Directions," *Latin American Research Review* 2 (1989): 163.

5. Juan Carlos Torres, "América Latina: El Gobierno de la Democracia en Tiempos Difíciles," *Revista Venezolana de Ciencia Política* 9 (Enero-Abril 1995): 11.

6. Manuel A. Carretón, *Transformaciones Socio-Políticas en América Latina, 1972- 1992* (Santiago-Ediciones FLACSO, 1993, mimeo), 9.

7. See Julio Ortega, "Jorge Castañeda: El imperativo democrático," *Socialismo y Participación* (September 1993): 6.

8. José L. Rénique, "La Izquierda Latinoamericana: epitafio o nuevo comienzo?" *Socialismo y Participación* 1 (September 1994): 65.

THE LEFT AND POLITICAL LEARNING

No doubt the Latin American Left wants democracy for its region, but it also wants socialism. The enormous cost and dramatic failure of revolutionary radicalism in the 1960s and 1970s has convinced many of its members of the value of democracy, but it has not persuaded them to abandon their commitment to utopia. Its persistent search for an eternally ambiguous and confused version of socialism has led them to propose an equally ambiguous and confused notion of "radical democracy," which is the new utopia of the Latin American Left.

This politico-ideological process reaffirms once more the certitude of Schumpeter's observation that "first and foremost, socialism means a new cultural world . . . hence no merely economic argument for or against it can ever be decisive."⁹ A socialist utopia is capable of resisting the most severe reverses, and it remains evident that if for the contemporary Latin American Left democracy has been transformed into something acceptable and even desirable, socialism still remains the ultimate purpose of its struggle. Thus, the new agenda is to reach socialism *through* democracy—either the "democratization of democracy" or "radical democracy." The Latin American Left no longer disdains "formal democracy" but embraces it as a kind of instrument to achieve social and economic democracy that in practical terms amounts to an alternative route to socialism—complete with collective control of the means of production.

The dissatisfaction of the Left with democratic capitalism is closely related to its incessant search for a utopia, or rather, its efforts to construct an egalitarian society in which economic abundance, political liberty, and equality of outcomes will somehow happily coexist. For the Latin American Left the problem with democratic capitalism is that it does not presume to be capable of resolving all the problems of humanity, beginning with the elimination of poverty and human suffering. It is obvious that in a competitive market some will win and others will lose, some will come out better than others, but living standards for the overall majority will rise. In the socialist cultural universe, on the other hand, the search for "total" solutions is a key ideological ingredient, or at the very least, a permanent temptation.¹⁰

A handful of figures in the Latin American Left have come to understand the close connection between capitalism and democracy (understood in the conventional sense), but the majority prefer to square the circle by embracing democracy while questing on for socialism. Exceptional indeed is the case of the Salvadoran ex-guerrilla leader Joaquín Villalobos, who wrote in 1993 that "if one is anti-capitalist one cannot be taken seriously as a democrat,¹¹ as are at the other extreme—cases like James Petras and Steve Vieux for whom "free markets

9. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row 3rd edition, 1950), 170.

10. See Seymour Martin Lipset, "Reflections on 7 Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy" *The Journal of Democracy* 2 (April 1993): 42-55.

11. Comisión Política PRS-ERP, *Izquierda, Democracia Representativa y Mercado* (San Salvador, September, 1993), 4. This view is shared by Mario Payera, founder of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor in Guatemala. See his article "Asedio a la Utopía," in A. Arguiano, ed., *El socialismo en el umbral del siglo XXI* (México, D. F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1991), 299-307.

necessarily proceed in tandem at all times and in every country, and the one does not necessarily oblige the existence of the other."¹³ Not surprisingly, then, in his famous book. Castañeda insists that the Latin American countries—and the Left above all—should oppose U.S. "free market approaches."¹⁴

Given that the largest segment of the Latin American Left continues to reject capitalism, the dominant ideological orientation places emphasis on new forms of democracy and participation rather than on the subject of public ownership of the means of production.¹⁵ But what is this new democracy? The bulk of commentators speak of a radical democracy that "has yet to be conceptually fleshed-out";¹⁶ others refer to a nebulous socialist democracy or a democratic collectivism inspired by the "Indian communities" of Latin América.¹⁷

Can we deduce any clear notions from the foregoing? I believe that we can.

- The Latin American Left continues to support the project of a socialist utopia. Nonetheless, given its democratic commitment, it also aspires to build democracy without capitalism. The argument is that political democracy, though desirable, is not sufficient. One must go further, until reaching "authentic" or "true" democracy.¹⁸ This "social and economic" democracy is not according to the Left, achievable within the framework of a capitalist free market.¹⁹ For that the challenge that remains is -in the words of Chilcote -"the transition to a better society through democracy and socialism;"²⁰ It nonetheless remains impossible to find - anywhere in the vast intellectual province occupied by the Latin American Left-anything like a clear definition of what this socialism would be like or even what is meant by labels like "direct participative democracy."²¹ Nor is it at all clear how the Left proposes to avoid the well-trodden path by which elimination of free markets leads to the elimination of democracy and individual liberties—that is, the socialist road beginning in anti-capitalism and concluding in a dictatorship of the "popular democracy" type.

- At times, some left-wing thinkers seem to suggest that what they have in mind is a species of welfare estate, and Castañeda has indicated that it is possible to be "of the Left" and at the same time "partisan of a certain degree of market freedom-²²-the latter controlled and abridged, to be sure, by a state that is committed to "providing education, health, infrastructure, as well as investing in people, eradicating poverty, and creating regulatory

12 .J. Petras and S. Vieux, "The Transition to Authoritarian Electoral Regimes in Latin America," *Latin American Perspectives* 4 (Fall 1994): 19. See also J. Petras and M. Morley, *Latin America in the Times of Cholera* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 185-95

13. Ortega, "Jorge Castañeda," 4-5.

14. Jorge Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left after the Cold War* (New York- Alfred A.Knopf, 1993), 317.

15. See Steve Ellner, "The Changing Status of the Latin American Left in the Recent Past," in B. Carr and S. Ellner, eds. *The Latin American Left: From the Fall of Allende to Perestroika* (Boulder- West-view Press, 1993), 16.

16. Rénique, "La Izquierda Latinoamericana," 65.

17. Petras and Morley, *Latin America in the Times of Cholera*, 1, 3.

18. Anthony P. Maingot, "Commentary on *Utopia Unarmed*" *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* \ (Spring 1994): 179.

19. Torres, "América Latina: El Gobierno," 11.

20. Ronald H. Chilcote, "Left Political Ideology and Practice," in Carr and Ellner, eds., *The Latin American Left*, 184.

21. Ibid.

22. Ortega, "Jorge Castañeda," 12.

frameworks" Almost immediately, nonetheless. Castañeda finds himself pulled back from his fantasies to the real world: "The problem," he writes "is that it is far from clear from whence the money will come to do all this."²³ One is unsure whether or not to take such statements seriously. What is worth emphasizing, however is that in spite of the confusion, fuzzy thinking, ambiguities, and evasions common to the contemporary Latin American Left, it is difficult to reconcile its current reigning notions with the defense of socialism, even a "revised version" thereof.²⁴

- The ideological debacle of the Latin American Left has its roots in the collapse of Soviet socialism, the devastating disappointment of the Cuban Revolution, and the crisis of the state-centered matrix of development in the region in the 1970s and 1980s. In my view, this debacle has not produced a sufficient process of the political learning on the part of the Left, inasmuch it has extracted from these experiences partial lessons. So far, it has avoided coming to grips with the central problem: the impossibility of reconciling socialism and freedom. Let us understand here the term "political learning" as a process of cognitive change " through which people modify their political beliefs and tactics as a result of severe crises, frustrations and dramatic changes in the environment."²⁵ This process of apprenticeship can assume many forms -creative, pathological or merely viable. In the first case, the political actor's learning increases its ranges of possible intake of information from the outside world. If the learning process is pathological it reduces the political actor's subsequent capacity to learn or to control its own behavior. Finally, if the learning process is merely viable it neither adds to nor detracts from the subsequent capacities of the political actor for learning and self-steering.²⁶

In my view, the process of apprenticeship of the Latin American Left since the crises of recent decades has been partially pathological ; that is to say, instead of the process having enhanced its capacity to learn more, it has closed it inward. This much is clear in view of its demonstrated incapacity to abandon once and for all its quest for socialist utopia even after the collapse of the USSR, the evident failure of the Cuban experiment, and the limitless evidence on the close relationship between liberal democracy -the only form of democracy that protects individual liberties- and the economy of the market, a point to which I shall return.

- This pathological process of apprenticeship ought not to be underestimated with regard either to its theoretical impact or its practical consequences. From the theoretical point of view, we must reopen once again the debate on the nature of democracy, and attempt to clarify the confusion generated by the Left's adoption of a democratic commitment together with its refusal to abandon the quest for a socialist utopia. From the practical point of view and in spite of the present obvious weakness of the Left in Latin America, left-wing thought continues

23. Ibid.

24. Ellner, "The Changing Status," 17

25. Nancy Bermeo, "Democracy and the Lessons of Dictatorship," *Comparative Politics* 3 (April 1992):274.

26. Kari W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government* (New York: Free Press, 1963), 169.

to exercise an important influence in the Latin American cultural environment.²⁷ Under present and foreseeable circumstances, as numerous nations throughout the region are attempting -through huge efforts and not inconsiderable sacrifices- to bring themselves into line with the modernizing trends of democracy and markets the influence of the Left may in fact prove to be pernicious; at a minimum, it may succeed in blocking needed changes and confusing the issues. This possibility does not escape some left-wing ideologues, who are aware that "the problems of dire poverty and extreme inequality in Latin America have been intensified by the economic crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s" and this might lead the Left to "recover from its ideological disorientation by reasserting an anti-capitalist critique."²⁸ Here we have a threat worthy of taking seriously: the possible political and ideological resurgence of a Left that is even more confused than in the past, that has learned little from recent experience, and that has learned what it has learned badly.

THE ISSUE OF DEMOCRACY

For the Left in general—not just in Latin America—political democracy in and of itself continues to be unsatisfactory. This much is made clear, for example, in one of the most influential books published in the United States on the subject of democratization in recent years, which affirms that "in the contemporary world, these two transitions—to political democracy and to socialism—are simultaneously on the agenda."²⁹ The Left still feels vaguely unhappy with liberal democracy and refuses to discard its socialist dreams. This phenomenon is clear not only from its continuing fascination with utopia but also its own notion of democracy.

The problem is actually accentuated at times like these, in which the near-universal approval of the notion of democracy marches hand-in-hand with a widespread confusion as to its actual meaning.³⁰ As Sabine and others have shown,³¹ the French Revolution gave birth to a democratic tradition that is markedly different from the English and American liberal version. The links between this radical tradition and Marxism has been well explored by C. B. Macpherson³² who quite accurately connects democratic

27. As Torres has put it, "the predominant intellectual tradition in Latin America emphasizes the theory of dependence and class struggle," that is, it is a markedly left-wing intellectual tradition. See J. C. Torres, "America Latina: El Gobierno," 11

28. S. Ellner, "The Changing Status," 17.

29. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), vol. 4, 13.

30. See Russell L. Hanson, "Democracy," in T. Ball, J. Farr, and R. L. Hanson, eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 69.

31. George Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," *The Philosophical Review* 4 (October 1952): 451-74. See also J.L. Talmon, *The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952). As Tony Judt puts it, after the French Revolution, "a universal and undifferentiated democracy replaced the idea of liberty as the subtext of mainstream republican language." *Past Imperfect: French Intellectual 1944-1956* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 294.

32. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Real World of Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

radicalism with Rousseau.³³ Macpherson's critique of the liberal conception of democracy bases itself on the principle of assigning priority, explicitly or implicitly, to the value of *equality* over that of liberty.³⁴ According to Macpherson, democracy is a relatively late outgrowth of market economics, whose initial necessity, in the function of promoting competition, was a liberal state. Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens, and Stephens also argue that

capitalism creates democratic pressures in spite of capitalists, not because of them. Democracy was the outcome of the contradictory nature of capitalist development, which, of necessity, created subordinate classes, particularly the working class, with the capacity for self-organization.³⁵

It was then necessary for democracy to adjust itself to the demands of "possessive individualism,"³⁶ which drives both market economies and the liberal state. The inequalities generated by an open and liberal society, reinforced by the market, are the source of dissatisfaction for Macpherson and other critics, who end with or turn toward an always diffuse version of socialism. Or, alternatively—and this is decidedly the case with Macpherson—they propose a transformation of the very conception of human nature, to push aside "possessive individualism" in favor of egalitarianism.³⁷ In this fashion, substantive democracy would replace the merely formal democracy of *laissez faire* as industry, society, and government are organized along more equitable lines.³⁸

It is important to make clear as well that the political thought of the Right has always recognized the tension—in the words of Schmitt, the "precarious alliance"—between democracy and liberalism. For Schmitt, this "contradictory unity" would eventually have to be resolved one way or the other: either liberal individualism or democratic homogeneity. With powerful clarity, Schmitt distinguishes between the central concern of liberalism to limit the power of the government and preserve a sphere of inviolable freedom for the individual, and at the same time the primordial need of democratic thought, namely, to define the legitimacy of political authority in terms of the will of the majority:

33. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 1987), 26, 56, 74, 79, 82.

34. See E Gil Villegas M., "Democracia y liberalismo en la modernidad: una perspectiva tesa and Foro Internacional 4 (Octubre-Diciembre 1993): 696.

35. D. Rueschemeyer, E. Huber Stephens, and J. D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 58-59, 76-77, 271.

36. See C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960).

37. Gil Villegas, "Democracia y liberalismo," 692.

38. Hanson, "Democracy," 85.

The democratic principle demonstrates its political power by knowing how to refuse or keep at bay something foreign and unequal that threatens its homogeneity. The question of equality is precisely not one of abstract, logical-arithmetical games. It is about the sub-stance of equality. . . . The general will as Rousseau constructs it is in truth homogeneity. That is a really consequential democracy. According to the Contract Social, the state therefore rests not on a contract but essentially on homogeneity, in spite of its title and in spite of the dominant contract theory. The democratic identity of governed and governing arises from that.³⁹

The tendency toward *homogenization* of society is the key to understanding democratic radicalism.⁴⁰ This tendency, and the principle of majority will, have contributed decisively to giving democracy the character of the only legitimizing principle of political authority in our time. For this reason, as Heller notes, "neither the Bolshevik nor Fascist dictatorships can be legitimated in a self-justifying and autocratic fashion, but rather both require legitimation before public opinion in an imminent form, as a means to the establishment of a 'true democracy.'" ⁴¹ Political equality remains unsatisfactory for democratic radicalism, and its homogenizing tendency has been the force behind the vision of socialism as *the culminating expression of democracy*. The totalitarian reality of socialism, however, has made it possible to show rather more clearly that the principle of democracy requires complementation by the liberal principle and free-market economics in order to produce a democracy in actual practice. Both are necessary to protect the liberty of individuals and to guarantee as well that the will of the majority generalizes the necessary legitimacy for political authority. Without the market and without the liberal state, democracy is bound to degenerate into dictatorship. That is the crucial lesson of the socialist experience throughout this century.

THE LEFT, DEMOCRACY, AND THE MARKET

It is difficult to disagree with the idea that there is no third principle of economic organization different from the competitive market in which no one can exclusively determine out-comes for determined groups or individuals on one hand, and on the

39. Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1988), 9, 14.

40. Julio Ortega has argued that "today there seems to prevail a notion of a homogenizing and universalist democracy based on the liberal ideology." See Ortega, "Jorge Castañeda," 4. It is, I think, important not to confuse the internalization of democracy as a widespread contemporary goal and legitimating political principle, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the issue of the inherent or intrinsic condition of democracy. Liberal ideology worries about the freedom of the individual, not about the homogenization of society. Democratic radicalism, which has its modern roots in Rousseau and Marx, tends to identify democracy and socioeconomic homogeneity.

41. Hermán Heller, *Teoría del estado* (México, D.R: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1971), 193-94.

other, the principle of centralized direction where the group that holds political power authoritatively allocates economic outcomes. Economic control is not merely the control of the means necessary for the achievement of our purposes. He who controls these means also possesses the power to determine just what ends are sought, what values will receive priority, and in sum, what we thought to believe and for what purposes we should struggle.⁴² From that it follows that to sustain a free society it may be crucial for the state to recognize limits not only in its political power but also its economic reach, with a view to preserving the widest possible space for individual freedom.

Socialism is incompatible with a market economy, and the latter cannot exist without private ownership of the means of production. The imposition of socialism — properly understood as state ownership and control of the economy and the distribution of resources “from above”— necessarily carries with it the abolition of private property and its substitution of with collective ownership of the means of production. This praxis has always led, and will always lead, wherever applied, to the destruction of freedom as we understood the term, with all its limitations but also with all its virtues and to advantages. So-called “formal or “bourgeois” democracy, which continues to be unsatisfactory for the Left, is liberal democracy based on the rule of law, and it is consubstantial with capitalist market economics. It is true that the free market can coexist with authoritarian political forms, and indeed it has often done so in Latin America; but even so, that does not gainsay the fact that a market economy is the necessary (if not sufficient) condition for the emergence of a free and democratic society. Stated somewhat differently, liberal democracy is the only system that effectively—not just in theory—preserves a space for the liberty of individuals, and that liberty (and the democracy that sustains it) is consubstantial with free market economics.

It would be absurd to deny that in a society of free men and women there exist socio-economic inequalities, since differences of aptitudes knowledge, abilities, aspirations, and individual fortunes, within a process that no one can determine or predict, necessarily produce different results in each particular case. Nonetheless, this is not merely not a negative but is an admirable aspect of the system, since individual peculiarities are the source from whence emerge the innovators, those whose personal achievements provide benefits and open the roads of progress for everyone else. The idea of a homogenizing equality is not merely utopian, but—as has been demonstrated beyond all reasonable doubt—the attempt to achieve it by force extinguishes the creative energies of people and establishes an enormous inequality in favor of those who exercise that force, among them socialists who so often have begun with a critique of “democracy” only to end up with the totalitarian exercise of political power.

42. F. A. Hayek, *The Political Order of a Free People* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 151.

Some of the worst tyrannies in history have been the product of the illusory quest for equality sacrificed on the altar of economic freedom.⁴³ Nonetheless, the Latin American Left has yet to learn this lesson. It continues its quest for socialism, although some now speak of a "true welfare state" as an acceptable substitute.⁴⁴ In general, the economic and political thought of the Latin American Left in our time is characterized by an enormous confusion, a reluctance to admit the failure of the socialist idea, and the insistence on continuing to urge upon the region "a concrete utopia,"⁴⁵ wholly undefined, described in esoteric terms like "the struggle for the expansion of subjectivity, for happiness and self-affirmation."⁴⁶ Even Fernando Henrique Cardoso, now president of Brazil, seems incapable of negotiating past old dogmas and prejudices, inasmuch as he continues to argue for the need not to "surrender" to the logic of the market, while maintaining that "it is necessary to redefine the dependency issues."⁴⁷ Cardoso appeals once more to the well-worn argument that Adam Smith's invisible hand "is not perfection."⁴⁸ No doubt; but this is not Latin America's problem. Rather, the issue is posed quite differently, namely, should the countries of the region open their markets, both internally and externally—or shouldn't they? Should a democratic capitalist course be decided upon— or shouldn't it? Should the democratic agenda in Latin America include the struggle for socialism—or not?.

Other writers on the Left also argue that Latin America requires a "developmentalist state,"⁴⁹ but this type of state is hardly new. Indeed, in its interventionist and centralist form, it is precisely what has shaped Latin America for decades now. What Latin America has never experienced is a consistent effort to create open, democratic societies, with liberal states and economies. Some thinkers on the Left, such as Peruvian Henry Pease have accepted the fact that a new economic formula "has to combine State and the market as inevitable components—and it has to do it without dogmatism."⁵⁰ This observation should be regarded as acceptable *to the degree to which it is clear that "socialism" is not the final objective*, that the socialist utopia should be consigned to Trotsky's "dustbin of history," and that what is proposed is not an

43. See R. Dubuc, *Hay salida* (Caracas: mimeo, 1983), 29.

44. Castañeda, *Utopía Unarmed*, 451.

45. Garretón, *Transformaciones socio-políticas*, 11.

46. *Ibid.*, 10. No less abstract are Vilas's proposals of "social reform and wider democratization that combines political representation with social democracy." See "Entre la democracia y el neoliberalismo," 42.

47. Fernando H. Cardoso, "North-South Relations in the Present Context: A New Dependency," in M. Carnoy, et. al. *The New Global Economy in the Information Age* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 151, 158.

48. *Ibid.*, 151.

49. See M. Cavarozzi, *El sentido de la democracia en la América Latina contemporánea* (Santiago: FLACSO Ediciones, 1993, mimeo), 28.

50. Henry Pease G., *Los años de la langosta. La escena política del Fujimorismo* (Lima: La Voz Ediciones, 1994), 26.

interventionist state but a state that is legally (but not economically) powerful, which sustains the rule of law and stimulates competition and the productivity of enterprises and individuals. Only by following this path will Latin America find itself capable of confronting the great challenges of the present, such as the globalization of the economy and growing international competitiveness. Only this road is capable of leading Latin America to the point of being able to create wealth and promote the welfare of its majorities within the framework of freedom.

If the Latin American Left continues instead to busy itself with "designing utopias"⁵¹ it will surely lose whatever political relevance it still retains, although it will no doubt be able to negatively affect efforts to abandon once and for all the socialist myths and confront the necessities of capitalism and liberal democracy. To be sure, it is not impossible that if the process of democratization and economic reform presently underway in Latin America were to fail, if the time necessary to bring changes to maturity falls victim to popular impatience, the Latin American Left might indeed find an opportunity to return to its old ideological practices. Under those circumstances, blaming "savage capitalism" for all the evils of the region, it might well revive the illusion of radical democracy, the name under which the socialist utopia now travels.⁵² The result would be only new tragedies and failures for the Latin American nations. As expressed so well by Eugene Genovese, a leftist intellectual who has finally seen the light, "social movements that have espoused radical egalitarianism and participatory democracy have begun with mass murder and ended in despotism."⁵³ The Left has been incapable, and will continue to be so, of proposing an economic alternative to capitalism that is both efficient and protects the liberty of individuals. If it remains true that liberal democracy, free markets, and economic prosperity for the majority do not always go together,⁵⁴ it has nonetheless also been demonstrated that socialism condemns peoples to backwardness and political oppression, and that a capitalist economy is clearly compatible with democracy, freedom, and the progress of many millions of human beings.

The Latin American Left, with some—very few—exceptions has found it extremely difficult to definitively abandon the myths that motivated it in the past. Its recent evolution would seem to confirm Schumpeter's observations to the effect that socialism is

51. Carlos M. Vilas, "Latin America and the New 'World Order': Prospects for Democracy," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 1 (1994): 281. Tony Judt asks, "Who, now, takes seriously the promises of Marxism, the assurances of even modest utopian futures?" The answer is—the Latin American Left! See Judt, *French intellectuals*, 294.

52. According to Castañeda, "the fact that the economic and social injustices which brought about the Left's existence in Latin America are still present, if not worse than ever, implies a continued role for the Left in the Future," See Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed*, 252-53. In other words, the Left shall exist until a perfect society is eventually built.

53. Eugene Genovese, *The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Cultural War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 298.

54. As Samuel Huntington puts it, "Political democracy is clearly compatible with inequality in both wealth and income, and in some measure it may be dependent upon such inequality. High levels of economic equality can only be maintained by extremely high levels of political coercion." See "The Modest Meaning of Democracy," in R. Pator, ed., *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989), 20. Huntington's point is, apparently with some reluctance, accepted by Rueschemeyer, et. al., when they write that "virtually all full-fledged democracies . . . are associated with capitalist political economies." See *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 2.

a "cultural universe," a "symbol," forever vague and undefined in content.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, it is a high-risk symbol, since the inevitable imperfections of liberal societies and open economies afford ample opportunities to utopian projects. True, such projects eventually bring backwardness and oppression in their wake, but their momentary attraction at given points can often be irresistible.

The Latin American Left occasionally admits that "we are on the road, so to speak, but without knowing *hacia dónde* (where to) . . . we have no 'solutions,' no coherent alternatives to liberalism . . . we are still experimenting with what social equality can mean in the context of the world-economy of the 21st century."⁵⁶ This is a superficial, irresponsible posture that implies new storms ahead on the complex, fragile political panorama of the region.

It is perhaps excessive to expect the Left in Latin America and elsewhere to abandon its socialist utopia. In the fashion of Marx, those who call themselves "of the Left" are convinced that the inequalities and class divisions that exist in the world can be overcome only by the abolition of capitalism itself. This conviction is impervious to arguments such as those of Max Weber, who was persuaded that social divisions could eventually be minimized and transcended (though not abolished) within the capitalist system.⁵⁷ True, the socialist cultural universe has produced many tragedies and assured many failures. But to the extent that the world in which we live falls short of perfection, it can look forward to a firm and continuing future.

55. See R. A. Packenham, "The New Utopianism: Political Development Ideas in the Dependency Literature" (Washington, D. C.: The Woodrow Wilson International Center, Latin American Program, Working Paper#19, 1978), 14-15.

56. Susane Jonas, "Reflections on ALAS '95," *LASA Forum* 4 (Winter 1996): 10.

57. See David Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics* (London: Polity Press, 1985), 242