

**THE BOLIVARIAN ALLIANCE FOR
THE PEOPLES OF OUR AMERICA:
Knowledge, Progress and Development.**

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June 2010

The Peoples of the Americas: an introduction

“Never has there been in America, from independence to now, an issue that requires more sensitivity, nor obliges us to be more vigilant, nor demands a clearer and detailed analysis, than the invitation from powers in the United States ... to extend their control over the Americas...”

José Martí , quoted Ministerio de Comunicación e Información
2006: 20, author’s translation.

The agenda of the first International Conference of American States, convened by United States Secretary of State James G. Blaine and celebrated in Washington between October 1889 and May 1890, included: a political initiative for the peaceful resolution of conflicts within the Americas by binding arbitration, as the growing independence movement eclipsed the authority of the Spanish empire (at this time only Panama, Puerto Rico and Cuba remained under the jurisdiction of Spain); and, an attempt to establish and institutionalize regional economic integration within a customs union which would privilege United States manufacturers by restricting extra-hemispheric trade (particularly affecting the European trade of Argentina and Brazil).

The proposed arbitration was dismissed by Latin American delegates as an unacceptable surrender of sovereignty to the United States, and the suggestion of a customs union was rejected as imperialist meddling in legitimate, national, economic affairs.

For José Martí, the “Apostle of Cuban Independence”, the opposition to U.S. political and economic regional hegemony by sovereign nations, underscored

the importance of Latin American, inter-governmental, negotiation and cooperation, in defence of regional interests. *El Liberador*, Simón Bolívar, had already cautioned that the United States was "...destined by Providence to plague America with miseries in the name of freedom" (Bolívar 1829: 173). And to challenge the incipient regional dominion of the United States, José Martí, in *Nuestra América* [Our America], an emblematic and iconic article published in newspapers in New York and Mexico City in January 1891 (Martí J. 1891a), called for continental, empathetic, solidarity: "...Our America [has] to show itself as it is, *one in spirit and intent...*" (Martí J. 1891: 119, emphasis added).

In *Nuestra América*, Martí juxtaposed the cultural distinction between: "Our America" – Iberian, Latin-Catholic, 16th/17th century tradition of Spanish/Portuguese colonial expansion; with the "Other America" – Anglo-Protestant inspired, 18th/19th century United States imperialism. From his prodigious literary output of prose, poetry, plays, newspaper articles, and he even edited newspapers and political and economic journals and a children's magazine, *Nuestra América* is arguably Martí's most important work (see Belnap and Fernández 1998). In *Nuestra América* José Martí combined the '... precise and subtle, fleeting though eternal, harsh but enhancing, sober yet emotional...' words of the poet, with those of a lawyer, "...to the point, logical, citing relevant principles, making his case with devastating rhetoric..." within an argument which was morally and politically '...persuasive, conciliatory, accessible, and memorable ... [evoking] lofty ideals ... [to] affect the conscience of a nation-to-be ... [with an] eloquence [that] engendered the politician's zeal, the reformer's vision and the apostle's mission." (Martí O. 1998: 330/331).

The difference between “Our” and the “Other” America is essentially a spiritual and emotional distinction, rather than a geographical and economic division. Inherent in the ideological precepts of “*Nuestra América*” is a regional, social consciousness, which affirms a communal affinity and accountability: as opposed to the celebration of individuals’ competitive interests, and the elitist, economic expediency of social organization, implicit in the cultural maxims of the Other America. And José Martí remonstrated with Latin American governing elites for adopting the cultural values and lifestyle mores of the Other America, which ultimately legitimated economic exploitation and social inequality: ‘Prosperous people have to fight against the bad habits of wealth. It has to be worshiped less. Let people reflect upon the virtues that attenuate it.’ (José Martí (1974), quoted, Pino forthcoming: 56, thanks to Mariá Bulto for help with the translation).

For Martí, to govern well...

“... one must see things as they are ... Good government is nothing more than the balance of the country’s natural elements where each man can attain self-realization and all may enjoy the abundance that Nature has bestowed in everyone ... *Knowing is what counts.* To know one’s country and govern it with that knowledge is the only way to be free from tyranny ... If a Republic refuses to open its arms to all, and move ahead with all, it dies ... Nations should live in an atmosphere of self-criticism ... *but always with one heart and one mind.*”

Martí J. 1891: 113, 114, 117 and 118, emphasis added.

The emotional, almost spiritual, interplay between consciousness and power was incisively juxtaposed. Social and political relations are more than an

expedient intimacy born of competitive exchange: they are the communal processes of human existence; the cultural parameters which define personal aptitudes, sensibilities, ambitions and opportunities. And in the struggle to counter the insidious culture of the Other America '*...weapons of the human mind ... [will] conquer all others. Barricades of ideas are worth more than barricades of stones ... A powerful idea waved before the world at the proper time, can stop a squadron of iron-clad ships.*' (Martí J, 1891: 111, emphasis added). In poetic voice, the power of ideas, the human mind, individuals' judgement and social solidarity, are the effective means in the struggle for progressive, regional, self-determination.

And the phrase "Our America" continues to have deep ideological resonance in the Latin American lexicon.

The tyranny of the Other America

Sixty six years before the first International Conference of American States, to forestall newly independent Latin American nations from falling under the jurisdiction of European powers other than Spain, particularly Great Britain (see Galeano 2009: 173-175), U.S. President James Monroe had enunciated his "Doctrine": that the government of the United States reserved the "right" to unilaterally intervene in any sovereign nation of South America if United States interests were deemed to be threatened, ignored or subverted.

And fifty nine years later, after the 2nd World War, when United States foreign policy was defined by the Cold War with the Soviet Union (1946-1989) and national security was conceived as the "containment of communism", President Truman (1944-53) launched "...an offensive to destroy all the Latin American

political forces that were considered obstacles to the expansion and deepening of Washington's continental domain..." (Regalado 2007:121-2).

In 1948, in an attempt to unite the Americas against the Soviet "threat", the United States convened a conference of 21 Latin American nations in Bogota (Colombia), to adopt the charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) [*Organización de los Estados Americanos – (OEA)*]. To further consolidate U.S. influence in the Hemisphere, in 1961 President John F. Kennedy (1960-3) initiated the Alliance for Progress, which revisited the economic agenda of the 1891 Conference of American States. Seeking to promote regional economic cooperation to the advantage of United States, twenty thousand, million, dollars of U.S. aid was made available *to be loaned* to Latin America. Sourced from U.S. aid agencies, multilateral financial agencies, and the private sector operating within the Pan-American Development Foundation, predictably around ninety percent of all commodity purchases from these monies were made from U.S. corporations (see, Cox, 1994: 83-85).

Under Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency (1963-69) James Monroe's 1823 Doctrine was invoked to justify military intervention in the Dominican Republic between April 1965 and September 1966, in support of right-wing political interests opposed to Juan Bosch, of the Dominican Revolutionary Party, who had previously been inaugurated as President in February 1963.

Also there was military intervention in Panama, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina and Chile (1964); Argentina (1966); Venezuela (1963-7); Peru (1963-8); Colombia (1962-6); El Salvador (1962-72); and Uruguay (1966-71) (see Regalado 2007: 144). For details of fifty five U.S. interventions in Latin America between 1890 and 2004 see, Becker 2004.

But *Our America* became intolerant of the hegemonic ambitions of the *Other America*. In Peru, Bolivia, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, Venezuela, Guatemala, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Colombia and México, armed movements organized to fight against national political elites supported by the United States were active (see Regalado 2007: 145).

Contemporaneous with financial globalization – an era inaugurated by U.S. President Richard M. Nixon's August 15th 1971 decision to unilaterally renege on international commitments entered into in 1944 at the Bretton Woods Monetary and Financial Conference – the tenor and logic of the “invitation from powers in the United States” assumed a financial guise. The Bretton Woods conference had been convened, in the light of the 1930s economic depression, to manage post-war international trading relationships under the auspices of the U.S.\$, valued at 35\$ per ounce of gold. as the international standard of value.

In 1971, for the first time since before World War I, the United States suffered a balance of trade deficit. Under the Bretton Woods rules, debtor countries were required to economically adjust to achieve balance-of-payments equilibrium. An eventuality which implied economic austerity and severe recession in the United States and with labour unrest, political radicalization consequent on the Vietnam War and the rebellion by black youth in the cities, this option was politically impossible. The alternative, reducing the surplus of dollars in the international economy by either/or – accepting defeat in Vietnam and reducing spending on the war: reducing foreign investment and debilitating U.S. influence in the world in general and control over the Americas in particular – could not be countenanced. And President Richard Nixon removed the “gold peg”, the guarantee of the value of the \$ and the marker for currency valuations around

the world, which had been the lynch pin in international currency transactions according to the “Bretton Woods” rules for the previous quarter century. Hitherto the value of currencies (and necessarily national interest rates) “floated” with the ebb and flow of supply and demand for particular monies. Economies could no longer be endogenously managed to meet local political priorities (by adjusting domestic interest rates) but had to adjust to the exogenous, speculative, exigencies of international finance.

Of course the post-1971 globalized world has been characterized by other profound changes: following developments in the electrical and materials industries, in 1971 in Santa Clara, California, Intel introduced the microprocessor, heralding cheap practical computing; and the creation of the Internet and investments in satellite and cable networks, the concomitant evolution of production processes, transport systems and marketing strategies; revolutions in occupations and lifestyles; and changes in social demographics – globally transformed everyday life (see, Reich 2009: Chapters 2 and 6, and Hobsbawm 2008: Chapters 1 and 4).

However, the change in the relations which structure international trade within a global division of labour, an adjustment which reconfigured the parameters of United States intervention in the Americas, can be pinpointed to decisions taken on August 15th 1971 by Richard Nixon. Henceforth the logic of U.S. hegemony in Latin America would be financial rather than political.

The focus of development thinking and economic decision making shifted from Ministries of the Economy and politicians. Central banks and economists now operated the levers of regulation, and monetary policy (finance) rather than

fiscal policy (economic management and government spending) became the touchstone of development.

To take advantage of the “freedoms” of the globalized international economy, U.S. President George H. Bush proposed the “Enterprise for the Americas” initiative (June 1990). The establishment of a competitive “free market” zone from “Alaska to Tierra del Fuego” would consolidate United States economic hegemony: a return to James Blaine’s 1889 agenda of ensuring that Our America was subservient to the economic pretensions of United States’ capitalists and remain in the “back-yard” of the Other America.

The first step in this process was the inauguration on 1st January 1994 of the North American Free Trade Association [NAFTA]: an agreement between Mexico, Canada and the U.S.A. Presented as an initiative to increase trade and regional development within competitive markets, initially, in 1995, U.S./Mexican trade increased by 23%, but total output in Mexico fell by 7% (see Greider 1997, 270-3). “Real wages *fell* on … all three sides … In Mexico, labourer’s pay per hour dropped 40% in the first seven years … [while] in all three nations productivity [and profits] *rose…*” (Palast 2007, 306, emphasis added). The NAFTA was “…an agreement for the rich and powerful in the United States, Mexico and Canada [the Other America], an agreement effectively excluding ordinary people [Our America]…” (Castañeda 1995: 69).

Subsequently, the second step was taken in December 1994, at the First Summit of the Americas of the Organization of American States, in Miami. The agenda was to negotiate to establish *La Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas* [ALCA] (The Free Trade Area of the Americas [FTAA]). “Our objective is to guarantee our national business control of a territory that stretches from

the Arctic to the Antarctic, and the free access, without difficulties, for our products, services, technology and capital throughout the hemisphere.” (U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, cited in Cockcroft 2004:6, author’s translation). But negotiations for the establishment of ALCA stalled in 2003, and the November 2005 “Summit of the Americas” in Mar del Plata (Argentina), intended to re-start negotiations, ended without any agreement or final communiqué.

However, the hegemonic agenda of the Other America has been prosecuted by other means: financial contagion and the promotion of representative democracy.

After the price of oil quadrupled in the 1970s to nearly US\$12 per barrel, petro-dollar surpluses burgeoned and were deposited with international banks, a major portion of which was “recycled” as loans to Latin American governments. Subsequently, in an effort to stave off price inflation in the US economy, domestic interest rates were increased, an increment which through the institutions of global finance simultaneously augmented the cost of international lending, and the indebtedness of Latin American countries mushroomed. The ‘debt crisis’ ensued when, in August of 1982, Mexico’s Finance Minister Jesus Silva-Herzog declared that foreign debt obligations could no longer be honored.

In response, commercial banks reduced or halted new lending in Latin America and refused to refinance billions of dollars of short-term loans. And in the last two decades of the 20th century, every Latin American economy with the exception of Cuba was “structurally adjusted” (see below) by the WB and the IMF to preserve the integrity of global financial markets (euphemistically justified as “debt relief”).

The conditions attached to new loans to repay existing debts became known as the “Washington Consensus”. Governments were required to liberalize domestic economies, by: reducing fiscal deficits through restricting social spending (on education, health, social services, etc...); moderating taxation (to act as an “incentive” to private investment); allowing interest rates and exchange rates to be competitive (to encourage foreign investment, export production, trade liberalization and competition); among other measures (see, Williamson 1990: Chapter 2).

However, to be effective in consolidating the cultural hegemony of the Other America, the financial agenda of the Washington Consensus had to be politically buttressed by the promotion of national polities conforming to the, supposed, libertarian principles of “representative democracy”.

The economics of liberalized markets and the politics of “one person one vote majority rule” meant that governance did not have to be structured around inalienable *social* rights. Inequality and disadvantage were rationalized as either a consequence of individuals’ personal inadequacies, or, the political environment was adverse to private enterprise, profitability, and market relations of exchange: imperialism in the age of globalization ‘...is about the struggle for hegemony ... rather than struggles for direct control over territory.’ (Harvey 2010: 212).

Consequently, in 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was created. The remit of the NED was to grant funds to political parties and the business community in order to promote representative democracy and free markets (on the antecedents of the NED from 1945, see Agee 2005). The NED website claims to have made “...hundreds of grants each year to support

prodemocracy groups in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and the former Soviet Union." (see NED 2009). For a list of 137 grants made in 2007, to organizations in, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba. Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Venezuela, and the region as a whole, see <http://www.ned.org/grants/07programs/grants-lac07.html#regional>.

"Pro-democracy" as an approach to interfering in the affairs of sovereign nations in the Americas was first applied in Nicaragua. In July 1979 the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) deposed the U.S. backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza Debayle. The establishment of representative democracy in Nicaragua, eschewing the socialist ambitions of the FSLN became a major priority for the United States government. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] and Argentine Intelligence, with U.S. funding, unified anti-Sandinista forces into the Contras, officially known as the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (*Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense*, FDN). From 1982 to 1988, based in Honduras, the FDN attacked purely civilian targets, and through murder, rape, beatings, kidnapping and disruption of harvests sought to undermine social cohesion. However, the more important tactic was the creation of an alternative cultural and political process which would promote the interests of the Other America by encouraging free enterprise and competitive exchange within a representative, democratic, political agenda.

After 1983, the National Endowment for Democracy was mandated to channel funds and direct the development of a political opposition movement in Nicaragua, that could triumph at the polls (see, Robinson W. 1992). When the electoral campaign began in autumn of 1989 for the elections of February 1990,

the new Bush administration assigned \$9 million to the NED to create a National Opposition Union (*Unión Nacional Opositora* – UNO): a front which would unify the right-wing opposition movement. “The total amount that the United States invested in the Nicaraguan electoral campaign of 1989-90 has never officially been revealed, but has been estimated at more than \$20 million.” (Agee 2005). And on February 25th Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of the UNO won 54.73% of the vote in the presidential elections.

Subsequently the NED was prominent in a program of political intervention/subversion in Venezuela (along with the Department of State, the Agency for International Development, the Central Intelligence Agency, the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the Centre for International Private Enterprise, and the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, see Agee 2005).

On October 29th 2001 President Hugo Chávez appeared on national (Venezuelan) television, deplored the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan and the “war on terror” declared by U.S. President George W. Bush. And, subsequently, the NED quadrupled its spending in Venezuela (Golinger 2007: 35): “In the face of growing concerns of *democratic backsliding* … [the NED] expanded its program … to include support for a wide variety of democratic civil and political organizations…” (NED 2001, emphasis added). A \$340,000 grant was made to the International Republican Institute (IRI) to strengthen political opposition and as part of this initiative Mike Collins, former press secretary of the U.S. Republican Party, offered training session on communication strategies, sessions which addressed the reporting on politicians and political movements from a right-wing, free-market, point of view (see, Golinger 2007: Chapter 4).

When on April 12th 2002 President Chávez was temporally removed from office by a United States inspired coup, the IRI applauded ‘...the bravery of civil society leaders ... in their struggle to restore genuine democracy to their country...’ (IRI President George Folsom, quoted Golinger 2007: 44). But the coup plotters only remained “in power” for 47 hours. Key sectors of the military and parts of the anti-Chávez movement refused to back the new regime of Pedro Carmona (then president of the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers of Commerce). The surrounding of the Miraflores presidential palace by tens of thousands of *Chavistas*, and the retaking of the Miraflores palace by the Presidential Guard without firing a shot, lead to the collapse of the Carmona government and the re-installation of Chávez as president.

Upon news of Chávez's return to power, Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Advisor for U.S. President George W. Bush, hoped that Chávez would take “...advantage of this opportunity to right his own ship, which has been moving, frankly, in the wrong direction for quite a long time.” (see, Tucker 2002). Bush denied any involvement of the U.S. government in the coup attempt, although it was generally known, and the *Observer* newspaper reported that, the ‘...failed coup in Venezuela was closely tied to senior officials in the US government.’ (see Vulamy, 2002).

In June 2002, just two months later, Development Alternatives Incorporated of Bethesda [USA] was awarded a contract to open the “Office for Transition Initiatives” to manage some \$7 million dollars destined for some 533 organizations, political parties, programs and projects in Venezuela which were deemed to be favourable to Washington (see Golinger 2009).

Eight years later the Other America remained belligerent in Venezuela: the USAID/NED budget to fund groups geared towards “regime change” (a euphemism for representative democracy) in 2010 reached nearly \$15 million, double the figure for 2009 (see Whitney 2009).

In the tradition of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, “pro-democracy initiatives” of the Other America to subvert and destabilize governments which challenge United States supremacy were also visited upon Haiti.

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a reformist priest, was originally elected as President in 1991, only to be ousted eight months later in a C.I.A. orchestrated coup. Finally, in 1994, Washington restored Aristide to the presidency on the condition that development policy rigidly followed neo-liberal, free-market, imperatives. And U.S. troops were stationed in Haiti for the remainder of his term to ensure compliance (see Blum 2010). He remained in office until 1996, and was re-elected for the period 2001-2004.

In 2000 he wrote...

“Can we create a more just global economic order, can we tackle the inequalities that mark our age? ... [I]t is possible. But one thing is certain, to get there we have to take some risks. We will have to assume them. And to assume risks takes faith. If you cannot cross the visible to what you cannot yet see, you will be stuck in doubts, pessimism, and defeatism. Faith arms you to believe and to assume risks.”

Aristide 2000: 76 and 77.

Such faith is an appreciation and expectation of human potentials, through which people learn from the past, today, to create a better world, tomorrow. Or,

as José Martí observed, “...the power of judgement and the weapon of the human mind will conquer all others...” (Martí 1891a, author’s translation, quoted above).

Perhaps, not surprisingly, in February 2004, democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was again escorted by United States military personal to an airfield and flown out of Port-au-Prince on a United States plane, and an interim government led by Prime Minister Gérard Latortue (who had been brought back from the U.S.), and pro-U.S. President Boniface Alexandre, was installed. The IRI had been instrumental in building a “Democratic Convergence” which was “...elemental in provoking ... ongoing tension and violence ... eventually leading to the illegal and violent overthrow of President Aristide.” (Golinger 2007: 42). On the history of U.S./Haiti relations, and Aristide’s refusal to liberalize the economy and privatize state-owned enterprises, see Klein 2005, and Chossudovsky 2010.

More widely in Latin America, and according to a 2007 BBC survey, ‘...64% of Argentines, 57% of Brazilians, 53% of Mexicans and 51% of Chileans had “mainly negative” views of the United States ‘...and it was hoped that Barack Obama’s accession to the forty fourth Presidency of the United States on January 20th 2009 would seriously attempt to set a “...new tone of respect...” working towards a “...peaceful, prosperous, and democratic hemisphere...” (see FPF 2009). The hope was that a line would be drawn under the foreign policy of George W. Bush, whose invasion of Iraq and the torture and detention of “enemy combatants” in Guantanamo Bay was evocative of the ubiquitous U.S. interventions in Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Obama's inaugural address to the United States Congress spoke of the U.S. being a "...friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity..." (see NYT 2009). And on April 19th, at the 5th Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain (Trinidad), the first hemispheric forum for President Barack Obama to engage with leaders from across Latin America and the Caribbean, the foreign policy principles of his administration were outlined. The importance of democratic practices as a universal value was emphasised and he declared that the United States would no longer support the violent overthrow of democratically elected leaders.

Then, less than two months later on June 28th, the democratically elected president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, was escorted in the early hours of the morning, in his pyjamas, by troops and deported in a plane which flew from a U.S. airbase to Costa Rica.

The coup leader Roberto Micheletti ordered a series of draconian measures against Zelaya's supporters (see, COFADEH 2009) and installed a government of allies and cronies. Significantly, Honduras had become a member of the Bolivarian Alliance of the People's for Our America, and Zelaya was deposed on the eve of a non-binding plebiscite (referendum) on the election of a constituent assembly, to convene in November, to rewrite the constitution and rule on the demand for agrarian reform. If successful this initiative would have irrevocably changed the political and economic environment in Honduras towards the social needs of the impoverished masses (Our America) and against major land owners and foreign agri-business transnationals and the comprador bourgeoisie engaged in trade with the United States (the Other America).

President Zelaya was also expected to demand that United States forces leave the Soto Cano airbase, where 500 American troops were permanently based less than 65 miles from the capital Tegucigalpa.

International condemnation of the coup was near universal and, regionally, the new regime became a pariah.

President Obama denounced the coup as illegal and called for Mr. Zelaya's restoration to power, but US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was less forthright, and proposed that Costa Rican president Oscar Arias act as a mediator in discussions between the illegitimate government of Roberto Micheletti and the elected president Manuel Zelaya. Under the Honduran constitution presidents can only serve one term, and the Clinton strategy was an effort to delay any restitution of Zelaya until the presidential election due on 29th of November (which CNN News reported on November 15th would be "... recognized by the United States with or without the reinstatement [of Zelaya] ...").

On the 21st of September Zelaya slipped back into the capital of Honduras, Tegucigalpa, taking refuge in the Brazilian embassy. By the 30th October a deal had been brokered for Zelaya, under the "Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord" (see, <http://hondurascoup2009.blogspot.com/>), to participate in a "Government of Unity and National Reconciliation": a power-sharing deal which collapsed within a week when the terms of the agreement were unilaterally abrogated by Michelotti with the active connivance of Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in Washington. The *Washington Post* of November 12th reported that "...both Honduran officials and U.S. lawmakers are blaming American missteps for ... the failure".

The November election returned Porfirio Lobo Sosa, who was inaugurated on January 27 2010, and the Other America was once more triumphant in Honduras

In Paraguay, for fear of “...an ouster similar to the one that befell ... Zelaya...” (Agence France-Presse, November 6th, quoted Rozoff 2009), President Fernando Lugo replaced the nations top military commanders, who had previously been trained at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC or WHINSEC), formerly the School of the Americas [*Escuela de las Américas*], at Fort Benning, Columbus, Georgia (U.S.A.). And for similar reasons Nicaragua had expelled a Dutch European parliamentarian who was reported to be in Managua to gauge how the military “...felt about attempting a Coup d’etat...” (Radio Netherlands, reported in Rozoff 2009).

Also, following the refusal by Ecuador to renew an agreement which gave the United States access to its Manta airbase – the lease expired in November 2009 – President Álvaro Uribe Vélez of Colombia agreed to the “Supplemental Agreement for Cooperation and Technical Assistance and Security Between the Governments of the United States and the Republic of Colombia” (SACTA) on October 30th, 2009. The SACTA agreement allows United States military forces to use seven air force and naval bases and army installations in Colombia, and to access all Colombian territory for military purposes. The agreement also includes a proviso that U.S. military personnel have diplomatic immunity from prosecution. SACTA was near unanimously rejected by South American governments. What particularly disturbed other Latin American authorities was that access to these military installations would give U.S. Southern Command (SouthCom) ‘...air mobility reach on the South American continent...’ and ‘...

nearly half of the continent can be covered by a C-17 [aircraft] without refuelling...' (Lindsay-Poland 2009). A US-air force document stated that an increased military presence was necessary to combat '...the constant threat from anti-U.S. governments in the region...' and that the bases would be used for '...full-spectrum military operations improving the capacity of US forces to execute *expedient warfare* in Latin America...' (see Whitney 2009, emphasis added).

Fidel Castro in one of his "Reflections", published by the Cuban News Agency on the 6th November, described this agreement as an '...annexation of Colombia to the United States ... that turns Colombia into an overseas territory...'. Also, the Russian Information Agency (September 27th 2009) reported that Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli and U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton had reached preliminary agreement on U.S. access to four air and naval bases (see Rozoff 2009). And as part of this military buildup in the Americas, the United States recommissioned the U.S. Navy Fourth Fleet, disbanded in 1950, to patrol the Caribbean Sea, and the waters off Central and South America.

On January 12th 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti causing an unfolding humanitarian crisis. It is estimated that up to 200,000 were killed, with the survivors desperately in need of clean water, shelter and medical help. Haiti has a long history of U.S. military intervention and occupation '...that has contributed to the destruction of Haiti's national economy and the impoverishment of its population...' (Chossudovsky 2010a) and has been under foreign military occupation since the U.S. sponsored military coup and abduction of President Aristide in February 2004. The international relief effort,

without any negotiation between the two governments, was the justification for Washington to bring in an additional 10,000 troops, and the control of Port au Prince airport was taken over by the U.S. Air Force, which became a military base, blocking various aid missions from entering the country in order to serve Washington's logistic agenda. The post-February 2004 "peacekeeping" contingent is now more than 20,000. The island of Hispaniola, which includes Haiti and the Dominican Republic, is a gateway to the Caribbean basin, strategically located between Cuba to the North West and Venezuela to the South. The militarization of the island, with the establishment of US military bases, is not only intended directly to put political pressure on Cuba and Venezuela it is also part of the "full-spectrum" military preparations to improve the capacity of US forces "to execute expedient warfare in Latin America".

In addition to this military agenda within Haiti, post-earthquake reconstruction will not be based on mobilizing local resources to rehabilitate State institutions, education, health care and essential public services. A United States/IMF/World Bank, Washington Consensus style, reconstruction programme, will be financed by loans to pay foreign investors, especially in construction, mining and security, and the '*...entire national economy is slated to be handed over to foreign capital.*' (Chossudovsky 2010, emphasis in original). 'Haiti is sleepwalking towards a debt crisis...' (*Observer* 31st January 2010), although Venezuela has written-off a \$295 million debt.

And there is another, perhaps less immediately obvious reason for United States interest in one of the poorest nations of the world. 'Behind the smoke, rubble and unending drama of human tragedy in the hapless Caribbean country, a drama is in full play for control of what geophysicists believe may be

one of the world's richest zones for hydrocarbons-oil and gas outside the Middle East, possibly orders of magnitude greater than that of nearby Venezuela.' (Engdahl 2010). Haiti straddles one of the most active geological zones in the world, where three tectonic deepwater plates constantly interact. Such regions of convergence are commonly areas where vast volumes of gas and oil can be pushed up through the earth's mantle.

In June 2010 the *Miami Herald* reported that the Obama administration, through the State Department, released a further \$15 million to fund "pro-democracy" civil society groups in Cuba. However, tellingly, \$2.6 million set aside for Alan Gross, an ex-volunteer field organizer for Barack Obama's presidential campaign and Washington-based social worker, sent to Cuba to distribute communications equipment to Jewish dissident organizations, was blocked by the U.S. Congress. Gross, an "independent business and economic development consultant", hired by Development Alternatives, Inc., a State Department contractor working under a \$8.6 million contract from the Agency for International Development, was arrested in December 2009 for the illegal distribution of sophisticated satellite communications equipment and involvement in United States sponsored espionage activities.

U.S. complicity in right-wing political ambitions in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Haiti, Honduras and Cuba, and the concern over United States capacity to "execute expedient warfare" has prompted South American nations to arm themselves in defense of national sovereignty. The October 8th edition of Venezuelananalysis.com reports that Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and Brazil have purchased arms from Sweden, Russia and France to guard against

U.S. support for numerous military groups. It is also reported (see Rozoff 2009) that Nicaragua and Ecuador have purchased Russian military equipment.

'It is clear that the Obama administration is in no hurry to break with the methods used by its predecessors.' (Toussaint 2010). There has been no fundamental break with past U.S. foreign policy. The strategic imperatives remain unchanged: "the invitation from powers in the United States to extend their control over the Americas" continues unabated.

Our America Resurgent

At the unpropitious ALCA negotiations at the November 2005 "Summit of the Americas" in Mar del Plata (Argentina), when, after two decades of rising poverty, unemployment and inequality promoted by the Washington Consensus; opposition to neo-liberalism from global mass movements in Seattle, Genoa, the World Social Forum, and elsewhere; Third World governments refusal of the further deregulation of the world economy at the Doha round of trade talks at the WTO; regional opposition to ALCA organized by the *Alianza Social Continental* [Hemispheric Social Alliance] of trade unions, social movements, and indigenous, environmental and citizens' organizations – 30 mass movements from 19 countries organized into 18 regional networks (see HSC 1999 and Saguir 2007) – it became politically impossible for the representatives of governments in the Americas to reach agreement on the ALCA initiative. 'In the future, we will speak of US-Latin American relations in terms of the era before Mar del Plata, and the era after it...' remarked President Hugo Chávez in his weekly televised, political "talk show", *Aló Presidente*.

The ALCA negotiations, the second step in the June 1990 “Enterprise for the Americas” initiative of the Other America (see above), began at the December 1994 First Summit of the Americas of the Organization of American States, in Miami. Also in December 1994, in Havana, Fidel Castro met Hugo Chávez (to become President of Venezuela in 1998) for the first time. ‘Chávez ... spoke with passion and depth about the program of the Bolivarian Revolution [in Venezuela], and the possibility of realizing the dream of [Simón] Bolívar ... *the union of [Latin] America...*’ (Elizalde and Báez 2005, 47, author’s translation, emphasis added). “The invitation from powers in the United States to extend their control over the Americas” in the guise of NAFTA and ALCA and the threat of expedient warfare, was to be challenged by the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and the Caribbean – ALBA.

With the instigation of ALBA, Simón Bolívar’s and José Martí’s nineteenth century insights, that progress in the Americas was contingent on regional self-determination for the peoples of Our America in a spirit of cooperation, human dignity and solidarity, were to be realized. The first official declaration and subsequent agreement made under the framework of ALBA was signed between Cuba and Venezuela in Havana on December 14th, 2004.

Subsequently (and at the time of writing, June 2010) Bolivia joined April 29th 2006, Nicaragua January 11th 2007, Dominica January 26th 2008, Honduras August 26th 2008 (although after the coup of June 28th 2009 which deposed the democratically elected President Manual Zelaya, the United States backed right-wing regime of Roberto Micheletti withdrew from ALBA – see above), and St Vincent and the Grenadines, Ecuador and, Antigua and Barbuda June 24th 2009.

And at the IVth Extraordinary Summit in June 2009, convened to receive St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Ecuador, and Antigua and Barbuda, into the ALBA fold, the name was modified to the *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América* [Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America], reflecting that this integration process was no longer a theoretical proposal, but ‘...a geopolitical, regional, platform of economic power ... embracing eighty million people, with an annual product of six hundred million dollars and reserves of gas, petroleum, water and fertile land...’ (Chávez 2009).

The various, institutional, components of ALBA additionally incorporate: Argentina, Brazil, Belize, Grenada, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, The Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Colombia, Paraguay and Uruguay. General, regional needs are addressed, including: petroleum [PETROSUR, PETROCARIBE, PETROANDINA]; information and media [TELESUR]; education [*Universidad del Sur*]; international credit [*Banco del ALBA*]; health initiatives [*Operación Milagro* to regionally address ophthalmic problems, and medical schools in Havana and Caracas to train doctors]; a plan for regional natural gas distribution [*GasDucto del Sur*]. And there are various regional cultural initiatives; the ALBA Games of the 29th April 2007, in which 4,400 athletes, in 45 sports, from 31 countries competed in 9 Venezuelan states; the Cultural Fund of ALBA, promoting cultural relations between Cuba and Venezuela, and the process to extend this collaboration to Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia; etcetera.

Member (as opposed to participating) countries of the ALBA initiative continue to remain active participants in a range of other Latin American regional

integration initiatives: Central American Common Market – CACM; Caribbean Community and Common Market – CARICOM; *Comunidad Andina de Naciones* – CAN [Community of Andean Nations]; *Mercado Común del Sur* – MERCOSUR [Southern Common Market]; *Grupo de Rio* [Rio Group]; *Plan Puebla Panamá - PPP* [Puebla-Panama Plan]; and the *Unión de Naciones Suramericanas - UNASUR* [Union of South American Nations].

The project of “*alba*” – the word translates as: “dawn of day, day-spring” (Velásquez Spanish and English Dictionary) – is more encompassing than the intergovernmental, institutional, integration initiatives, which constitute ALBA. The process of *alba* implies the dawning of a (non-capitalist) regional, social, consciousness (see Cole 2008). The ALBA/*alba* initiative is ‘...a geo-economic, geo-political, social, cultural and ideological space *that is in construction...*’ (Hugo Chávez, at the 6th Summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America, January 30th 2008, quoted, Janicke 2008, emphasis added).

“There is no way of overestimating the challenge that the emergence of ALBA and the overall reawakening of Latin American [Our America] pose to the role that the U.S. [the Other America] abrogates to itself as Lord of the entire Western Hemisphere.”

Rozoff 2009.

According to the President of the ALBA Governing Council, Carmen Jacqueline Giménez Tellería, the agenda of ALBA, the promotion and development of ‘...a peaceful democratic culture focusing on integration in Latin America and the Caribbean...’ intended to eradicate extreme poverty, combat corruption, eliminate discrimination for reasons of gender or race, and to educate and generate employment, will be effected ‘...through exchanges of ideas and [the]

implementation of social, economic and cultural development projects...’(see Tellería 2006, emphasis added).

A restatement of José Martí’s prescient observation, that: “*Knowing is what counts.*”

To be able to understand we have to examine reality; the most credible source of truth comes from our own existence; that is our experience; we have to learn to observe in order to create; we have to think about our experience; that is we have to *reflect*.

Marti, 2001: 362, emphasis added, authors’ translation.

And reflection on the experience of existence implies that people appreciate and understand the social parameters of their personal ambitions: to this end ‘...one must go on a crusade *to reveal to men their own natures*, and give them, with plain and practical scientific knowledge, the *personal independence* that fortifies a man’s kindliness and gives rise to pride and decency of being an amiable creature living in the great universe.’ (Martí 1894: 47, emphasis added).

Fundamental to Martí’s philosophy of liberation is “personal independence”: it is a process in which men come to know *themselves*, crucial to which is knowledge and education: ‘Being cultured is the only way to be free.’ (Martí 1894: 47). People will understand the experience of their existence as they appreciate other people, and such an awareness can be effected by an army of *maestros ambulantes* [wandering teachers], who would culturally unite Our America “in spirit and intent” through a literacy programme, by which individuals would come to appreciate “their own natures” (see, Keeble 2001).

Knowledge and progress

The process of human cognition, the power of ideas, the significance of the mind, and whether or not psychological states are also material conditions corresponding to human potentials, have been thought of and written about at least since the time of Plato [427-347 B.C] and Aristotle [384-332 B.C.] (see, Sellars 1997). In recent times archaeological research into the history of evolution over the past 7 million years (see, Cochran and Harpending 2009, Coolidge and Wynn 2009, De Wall 2009a, Diamond 1993 and 2005, Dunbar 2004, Gould 2005, Gribben 1993, Olson 2002, and Zimmer 2003), and biological and neurological investigation into the development of the human mind from the primate brain (see, Capra 1997, Damasio 1999, De Waal 2009b, Donald 2001, Frith 2007, Hauser 2006, Hodgson 1993, Horgan 1999, Jaynes 1976, Jones 1996, Lehrer 2009, Levins and Lewontin 1985, Lewontin and Levins 2007, Mithen 2005, Rose 2003 and 2005, Rose, Kamin and Lewontin 1984, Tallis 2008, Wells and McFadden 2006, and Zeki 2009) have demystified esoteric debates about phenomena common to body and soul: the evolutionary imperative of the human race has been revealed as an affinity in individuals' appreciation of experience, within and between the various cultural parameters of social existence: *knowing is what counts*.

All creatures, to survive, have to adapt to the environment of their existence. Humans, as quintessentially social beings who self-consciously exist within a division of labour, have to accommodate themselves to *social relations* of existence, which are the conditioning circumstances of individuals' experience.

An awareness of the abstract reality of people's attitudes to, and relations between, each other, and an appreciation and acceptance of human diversity is

an evolved capacity. Over the past seven million years or so, since we shared a primate ancestor with chimpanzees, the human mind has evolved from the primate brain. We still share 98.4% of DNA [deoxyribonucleic acid which contains the genetic instructions for the development and functioning of all known living organisms] with chimpanzees. That is, the human mind is enabled by, but not reducible to, a fundamentally primate brain.

In this seven million year interregnum human beings have *socially* evolved.

“We are what we are *because of enculturation*, plain and simple. This is not true of any other species.”

Donald 2001: 151, emphasis added.

There is an evolutionary continuity between animals which are *conscious* of their surroundings, and human beings, who have a *consciousness of their very being*. All animals are aware of the environmental circumstances of their existence and behave appropriately to survive: for humans the conditions of that survival are *social relations* of existence. Human beings differentiate themselves from other members of their species. We take cognizance of *other people's intentions*. Instinctively we become aware of others' perceptions of the opportunities and frustrations of life, and of their ambitions and fears for personal achievement. Such a self-conscious appreciation of experience ‘... announces the dawn of individual forethought.’ (Damasio 1999: 25).

Emerging out of East Africa around one hundred and twenty thousand years ago, the species *homo sapiens*, modern human beings, developed symbolic communication (language), and therefore the possibility of a collective memory and culture, around 80,000 years later. The subsequent evolution of culture and

abstract thought and the capacity for self-conscious individuals to survive by *thinking about each other* within *cognitive communities*, has been the most significant stage in the evolution from our primate progenitor. Diverse experiences, perceptions, ideas and ambitions came to be shared. And knowledge and enculturation, the fusion of cognition/comprehension with consciousness/intuition, became the dynamic of human evolution as individuals instinctively learnt to cooperate to create, improve and secure their well-being. The “...human mind is a frighteningly clever beast. Its *intuitive power is astonishing.*” (Donald 2001: 156, emphasis added).

Human intelligence, as in other mammals, is isomorphic with conscious experience: that is, awareness of existence is a rationalization of people’s actual lives. While on the one hand individuals (as primates) sensuously and intuitively, analogically appreciate the exigencies of material life, on the other, (as human beings) such information becomes conjecture, as people symbolically interpret life’s events within a conception of social existence and beliefs about other individuals’ motives and intentions.

“Humans thus bridge two worlds. We are hybrids, half analogizers, with direct experience of the world, and half symbolizers, embedded in a cultural web.”

Donald 2001: 157.

Human beings are aware of themselves embedded *within* this cultural web. “The human being is ... an animal which can individuate itself *only in the midst of society.*” (Marx 1973: 84, emphasis added). Individuals’ self-awareness and personal identity, is a matrix of the social relations which are the parameters of their survival. Individual experience and social existence are distinct, but

interdependent, dimensions of human reality: personal experience only becomes relevant and meaningful, when subjectively juxtaposed to an understanding of the possibilities of social existence: yet that understanding of existence is a rationalization of experience.

This is the *dialectic* of the human mind.

Objective (social) reality is always (individually) subjectively defined: there is a symbolic, emotional, social appreciation, of analogical, perceptions of experience, and this distinguishes the human mind from the primate brain.

The emotional component of the survival stratagems of social animals coordinates action and movement. Danger is met with a collective response and individuals communicate about sources of sustenance, etc., ‘...individuals strike up regular relationships with other individuals that feature the giving of goods such as food or the giving of services such as social support ... I scratch your back, you scratch mine.’ (Robert Wright, commented on in De Waal 2009: 85).

For human beings, who exist within an extensive division of labour, the adaption of behaviour to address the needs and intentions of others reaches far beyond face-to-face, group interaction: as a species, people’s backs are etched with the patterns of remote relationships. And the social mores and individual attitudes that structure (distant) inter-personal relationships become embedded within impartial, general and disinterested, *ethical principles*.

The moral precepts of human existence abstract from particular experiences: social relations conform to common rules and collective standards. This “... moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals.” (Charles Darwin, quoted De Waal 2009: 143).

However, it still remains, ultimately, that the human mind symbolically interprets *personal experience* to understand and conceptualize social existence. In this the mind is enabled by the (primate) brain which sensuously appreciates that experience: this is the *feeling* of existence. Individual feelings can only partially reflect wider social existence, a limitation which is particularly prescient in a globalized world in which billions of people interact, compete and cooperate to produce their survival.

With human progress and the advance of individuals' social potentials, the "cognitive community" of existence and the social division of labour deepens and widens. People increasingly specialise, which both augments efficiency in (social) production and (individually) vents particular skills and talents. To cooperate and yet realize personal ambitions, individuals must appreciate their own and others' needs and limitations, and institutionally organize themselves to achieve some form of consensus which eschews political marginalization and social exclusivity.

That is, a "powerful idea" of social evolution "waved before the world at the appropriate time" alters human beings' consciousness, socially redefining and changing individuals' lives.

'We can now speed and alter the evolution [progress] of our species at unprecedented rates and effectiveness ... Consciousness puts us in the ... position of *being the only species* that can directly affect the components of both its individual and species-level fitness [well-being].'

Stephen Jay Gould, quoted McGarr and Rose 2007:234, emphasis added.

In such an evolutionary process, individuals vicariously appreciate the social world beyond personal experience and cooperate to change (global) society in the social interest. In this the role of political leadership is crucial, to both: animate citizens to create the institutions which enable consensual, decision making; and, to be an intellectual catalyst, engendering a consciousness of social existence which encompasses the diversity of human experience.

The exigencies of development in human progress

Such a progressive, evolutionary agenda can only be achieved *through* development. Progress is an epochal, species level, evolutionary concept, whereas development is contingent on the political parameters of social organization defined in historical time.

And in Latin America, over the past five centuries, the overriding political reality, within which an often illiterate, relatively uninformed and uneducated population has had to make sense of, has been tyranny: sixteenth century Spanish and Portuguese colonial dominion, and later, nineteenth and twentieth century, imperialist exploitation.

More recently, in the final decades of the twentieth century when development was driven by the imperative of the “structural adjustment” policies mandated by the Washington Consensus, and restrictions were lifted on foreign ownership, state utilities and industries were privatized, taxation was lowered, trade unions were weakened, and social welfare benefits, education and health provision were severely reduced, Latin America was plunged [in the 1980s] ‘...into its deepest crisis this [20th] century ... Deregulated economies ... synonymous with unprecedented social polarization ... plummeting living standards ... and

multi-billion dollar fortunes ... [led to the] massive pillage of the economy (by foreign and local investors and bankers) and the state (by elected politicians and non-elected officials).' (Petras and Morley 1992: 7).

The 1980s became a "lost decade": average per capita income in Latin America declined by 0.9% per annum in the 1980s and by 1.5% in the 1990s (see, Robinson W. 2008); and between 1983 and 1992 the overall number of people living in poverty increased from 78 to 150 million (see Korneniewicz and Smith 2000:8-9).

In Venezuela tens of thousands of people protested IMF-mandated austerity measures enforced by President Carlos Andes Perez; in Argentina there were prolonged strikes against the Carlos Menem regime; similarly in Brazil people protested through extended industrial action and widespread social unrest against the policies of the supposedly "centre-left" Social Democratic Party regime of Fernando Collor de Mello which dramatically increased unemployment and lowered the real wage; and in Guatemala, Peru and Chile there were similar rebellions.

Governments coming to power after the 'lost decade' in Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia on a manifestos committed to intervening in competitive markets to arrest encroaching impoverishment, only modified the extremes of neo-liberalism: a development strategy that, at the close of the twentieth century, was '...an unmitigated economic disaster ... around 97 million people, are presently struggling to live on an income of less than a dollar a day. Meanwhile the number of Latin American billionaires has more than quadrupled since the late 1980s.' (Bellamy Foster 2007).

And in the incipient 21st century ‘...[in spite] of more than two decades of democratic governments ... the region faces a growing social crisis. Deep inequalities remain entrenched, serious levels of poverty prevail, economic growth has been insufficient and dissatisfaction with those democracies – manifest in many places by widespread popular unrest – has been growing, often with deeply destabilizing consequences.’ (Caputo 2005).

Such “widespread popular unrest” has included community action against: water privatization [Cochabamba, Bolivia, 2000], banking/peso crisis [Argentina 2001/2], privatization of electricity supply [Arequipa, Peru 2002], etc...

Representative democracies (based upon competitive elections and majority rule) as a political means of realizing citizens potentials and ensuring individuals’ well-being are largely meaningless in a globalized world. State regulation of social existence has assumed an international dimension. ‘The internationalization of the state ... has involved the emergence of truly *supranational* institutions [WB, IMF, WTO, etc.] ... It is not that the nation-state will disappear ... The function of the nation-state is shifting from the formulation of national policies to the administration of policies formulated by ... transnational institutions.’ (Robinson W. 1996: 372 and 373, emphasis in original).

Denied any semblance of democratic control over their lives by the machinations of “formal”, representative, political institutions, people organized themselves into social movements to defend themselves against the (local) effects of (global) economic exploitation. Citizens mobilized to struggle against continuing decline into penury – opposing price rises, protesting the removal of

food subsidies, rebelling against unemployment, landlessness, the privatization of public property, political corruption, etc...

'From the early 1990s ... social movements of very different backgrounds [in Latin America] have been at the forefront of social protest, at the local as well as at the national and supranational level ... there have been impressive mobilizations and campaigns *that cannot be considered as isolated activities*.'

Biekart 2005, emphasis added.

Social movements structure political dissent (rebellion) around *opposition* to the experience of free-trade agreements, privatization of public services, political corruption, and struggle to protect indigenous rights, land entitlements, employment, and the like. However, *social change* and the imagining of alternative modes of existence (revolution), requires organized political solidarity: '...Our America [has] to show itself as it is, *one in spirit and intent...*" (Martí J. 1891: 119, emphasis added).

And gradually resistance has transmogrified into a political process orientated to the building of progressive social environments. As Dominguez (2009: 48-55) notes: the Brazilian Workers' Party [*Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT*] originated in the militant trade unionism of the 1970s; in Bolivia the Movement Towards Socialism [*Movimiento al Socialismo, MAS*] grew out of the *cocalero* union of coca growers; in Ecuador the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities [*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador, CONAIE*] joined the short-lived government of Colonel Lucio Gutiérrez challenging the dollarization of the economy; and in Argentina the *piqueteros* [roadblockers], in Mexico the Zapatistas of Chiapas, in El Salvador the Farabundo Martí National Liberation

Front [*Frent Farabubdo Martí de Liberación, FMLN*], in Nicaragua the Sandanista National Liberation Front [*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN*], in Guatemala, Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity [*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, URNG*], in Venezuela the Fifth Republic Movement [*Movimiento Quinto Republicana*], in Uruguay the Broad Front [*Frente Amplio*] of former Tupamoro guerrillas, trade unionists and left-wing social democrats, and other movements in Paraguay, Chile, Peru, the Dominican Republic, etc... all assumed a positive political presence as the voice of Our America began to be heard.

There has been an ideological sea-change: a political “Pink Tide” has emerged. Social consciousness has evolved to embrace fundamental change, forging solidarity while respecting diversity.

In December 1998 Hugo Chávez, leader of the Fifth Republic Movement, was elected President of Venezuela, a result ratified in regional and national referenda and elections no less than 13 times, up until a referendum was narrowly lost in December 2007. However, in the regional and municipal elections at the end of November 2008, Chávez' United Socialist Party increased its vote by 1.1 million over the referendum which had been lost the previous year.

Since December 1998, Bharrat Jagdeo, of the People's Progressive Party, was elected President of Guyana in August 1999; in Brazil, in October 2002, Luiz Ignácio Lula da Silva, of the Workers' Party, was first elected President, and reelected in October 2006; Néstor Carlos Kirchner, of the *Frente para la Victoria* or FPV (Front for Victory), was sworn in as President of Argentina in May 2003; and in October 2007, his wife Cristina Fernández, on essentially the

same political platform, was elected to succeed him; in October 2004 in Uruguay, Tabaré Ramón Vázquez Rosas, of the *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front) coalition, was elected President ending 150 years rule by right wing parties and the military, and in elections of 29th November 2009 he was succeeded by José Mujica, ex-Tupamaro National Liberation Front activist of the 1970s and 80s, also representing the *Frente Amplio*.

Two thousand and six was a momentous year: in January, Evo Morales of the *Movimiento al Socialismo*, or MAS (Movement for Socialism), was elected President of Bolivia, and was re-elected on the 7th December 2009 for the period 2010-2015 with more than 63% of the valid votes; in March, Verónica Michelle Bachelet Jeria, of the Socialist Party, was elected the first female President of Chile; in April, Ollanta Humala, of the Peruvian Nationalist Party, came within 5% of being elected President; in July, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of the Party of Democratic Revolution, lost the election for President of Mexico by less than 1% in a disputed contest; in November José Daniel Ortega Savedra, of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, regained the Presidency of Nicaragua; and also in November, in Ecuador, Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado who founded the *Alianza PAIS-Patria Altiva i Soberana* (Proud and Sovereign Fatherland Alliance) was elected President and reelected in April 2009 in the first round of voting, which is without precedent, with 51.7% of the vote in an electoral contest between four candidates .

In September 2007 Alvaró Colom, leader of the *Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza* (UNE) [National Union of Hope] became Guatemala's first left-leaning president in fifty three years, when he won the presidential race against Otto

Pérez Molina of the *Partido Patriotica* [Patriotic Party] in the second round of the vote (there were 14 candidates in the first round).

In April 2008 Fernando Lugo, a Roman Catholic bishop, of the Christian Democratic Party, a party integrated into a coalition of more than a dozen opposition parties and social movements, known as the Patriotic Alliance for Change, was elected President of Paraguay, ending more than 60 years rule by the right-wing Colorado Party. And on the 16th March 2009, Mauricio Funes of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, a movement which fought a 12 year guerrilla war up until the early 1990s, won the presidential elections in El Salvador.

The issue of state intervention in development – hitherto marginalized in the dominant discourse of neo-liberalism – came to politically occupy centre stage. Presidents and candidates espoused, albeit with different emphases and within distinct contexts, development strategies oriented to advancing the well-being of Our America.

The oppressive politics of the Other America, imposed by covert and overt warfare on the peoples of Our America, has included: ‘...coup d’etats, assassinations, disappearances, torture, brutal dictatorships, atrocities, political persecution, economic sabotage, psychological operations, media warfare, biological warfare, subversion, counterinsurgency, paramilitary infiltration, diplomatic terrorism, blockades, electoral intervention to military invasions...’ (Golinger 2010). But now, according to one observer: ‘The Latins are defying the American Empire’ (Perkins, 2007: 79)..

Our America: the power of the human mind

“Human beings are self-determining – but only on the basis of a deeper dependency on nature, the world and each other. And whatever meaning I may forge for my own life is constrained from the inside by this dependency ... *We are woven through by the meanings of others* – meanings we never get to choose, but which provide the matrix within which we come to make sense of ourselves and the world...”
Eagleton 2008, 76, emphasis added.

In the search for meaning, the human psyche is imprinted with our biological heritage. Human “...brains are primate brains ... human cognition is primate cognition.” (Coolidge and Wynn 2009: 73). We adapt to the *experience* of existence: an existence which is conceptualized by the human mind to give social meaning to the *feeling* of experience. In this sense our minds are intertextured by the sentiments of others into an emotional consciousness, which is the cognitive parameters within which individuals socially cooperate in their communal existence.

Consciousness, the dialectic of the mind, is both the condition for, and the result of, individuals’ appreciation of *each other*: Knowledges of experience and existence are juxtaposed: ‘...the conceiving mind is the real human being and hence the conceived world ... *is the only reality...*’ (Marx 1976:32, emphasis added).

Dialectical thinking to understand citizen’s hopes and fears, and intervene to pose the situations and ask the questions which might reveal to individuals’ the

social parameters which frustrate their ambitions, and evolve their social consciousness, is the *art* of political leadership.

'In this Fidel [Castro] is a master. His own special way of fusing himself with the people can only be appreciated by seeing him in action. At the great public mass meetings one can observe something like the dialogue of two tuning forks whose vibrations interact, producing new sounds. Fidel and the mass begin to vibrate together in a dialogue of growing intensity until they reach the climax in an abrupt conclusion crowned by our cry of struggle and victory. The difficult thing to understand for someone not living through the experience of the revolution is this close dialectical unity between the individual and the mass...'

Guevara 1965: 214/5, emphasis added.

Such an evolving consensus of beliefs, attitudes and feelings, structuring social existence, is the process of *praxis*, which as "...the reflection and action which truly transform[s] reality, is the source of knowledge and creation." (Freire 1972: 77). Crucially, the social properties of moral sentiment and knowledge *between* people – the *human essence* – is '...no abstraction inherent in each single individual ... [it] is the *ensemble of the social relations*.' (Marx K 1972:12, emphasis added): an "ensemble" which renders purposeful human progress and social evolution possible.

Individuals' experience is "woven through by the meanings of others" and is attenuated by the human mind: a mind which can embrace a progressive consciousness when "a powerful idea waved before the world at the appropriate time" excites the imagination as to what is possible. '[T]heory [ideas]...

becomes a material force once it seizes the masses. Theory is capable of seizing the masses once it becomes *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* once it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp matters by the root. *'But for man the root is man himself.'* (Marx 1970: 137, emphasis added).

'... allow me to repeat and reiterate: in the face of sophisticated and destructive arms with which they want to frighten us and impose on us an unjust, irrational and unsustainable, global economic and social order: Sow ideas! Spread ideas! Propagate ideas! Sow the seeds of consciousness! Scatter the seeds of consciousness! Grow the seeds of consciousness!'

Castro 2003: 18, author's translation.

However, human experience is typically '...trapped in a maze of the numbingly mundane, where all that we can see in common from our walled-up, unequal vantage points is a flag fluttering high above and a television fluttering values and news in a darkened, windowless corridor ... [Understanding] requires a training of the imagination that few of us have the time or the natural inclination to cultivate...' (Robinson R. 2005: 133, emphasis in original).

A full awareness of the potential for an alternative existence which transcends the social algorithm of individual choice within competitive markets can only be a product of reflection on the social evolution of human life. Tomorrow was born yesterday: the lessons of historical experience need to be applied to the existential problems of today to reveal innovative possibilities for the future. And in this it is '...imperative to make common cause with the oppressed, in order to secure a new system opposed to the ambitions and governing habits of the oppressors.' (Martí 1891: 116, emphasis added).

Can there be any more profound purpose to progressive political leadership?

Endogenous development and progress into the twenty-first century

Knowledge and understanding is a social process: people's appreciation of experience alters with the shaking of the kaleidoscope of consciousness, which reconfigures the relations of social existence. In this process: '...the first human right is the right to think, the right to believe, the right to live, the right to know, the right to dignity, the right to treated as other human beings, the right to be independent, the right of a people to sovereignty, the right to human dignity' (Castro 2007: 28, author's translation).

Self-fulfilment and personal freedom are integral to the process of social liberation, and the evolution of knowledges and the consciousness of social existence: and in the time of globalisation such a revolution can only be countenanced on an international (regional) scale.

"...like never before we need the ideas of Bolívar and Martí ... in this unipolar world our people are threatened by being devoured by the empire ... destroying our independence and popular sovereignty ... the imperialist strategy is very clear ... to impose a political and economic regime which is convenient to the United States ... [nothing] will remain in Latin American hands ... North American companies will fundamentally control all economic activity ... *[But] if we put the ideas of Bolívar and Martí into practice it will lead to an end to injustice, the end of exploitation... [This] can be called many things ... socialism ... Bolivarianism ... the thought of Martí ... [and] Christianity...*"

Castro 1994: 94, 96, 101, 105, emphasis added.

The “social, cultural and ideological space” that Hugo Chávez insists is ALBA ‘...is the widest possible solidarity between the peoples, untrammelled by nationalisms or individuals’ egos, nor national politics which restricts and negates the objective of constructing the Latin American nation’ (Alterinfos América Latina, 2007, author’s translation).

It is not a regional integration to (quantitatively) *have* more: but to (qualitatively) *be* more: it is a strategy of regional *endogenous development* – it is the development process of Our America.

‘When development is not endogenous the risk is the contradiction with, and disturbing of, traditional cultural and economic way of life of people. Without equality there is injustice which leads to conflict and violence. And without [social] sustainability the natural environment and social structure is threatened.’

Ministerio de Comunicación e Información, 2004, author’s translation.

Exogenous development, the development process of the Other America, organizes social existence according to the imperative of competitive, economic growth as indicated by market prices (which are assumed to be *beyond* social control). This the strategy of ALCA and the logic of the Washington Consensus.

Alternatively the ALBA process, prioritizes: the construction of an economic structure which links production, distribution and consumption; the provision of an efficient local infrastructure; social inclusion and a political and economic agenda of equality; the adoption of sustainable life styles and consumption patterns; the development of new forms of economic and social organization as a permanent process; the construction of “micro” enterprises and cooperatives;

respecting local particularities within national (and regional) potentials; the development of technological alternatives; and the use of natural resources without compromising the ecological well-being of future generations (see Ministerio de Comunicación e Información, 2004).

Endogenous development within an international (regional) context demands that relations between sovereign nations reflect local needs and well-being, taking into account relative productive resources and technical sophistication. Such an integration agenda implies an evolving economic, financial, judicial and political architecture, based upon ethical principles of equality and social inclusion.

Such a process is in motion. At the 3rd Extraordinary ALBA Summit (summoned to evaluate the current global financial crisis from the perspective of the South countries) in November 2008, representatives of the (then) ALBA nations (Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Honduras, Dominica), plus Ecuador, approved a regional unit of account for settling trade imbalances: the SUCRE - *Sistema Unificado de Compensación y Regulación Económica* [Unique System for Regional Compensation]. It is planned that the SUCRE will initially be a “regional unit of account” for trade (a virtual currency), later being coined as the ALBA common currency.

As a “unit of account”, which records trade imbalances within the (socio-political) parameters of regional endogenous development, the value of the SUCRE for any particular country must reflect relative economic development and particular social/national needs. Trade imbalances between countries necessarily produce debtor countries (imports exceed exports), who owe money to creditors (exports exceed imports). And trade, like exchange, is a relation of

(social) interdependence between buyers (demand) and sellers (supply): each party needs the goods or income supplied by the other. Money needs to be recycled from creditor to debtor countries – not as loans or investment but as a reconfiguration of the producer-consumer economic relation of international trade. That is, in the case of the SUCRE, national currencies have a variable exchange rate to the regional, reserve, unit of account, to the advantage of less developed (debtor) nations.

This implies that trade is conducted according to *value* (as measured, endogenously, by the use of productive resources to fulfil human requirements) and not according to *market prices* (which vary, exogenously, with the international supply and demand for commodities): that is trade is for *human need* and not profit, and is *politically* regulated and not subject to the anarchic fluctuation of “market forces”.

Hence, the epiphanic regional integration initiative which is the institution of ALBA and the process of *alba*, is fundamentally an evolving concientisation of the citizenry, which compliments the radical political epiphany in Latin America (the Pink Tide) since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998 .

It is a process which prioritizes:

The struggle against individual poverty and social exclusion;
The need to protect rural *campesinos* from the effects of ruinous subsidies provided for agriculture in the “advanced” economies of the world;
The advancement of rural, agricultural production as a cultural existence based on sustainability and domestic food self-sufficiency;

A policy agenda which prioritizes relieving the poverty of the majority rather than increasing the wealth of the few, addressing the inequalities and asymmetries between nations;

Regional economic relations based upon “equal exchange”, compensating less technologically advanced economies and alleviating unpayable international debt between trading partners;

The sharing of social and technical information and knowledge;

The freeing of the means of information and communication from the private monopoly of the mass media;

Reversing the policies of privatization which have ineluctably placed social services beyond social control;

The creation of institutional and intellectual infrastructure for national and regional participative democratic governance;

Regional support for national, radical, social, economic and political change, being particularly vigilant of external interference (particularly from the United States of America).

“We all have our convictions ... [and we] can all influence each other. In the long run we shall all reach similar conclusions. My deepest convictions [are]: the incredible and unprecedented globalization ... is a product of historical evolution ... Is it a reversible process? ... No ... is it sustainable? No. Will it subsist for long? Absolutely not ... Will it last decades? Yes, only decades ... How will such a transition take place?

We do not know ... Will it be through deep and catastrophic crises? Unfortunately, this is most likely, almost inevitable and it will happen through many different ways and forms of struggle ... Who will be the builders of the new world? The men and women that inhabit our planet. What will be their basic weapon? Ideas will be, and consciousness. Who will sow them, cultivate them and make them invincible? You will. Is it a utopia, just one more dream among so many others? ... As the most visionary of the sons and daughters of this island [José Martí] said: 'Today's dreams are tomorrow's realities.'

Castro 1999: 63.

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