

Latin America and the Anglo-American “Booby-Left”

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“One of the most spectacular developments of this period is occurring in Latin America – For the first time in 500 years, Latin America has taken significant steps toward its liberation from imperial domination”. Noam Chomsky, Magisterial Speech at the Forum for Emancipation and Equality, Buenos Aires, March 14, 2015

Introduction

Numerous prominent progressive US pundits, whose political pronouncements carry great weight in the alternative media, have proclaimed ‘*Latin America’s decisive break*’ with US domination and have gone on to announce the beginning of a new ‘*post-imperial epoch*’.

These claims have little basis in reality to anyone minimally familiar with developments in the region, especially to any observer of the economic and financial foundations and socio-economic class structure of the biggest and most important countries in Latin America.

What can be scientifically classified as the Anglo-American *booby left* (AABL) is a taxonomic category characterized by their impressionistic pronouncements based on the rhetorical flourishes of prominent Latin American leaders and their local ideologues. Needless to say the AABL, speaking *ex cathedra*, are not troubled by deep structural anomalies, which contradict, their flattering orations about the ‘*emancipatory*’ accomplishments of their Latin American hosts. Let it be said that the prestigious reputations, which adorn the invited speakers, does not preclude including them as premier representatives of the AABL.

Only because the prestigious *booby-left* systematically ignores basic economic, social and political conditions in Latin America and conflates cyclical and conjunctional changes with long-term historic transformations, can they speak of the ‘*end of US domination*’ and a ‘*new era of social emancipation.*’ Paraphrasing Marx, we can say that ‘*the demagogic rhetoric of center-left Latin American leaders is the opium of the Anglo-American booby-left.*’

What Latin American Emancipation? What Dollar Dependence?

For over a decade, Latin America experienced a period of exceptional growth as commodity prices soared, China’s economy expanded and US bankers and creditors financed Latin American investors. Center-left, centrist and rightwing regimes benefited from China’s rising demand for agro-mineral commodities. Regimes across the spectrum diversified their export markets and their source of imports. With large-scale budget surpluses, center-left and rightwing regimes reduced poverty levels via increased social expenditures, while the elite economic structures, the primacy of private national and foreign capital, remained

intact. Landholding remained concentrated: No agrarian reform was implemented anywhere, except in Venezuela.

In fact, under center-left presidents, as well as rightist regimes, the areas exploited by agro-business and agro-chemical corporations expanded. Foreign corporations vastly increased investment and land ownership in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, three of the principal countries cited by the *booby-left* orators as leading the '*emancipatory transformation*'. The *booby left's* '*vanguard countries*', supposedly leading the struggle against imperialism and neo-liberalism, played a leading role in co-opting, de-mobilizing, de-radicalizing and even repressing the social movements, which had advanced a radical transformative agenda at the beginning of the 21st century. In other words, the *AABL* is suffering a decade-long amnesia. It confuses an increase in social expenditures, based on the royalties, taxes and loans from imperial MNCs, agro-mineral exporters and banks, with a '*historic break with the US empire*'.

The exuberant emancipatory claims of the *AABL* totally ignore the fact that Latin America's growth depended on corporate borrowing, as they sought low US rates, and now have large debts denominated in dollars, and face onerous payments with a stronger dollar. For the last three years Latin America's center-left governments have suffered the brunt of the devaluation of their currencies and the outflow of capital. Increasing disinvestment is also a result of lower commodity prices, slower growth, and, in the case of Brazil, a multi-billion dollar corruption scandal involving the giant public-private petroleum company Petrobras.

Financial dependence on Wall Street, City of London, Swiss, German and Chinese banks and the resultant onerous conditions for debt payments, has led these '*emancipated*' regimes to adopt '*fiscal adjustments*' reversing their social programs. In other words, the *AABL's* claims of a '*historical*' break with imperial domination lasted less than a decade. The moderate reforms were based on weak structural foundations, which made them vulnerable to changes in financial and commodity markets.

Brazil's President Rousseff is pursuing an orthodox neo-liberal agenda - cutting funds for unemployment, pension and poverty programs. Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and El Salvador, the entire gamut of '*emancipatory regimes*' have depended on agro-business elites, rejected agrarian reform and based their '*growth strategy*' on supply-side incentives to attract foreign capital.

According to the Bolivian Economic Minister Luis Arce, during President Evo Morales' nine years of '*emancipatory*' government, capitalists have quadrupled their profits. According to the Argentine Secretary of Economic Policy and Development Planning Axel Kicillof, long-term large-scale joint ventures have been signed granting 145,000 acres to Chevron to exploit its oil reserves via highly contaminating fracking while agro-toxic giant Monsanto secured a lucrative royalty contract on the use of the carcinogenic herbicide Roundup. Several other foreign agro mineral multinationals are in line for lucrative contracts.

What makes the '*emancipatory*' rhetoric of the *AABL* more ridiculous is that some of their leading anti-imperialist countries are highly repressive toward grass-roots liberation movements. In Ecuador, for example, President Rafael Correa has arrested Indian leaders of CONIAE (the principle indigenous peoples confederation), proposed harsh anti-strike labor legislation and opened nature reserves for exploitation by international petroleum

corporations.

The *AABL* confuses short-term increases in social expenditures, anti-imperial political rhetoric and the diversification of markets, with a '*historic*' break with US domination. Worse still, they ignore the fact that the second and third biggest economies and several others have deepened economic ties to the US Empire via bilateral free trade agreements. Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Panama have embraced free trade. Moreover, they are charter members of the US-centered Trans Pacific Free Trade group - a direct competitor of MERCOSUR, ALBA, Petro Caribe and other exclusively Latin American economic groupings.

Moreover, the recently elected governments in Uruguay and Brazil are looking toward greater ties with the US and European Union, as China and Latin America's growth and demand declines.

A decline in the US share of the Latin America market is hardly an expression of Latin America's *emancipatory* struggle, especially since it is accompanied by an increase in financial dependency. While neo-liberal regimes like Chile, Peru and Colombia, as well as center-left governments like Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador, have diversified their markets, those decisions are made by agro-mineral exporters and hardly reflect an *emancipatory* ethos; they have everything to do with the profit motive. Moreover '*emancipatory*' Venezuela (leader of Latin American integration) has remained far and away more dependent on a single commodity, oil exports account for 90% of its exports, and more dependent (80%) on the US market than Colombia, Chile or Peru - with their bilateral free trade agreements.

Conclusion

As a matter of historical accuracy the rise of '*emancipatory anti-imperialist politics*' reached its high point a decade ago when uprisings, led by unemployed workers, miners, Indian and peasant movements overthrew neo-liberal regimes in Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador. Fifteen years ago, under the neo-liberal regime of President Henrique Cardoso, the Rural Landless Movement, through a nation-wide land occupation strategy, secured the settlement of 50,000 families a year on expropriated large farms.

Today, under the '*emancipatory*' regime of Brazil's so-called *Workers' Party*, fewer than 10,000 landless families are land reform beneficiaries. In Bolivia, 90% of financial aid to agriculture goes to the agro-export elite centered in Santa Cruz while over 60% of the impoverished Indian peasantry receive token support. However their leaders do get invitations to the Presidential Palace to applaud the *anti-imperialist speeches* of Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera. Visiting *AABL* notables listen, mesmerized by the Vice President's exposition of what he pompously dubs a Gramscian reading of *Andean Socialism*.

The *AABL* notables are invited by the regimes they proclaim to be '*emancipatory*' to give '*magisterial addresses*', while local, better-informed, consequential intellectuals, long committed to the class and anti-imperialist struggle, but who have criticized the phony emancipatory rhetoric, are excluded.

The world-renowned intellectuals of the *AABL* are imported by center-left regimes in retreat, to provide an ideological veneer and prop up their declining legitimacy among their own people. Capitalizing on the *AABL*'s ignorance and arrogance, the regimes organize

costly international forums and flatter their overseas guests, who with gravity and serious demeanor inform their audiences that they are being *emancipated*. Even they should know that their *emancipators* are pocketing millions in bribes (Brazil), welcoming US joint military exercises (Colombia, Peru, Uruguay), funding agro-mineral elites at the expense of landless peasants (Bolivia) and implementing fiscal cuts to social programs to pay overseas bankers.

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