



**LATIN AMERICA: A
QUEST FOR PEACE**

Luis Chesney-Lawrence



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FOR PEACE**

The knot of our solitude

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Latin America: A Quest for Peace
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CONTENTS

	PP
ABSTRACT	IX
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I. THE ANCIENT TIME	9
CHAPTER II. THE DEPENDENCY PROCESS:	
THREE CASES	15
The "white gold" of the tropical coasts and Caribbean islands	17
The liberal economic system during the XIX-XXth centuries	19
The case of the oil extraction –the "black-gold"-	24
CHAPTER III. THE PRESENT TIME	31
REFERENCES	37

ABSTRACT

This book is concerned with Latin America and its history. It is intended to reflect the main feature of the historical process of this area: the violence, and the continuous aggression against the life and cultural forms of this continent. To this end, the interpreting of peace in Latin America would be relevant the use of the concept of dependency as a basic category of structural condition of its society. Thus, three cases of study are presented to show three different forms of instability and violence in this continent: (1) The Spanish exploitation during the colonial period in the so called "white-gold" era of sugar, (2) The effect of the liberal economic system during the XIXth Century in the so called "banana-republics" of Central America, and (3) The industrial dependency since the XXth Century, whose most prominent case is the oil extraction, the so called "black gold" of Venezuela. This critical view is complemented by a previous section on the way of life of the indigenous populations before the discovery of America, and a final section concerning the present situation in the region.

INTRODUCTION

"Peace studies are concerned not only
with the means of preventing wars,
but with factors essential to a more
stable, more just and therefore more
peaceful world".

(Oxford University Project
For Peace Studies,1984)

Once, over four hundred years ago through the mistake of a Genoese-Jew, America entered into history. By America, we refer to that part of the world actually known as Latin America. From that period in history, America or Latin America, as it has continued to be named, lost the right to live in peace. This loss was inflicted upon the peoples of the region "when Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in to the throats of the Indian civilizations" (Galeano, 1979, p.3) Time has passed and yet the situation remains the same.

Along this miserable way, we have even lost our original name of Americans. This title is now used by the citizens of the United States of America. Flourishing nations such as the Haitians and Cubans were well established before the "Mayflower" pilgrims of Plymouth arrived to settle in America. But, from that period in

history Latin America became a sub-America, a sort of second class group of nations with a diffuse identity.

However, our history is not only that of a fabulous kingdom, a wonderland shamed by the conquest, the gold or silver. We are actually a source of reserves of oil, of iron, of copper, of meat and raw materials. But, history repeats itself in as much as the more wealth we gain the less peace we receive. Despite our natural resources we are also poor. Among more than 350 million Latin Americans, at least 15% are unemployed or underemployed, 30% are illiterate, 50% of the population is under eighteen years old, 40% are just children. Half of the people live in crowded impoverished conditions. The human murder by poverty is a secret war: every year, un-noticed by the world, three Hiroshima bombs explode over the continent, a continent once called the New World. This violence is increasing. George W. Ball (1983) stated that it is possible to act with impunity because the poor cannot begin a world war. Dwight D. Eisenhower prophesied that if the world's inhabitants continued multiplying, there would be the danger of revolution. That is the reason that the United States missions have sterilized thousands of women in Amazonia: it is more hygienic and effective to kill guerrillas in the womb than in the mountains or the streets (Ibid, pp. 7-12).

When Christopher Columbus ventured across the sea in 1492, he had accepted the challenge of legends: terrible storms for his ships; fear of monsters, terror of sea serpents and the unknown. The world was then only the Mediterranean Sea with its uncertain

horizons: Europe, Africa and Asia. No one suspected that the world had another world. A vast new world. The solitude of Latin America. The land of chronicles, with fantastic stories handed down from generation to generation, as Garcia Marquez says (1983), "that-immense fatherland of dazzled men and historical women, whose obstinancy is confounded with legend.

America did not have a name. It was anonymous, like the serpents and the curiously carved logs coming far from the Atlantic... The Norwegians did not know they had discovered it long ago. Admiral Columbus himself died convinced he had reached Asia by the western route to India. When the conquistador boats and swords first trod the sands of the Bahamas, Columbus thought that these islands were an outpost of the fabulous Isle of Zipango, Japan. He was mistaken. It was America.

America, America... Yes! They have hurt us. And we cannot forget those wounds. They also confirm our experience. A part of our personality is at risk of becoming lost between the wastes of violence... Perhaps we cannot see now, that from its ruins will emerge a new man and a permanent peace. Perhaps. Facing history. For what purpose history? Searching? It could not be a mere collection of dates, an accumulation of wars and loss, losing from remote times. Most contemporary analysis will avoid the focus of these facts with resentment. Yes! It is very valid to search in the past, above all is our history. It is Latin American history. It is our daily violence. It is our hopeless peace. Yes, it is valid to search in our past. It is valid for locating our present situation. It is valid

whether we look with a critical mind at the past, sincere thoughts. The judgement of past is made of our own sensations of our own problems, and of our own limitations. However, this is not a journey into the past. It is an attempt to actualize our past. The wealth of legends does not make us less historical. On the contrary, it makes us break the tender balance between truth and fantasy, between research and creation. Indeed, it is a question to the past, whose answer is reflected in the reality of a continuous present.

This essay expresses a critical view of Latin American history, whose main characteristic is violence: a continuous aggression in opposition to its life and cultural forms. The appearance of the concept of dependency as a basic factor of analysis has been of relevant importance in the explanation of the historical and social processes of Latin America. But it is necessary to focus the dependency as a structural condition of the societies, which implies at the same time the study of such process -of the dependent societies-, as part of a world historical process. This perspective conducts to integrate as an unique system the problem of modern industrial countries and its results in the underdeveloped countries. One and other play a specific role in the development of the whole system. In this paper concerning Latin American peace, dependency will appear as a true element of each national society, and the study of violence -aggression or instability- could not be realized without reference to the whole global system (Vasconi, 1969; and Quijano, 1971).

The theory of dependency, or dependencia, is the expression of a Latin American analysis about its particular historical and social antecedents. Since the Second World War, Latin American scholars have come to see themselves as underdeveloped, in the concept of ideological and economic implications. During the 1950s at the Economic Commission for Latin America -ECLA-, this concept was the central theme of concern. To some extent it was the response to the neo-classical theory of monetarism adopted by most of the Latin American countries. The fact that the policy of import substitution created new forms of dependency converted this concept into theory. Then, it was considered that the world consisted of a "core" of dominant nations and a "periphery" of dependent ones. Its main feature is, however, an emphasis on external influences that distort the process of development, whose influence leads to an historical approach. Another characteristic is that the theory stresses political and cultural influences as well as economic ones.

Indeed, some echoes of the dependency theory reach Europe as well, because some structural rigidities of European countries are conspicuous too, especially in areas geographically on the periphery, such as Turkey, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Britain, amongst others. Perhaps such rigidities are not quite so dramatically visible as in Latin America, but most of them are increasingly dependent on the core of Europe, and all, including the most advanced, have been deeply penetrated by foreign based transnational corporations. Hence, the relevance of the theory as a

methodology for the study of concrete situations of dependency. For this, we can conclude that its principal contribution is the attempt to analyse peripheral societies through a comprehensive social science, which stresses the socio-political and historical nature of Latin American development (Seers, 1983).

Our starting point is that any interpretation of peace in Latin America requires the concept of dependency for its explanation. Thus, three different cases of an historical approach will produce three different forms of extreme: (1) The first of Spanish origin, resulted in a brutal exploitation during the colonial period, whose most clear example was the sugar culture -so called the "white gold"- of the tropical coasts and Caribbean islands, (2) The second stage a feature of the liberal economic system during the XIXth century and beginning of the last century led to a series of military aggressions and dictatorships whose major examples were the so called "banana republics" of Central America, and (3) finally, the industrial neo-colonial dependency, which has resulted in a deep cultural transformation of the Latin American societies. The most prominent case is that of the oil extraction -"black-gold"- in Venezuela. These ideas are complemented by this introduction, followed by a second chapter which is related to the way of living of our indigenous ancestors before the discovery of America, then a chapter where the three cases are presented, and a final chapter is concerned with the present situation -of terror and human rights violations- of a modern continent which profoundly contrasts with the ancient perspective.

We have something to say to the forgotten Mayan god Huitzilopochtli. We have something to add to the murder of Atahualpa, the Inca. We must say something. When the conquistador boats first trod the warm sands...

CHAPTER I. THE ANCIENT TIME

One of the cardinal preoccupation of man in all epoch has been to search and find his origins. This, sometimes becomes a fundamental problem for his future, and a necessity of his daily life. All this, because the mystery of his origin is a sentiment born with the first flashes of his reflective intellectuality. That instant, is when the idea is conscious and becomes life. To exist is being, it is to reflect. Indeed, it is to live. The concern of many written works and scholars of this slow ascent of the human being and his mind show to what extent this study reaffirms the evidence of the relationship between space and time in man. The past, seen in this way – whether under a materialist dialectic view or through mitic-religious metaphysics- has meaning only if future man is located in his present day in his far past.

It is difficult to image how the indigenous American realized his own reality, his mythology. The research of philosophers and scientists in the antiquity gave an ethnocentric view of the Americans. It is at least a perception of his reality, a mixture of legends and fables. It was the pre-scientific opinion of Baudeau, Las Casas, Buffon, and de Pawn. But after a short time, man became mankind and in turn, the Americans. These savage people knew stone weapons and that was the clue to establish a link with their prehistoric utensils. Then, it had a presentiment of a vague notion of evolutionism. The European Renaissance changed

this ethnocentric view, setting a hierarchy of human values which converted inevitability to racism. The monsters changed their image!

The Americans -Andeans, Mesoamericans or Amazons- created their original world on the basis of a severe organization of the economy, and a hieratic perspective of the society as a whole, model impregnated by a strong religious belief. This model produces its own weakness: they did not achieve any unity. This young empire, initiated a regressive cosmic cycle, through the path of mitic fatalism, accepting its own uprooting. The Americans were abandoned by their gods. The cities were divided. Then began the political conflicts. Finally, the Indian army was overthrown. A unique idiom, a unique God, and a unique King substituted the tradition of millennias. The American world cannot escape from its ruin, and. every day is distanced from its own history without possiblility of re-encountering it.

The Mesoamericans and the Andeans have been called Testimonny Peoples for they are the survivors of the old civilizations defeated by the impact of European expansionism. Tropical countries in turn, were called New Peoples. Thus they entered into an acculturation process which has continued until the present day. The Spaniards found in these regions huge cities with a cultural tradition completely different from their own. After the Spanish invasion, both the Mesoamerican -Mexicans and Mayas of Central America-, and the Andean societies collapsed.

Although today, all these peoples are independent nations, never have they been as they were, rather victims of the violent transformation imposed upon them, the adaptation to new conditions of economic systems, and the impact of the Mercantile and Industrial Revolutions. More than peoples deferred in their history, they are despoiled by their own history (Ribeiro, 1969).

There, they are, Teotihuacan, Chan-chan, Chichen Itza, resembling our past. We just can remember the sad glories of Chilem Balam and the endless route to the Sun, present still. After lamentable omens, appeared Quetzacoalt, then Uiracocha and Kon Tiki. The Americans remain placed in the violence which is extended to all spirits: the Guadalupe Virgin became God Tonantzin, too. The Inca Garcilaso become our first exiled. At the same time, the cities grew in the continent and with them temples, pyramids and streets: Yucatán, Palenque, Uxmal, Labna, Zayi. In all the Mesoamerican peoples, even now, the indigenous dimension persists in a relevant form. And indeed it was one of the thighest expressions of human artistry.

In the centre and southern areas of todays Mexico flourished the Aztec culture, and in Guatemala the Maya, both achieved an urban era with a wide commercial system, a deeply stratified society, and a complex political structure, similar to the states, but more vast. Mexico was inhabited by the Aztecs of Nahuatl idiom, whose federative organization included three centres, Texcoco, Tlacopan, and Tenochtitlán. They had their own writing system, a precise calendar, and an urban development which was

comparable with the Egyptian or Babilonic. The Mayas were considered one of the biggest and original cultures of the world, though lower than the Egyptian. They were an agricultural people, with writing and mathematical systems, and with outstanding sculptures. What is important about the Mayas is that they were probably the first civilization which flourished in a tropical rain forest, creating a model of urban structure especially adapted to these ecological conditions, a preamble of the future tropical cities.

On the contrary, in the Andeans, the culture was opposed to the Aztecs and Mayas in that it was less mystic, and with a more profound organization which permitted them to assemble strong theocratic empire. For this, their transport system was well established linking Cuzco, the capital, with the rest of the altiplane territory. This enabled them to communicate with all the small towns and about 10 million of their inhabitants. They had to adapt an inhospitable region with high mountains and with land of little use for agricultural purposes. But they became masters in the use of ploughed terraces.

All these cultures grew without mutual influence, for they were developed in an independent way. Their cardinal features were the collective social organization, the theocratic state -centralized- and a well established agricultural system. The number of inhabitants in that America is not clear yet. Some authors state a figure of between 6-9 million (Kroeber, 1939; Steward, 1949; Rosenblat, 1954). Recent studies indicate an amount of about 30 million for Central Mexico (Borach and Cook, 1963). Other writers suggest about 13

million for Central America and about 37 million for the Andeans (Dobyns and Thompson, 1966). According to these last studies, it is possible to assume that these empires, as a whole, had between 70-80 million of inhabitants before the conquest. A century and half later, and due to the violent impact of this process, those settlements had been reduced to 3.5 million. This was the means by which European and the American cultures entered in colonial conjunction. Sad destiny. A handful of two hundred thousand Spanish dominated millions of indigenous people, melting them into a different cultural complex, whose base was the Iberic root.

Today Latin Americans are the result of more than two hundred years of latinity and the mixture of European, African, and Indian peoples. They are the inheritors of a multiple culture fused under compulsory slavery of the Spanish expansion. In other words, they are a civilization as old as the most ancient in culture, and at the same time as new as the newest peoples. The old inheritance reflects their worse characteristics such as social discrimination between rich and poor, the conformism, and resignation of the poor with their poverty. The new is manifest in the vigorous assertion of the poor that misery and violence are not inevitable, in their pride to be an ethnic mixture, half-breed, and in their consequent rebellion against the status-quo, trying to bring a new epoch of progress and peace. An ancient poem of the half-gods of the Quiche Hunahpu and Ixbalanché peoples, against the genius of evil -owners of the dark kingdom of Xibalba- seems once again relevant:

Oíd nuestros nombres. Os diremos también los nombres de nuestros padres. Nosotros somos Ixhunalpú e Ixbalanqué, estos son nuestros nombres. Y nuestros padres son aquellos que matásteis y que se llaman Hun-Hunahpu y Vuoub-Hunahpu. Nosotros los que aquí véis, somos, pues, los vengadores de los dolores y sufrimientos de nuestros padres. Por eso nosotros sufrimos todos los males que les hicisteis. En consecuencia os acabaremos a todos vosotros, os daremos muerte y ninguno escapará, les dijeron. (Popol Vuh, 1973, p.19)

(Listen to our names. We will tell you also the name of our parents. We are Ixhunalpú and Ixbalanqué, these are our names. Our parents are those whom you murdered, named Hun-Hunahpu, and Vuoub-Hunahpu We are then, as you can see, the avengers of the pains and sufferings of our parents. For this, we are suffering all the evils you did. Therefore, we will exterminate you all. We will kill you and none one will escape, they said). (Trans. L. Chesney).

CHAPTER II. THE DEPENDENCY

PROCESS: THREE CASES

1492 was the year of the discovery of America. It was also the time of a deep crisis in the western world, which extended to the economic, social and spiritual area. The political scenario followed a similar trend. The theory of a morality with double face prevailed and the works of Machiavelli were famous (Hauser, 1976). These were the predominant ideas which influenced the conquerors of the New World, and oriented their relationship with the Indians, as Admiral Columbus called them America.

For martial Spain, 1492 was also the year of the recovery of Granada, the storming of the last Arab positions on Spanish soil. It had taken nearly eight centuries to win what was lost in seven years (Elliot, 1965). That same year, 150,000 Jews were expelled from the Peninsula. Spain went forward wielding swords with the Sign of the Cross on their hilts. This military heritage, coming from the tradition of the medieval crusading wars, and religious enthusiasm, provided a halo for the conquest of new lands beyond the ocean.

Three years after the discovery of America, Columbus personally directed the military campaign against the indigenous Indians of Hispaniola. When he first landed on San Salvador island, he realized they knew nothing of swords, and "when these were

shown to them they grasped the sharp edges and cut themselves" (Galeano, p.20). On his third voyage, the Admiral still believed he was in the China Sea, when he was nearly off the coast of Venezuela. Thus, the epic of the Spaniards and Portuguese in America, combined propagation of the Christian faith with extermination and plunder of native wealth.

The discovery went on. The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), allowed Portugal to occupy American territories: in 1530, Martin Alfonso de Sousa founded the first Portuguese cities in Brazil. Meanwhile, the Spaniards had advanced far in the conquest. In 1513, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa explored the South Pacific. In 1522, Ferdinand Magellan's returned, he who had for the first time united both oceans and confirmed that the world was round. In 1519, Hernán Cortes sailed from Cuba towards México. In 1523, Pedro de Alvarado launched the conquest of Central America. In 1533, Francisco Pizarro entered Cuzco, the heart of the Inca Empire, and in 1540, Pedro de Valdivia founded Santiago de Chile.

So, Spanish expansion started from the European concept of the city. Many cities were established throughout the region, substituting the indigenous villages which had been constructed before the XVIth century. These new cities signalled the initial step of a deep process of "transculturation" by means of which the Americans lost their freedom to accept or refuse imposed cultural and social patterns (Ortíz, 1976). To achieve this end were used two mechanisms: (1) the physical extermination of indigenous leaders, and (2) by diminishing the population through intense conditions of

15

work, epidemic transmission, and ecological disturbance. The indigenous way of life witnessed its own disintegration and the emergence of a direct dependence to the metropolis.

The term transculturation (transculturación, in spanish), is a Latin American neologism created in 1929 by Dr. Fernando Ortíz, Cuban anthropologist (1881-1969). According to Bronislaw Malinowsky, in his introduction to the book *Contrapunto cubano*, by Ortiz, transculturation is the new technical word to substitute several expressions in use such as "culture change", "acculturation", "diffusion", and others which Ortíz considered to be unsuitable. Therefore, transculturation may be seen as an interchange of cultures and civilizations.

The "white gold" of the tropical coasts and Caribbean islands

Although the aims of the Conquest were gold and silver, Columbus on his second voyage brought the first sugarcane roots from the Canary Islands and planted them in what is now the Dominican Republic. Sugar was a precious article to the Europeans. Thus, was the most important item for European commerce. Canefields grew in the tropical littoral of Northeast Brazil and in the Caribbean Islands -Barbados, Jamaica, Haiti, St. Domingo, Guadalupe, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, in Veracruz and the Peruvian coast which became the best lands for the "white gold". Legions of slaves came from

Africa to provide the labour force required, "human fuel" for the burning. The long sugar cycle generated an artificial prosperity. Curiously, three distinct historical periods -mercantilism, feudalism, and slavery- were combined in each canefield. These colonial plantations evolved directly into the present "latifundio", they being a continuing problem which prevent rural development and condemn the peasantry to poverty and a marginal existence in Latin America. After the peak of the sugar cycle, and due to competition from substitute products, exhaustion of the soils, and the development of new economic areas, came decay. The Northeast was Brazil's richest region, now it is the poorest. The same effect occurred in the Caribbean "sugar-islands". Because of the sugar cycle, Haiti became converted into a slavery dump. By 1786-1787, the French colony had brought in sixty-seven thousand slaves. But revolution broke out in 1791. By 1802, the once flourishing colony was in ashes and ruins, half of the black people exterminated and a order of that not a single mulatto with epaulets must be left in the colony. Haiti was born poor, was devastated, and never recovered, until now.

Such exploitation of both natural and human resources has been seen to take the same role for cocoa in Caracas, for cotton in Maranhao, for rubber in the Amazon territory, for the devastated "quebracho"-forests in Northern Argentina and Paraguay, for henequen plantations in Yucatán, for coffee in Central America, for the fruit plantations in Brazil, Colombia and Central American countries.

The liberal economic system during the XIX-XXth centuries

The Independence period taken by Latin American countries at the end of XVIIIth century, orientated a change in the dependency process. Independence, as a revolutionary myth, was only an expression at the super-structural level of society and became inevitably a transformation of the old system from mercantilism to the industrial stage. Consequently, this changed the "core" of the dependency. The ideological framework of this transference was the Laissez-faire theory, physiocracy, and the Manchesterian economic system. Its aim was the conquest of markets (Vasconi, 1969).

At the end of the last century, Central America was transformed. By 1880 its recently built coffee plantations produced only for the international market; But early this century "banana stands" made their appearance in Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Colombia.

The first banana cultivators of the Bahia Islands, never realized the importance this product would acquired in the history of Central America in future decades. Those buds originally established as decorative gardens, became by 1899 the extensive plantations of the United Fruit Company -the famous "chiquita banana"- of Honduras, and then across all Central America. In 1929,

the depression caused a drop in the price of bananas, the investment stopped and consequently unemployment and the displacement of peasants occurred. The people reacted with strikes. Social agitation was repressed violently through the already implanted dictatorships. They were to remain in power for the following twenty years: Jorge Ubico of Guatemala, Maximiliano Hernandez of El Salvador, Tiburcio Carias of Honduras, and Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua. The long struggle of Augusto Cesar Sandino ended in 1979, when the dictator Somoza Jr. fled from the country. Forty-five years have passed since the murder of General Sandino, who once said "my army and I, are the natural consequence of the criminal and absurd foreign policy of Northamerica in Nicaragua". During 1982, came the first free-elections of El Salvador, after fifty years of military governments and sucessive coup d'etats. The resulting confrontation, during the period of 1979-1981, produced over 30,000 persons dead and of more than 450,000 refugees in neighbourign countries, without international status or aid.

Dramatic and difficult is the history of Central America, especially in its relationship with the United States. It could not be different when the latter considers the region, including the Caribbean nations, for its geopolitical expansion. This may be seen as the reason why the United States has never permitted a united region, rather seeking to divide its nations into weak republics and maintain them with an uncertain future. On the other hand, the Central American republics, underdeveloped and poor, are the

most eloquent example of an imposed model of development, whose main feature is an economic and political submission. These "banana-republics" are an example to the world of what this type of model has to offer. Indeed, it is amazing to think that these countries were once the ancient and great Mesoamerican civilizations.

The geopolitical aims of the United States place Central America as a centre for its expansionist policy. All presidents have followed the dictates of this "Manifest Destiny". At least 784 hostile actions have been undertaken against the sovereignty of the Latin America-and Caribbean countries. Since 1960, more than 100 have occurred in Central American countries. The itinerary of this journey is extensive. President Jefferson (1801-1809), who inspired the Monroe Doctrine, expressed his fear that Spain could not resist the independence struggle of the Latin American countries until the United States was strong enough to be in a position of gradually absorbing these colonies under its own sphere of influence (Kharchatourov, 1977).

When the Monroe Doctrine was promulgated, it was not seen as a threat by the Latin Americans, for they were still struggling for their independence of Spain. However, Simón Bolívar -Liberator of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, and Bolivia- gave a strong warning of this future prospect (Pividal, 1970, p. 171).

During the middle of the XIXth century, W. Walker invaded Central America and proclaimed himself President of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras, where he restored slavery. By 1912, President W. Taft expressed "the whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally" (Selser, 1962). During the same period, ex-president Theodore Roosevelt determined the establishment of the Republic of Panamá, dividing the Colombian territory and recalling "I took the Canal Zone and let Congress debate". Later on, he will be winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

Only after the United States-Spain war of 1898 -when Cuba was liberated and Puerto Rico annexed- did Washington assume the right of "tutor" of the destiny of the Caribbean. President Roosevelt exposed the hidden philosophy behind their policy of the "big-stick": The United States would become an international police force in order to maintain order and peace in the continent. Through this doctrine the United States claimed the right to intervene in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 1927, Calvin Coolidge sent Marines back to Nicaragua, in order to "save" it from "bolshevism" imported from the Mexican revolution, then considered as the communist bogeyman of Latin America. When they withdrew, eight years later, The United States rewarded the Nicaraguans with the dynastic Somoza dictatorship, which for the next 43 years tyrannized the people. In 1932, when Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed the presidency, came the era of "the good neighbour policy". This resulted in the murder of Sandino and

21

a complete network of dictatorships to replace the resident Marines. This was the bananization of Central

America. In 1954, Jacobo Arbenz, President of Guatemala was overthrown, accused of being a "communist". Dwight D. Eisenhower -authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to "destabilize" the legitimately elected government. This occurred because Arbenz had accepted political support from a local communist party, and had attempt to expropriate some of the United Fruit properties. Then followed a succession of brutal rightist military regimes.

In 1961, John F. Kennedy reaffirmed this path by launching The Bay of Pigs invasion. Its failure, strengthened the Cuban revolution and left The United States frustrated and angry. As a consequence of this, President Kennedy promoted "The Alliance for Progress", which provided urgent economic aid to some Latin American countries. This was done in order to avoid another Cuba coming into existence. However, despite this policy in 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson sent 400 Marines into the Dominican Republic to rescue 18 "Americans in danger". This invasion force was increased to 20,000 men when a few "known comunists" were discovered in the country.

In 1973, the Nixon Administration undertook to "destabilize" the elected Chilean government of President Salvador Allende. Chile was rewarded with General Pinochet, one of the bloodier tyrants in modern Latin America history. In 1981, President Reagan

promoted a new policy of "true friendship and brotherhood" in order to assure the stability of the zone. This idea was concreted in the Symms Amendment which authorized the President to impede any Cuban aggression, using all means, including weapons. This Amendment was modified by Congress and transformed into Bumpers Amendment, which indicates that this law does not authorized the President to overlook the Security Act of 1947 and a Resolution on the war attributions of 1973.

Then came Grenada, the small victory that the United States needed to cure themselves of the remaining fears left over after its defeat in Vietnam. George W. Ball (1983) stated that the United states will intervene "in what is historically considered our sphere". This statement is intended to legitimate interventions in Latin America, when it is suspected that a capitalist country is being threatened with a revolution, socialist regime, or any progressive change. Nevertheless, The United states may be seen to be engaged in a dangerous policy of external interventions against peoples ready to give their lives before giving up their struggle for freedom and the right of autodetermination.

The case of the oil extraction

-the "black-gold"-

The last five decades have made more clear the appearance of this new "core" of dependency, and this fact is closely connected with the establishment of an international network of monopolies, which have evolved throughout the Continente At the same time, this has

been the period in which a breaking with our indigenous heritage is clearly visible. The watchword at present expresses the necessity to re-examine all things.

During the seventies and eighties, the majority of the Latin American political systems were under the complete control of the national armies. Only a few four or five nations can be given the wide qualification of being called democratic. As ever, these military dictatorships were in power with the aim of acting as guarantors for the-future of their countries, insisting upon the necessity of an undefined period of time to restate the values and relations of power.

The outcome has resulted in a lack of confidence in democracy. Far from a positive end, the search for new options continues. Curiously -and this can be seen as an example of the effect of a neocolonialist industrial dependency- the Latin American country most historically identified with militarism, "caudillismo", and dictatorship -Venezuela-, at that time and up until 1990, was the most persistent democracy of the Continente. The Venezuelan leadership seemed to have learned the lesson that a military ideology, at the end, has to give away to the re-enstatement of the cardinal values of democracy. From 1958, the Venezuelan democracy had persisted although the power is alternated between two traditional parties. Technically, it seemed that democracy in Venezuela has instituted. Nevertheless, this triumph rested on the angular stone of its national development: oil rent. No other factor explained better the Venezuelan democracy, in profound contrast

with the wild view of militarism in Latin America during the seventies.

Oil was not unknown in Venezuela. During the colonial period it was used only for domestic purposes - the "mene" was the name given by the indigenous people to oil-. By 1882 the Petrolia of Tachira Company existed, exploiting the so called asphalt-oil. Venezuela lacked the proper technology and between 1913 to 1917 the drilling was undertaken by British, Dutch and North American companies. By 1922, the explosion of Barroso well in Zulia state, revealed immense reserves of oil in the region, and therefore the investment increased. The revenues of currency and the commerce resulting from the oil industry transformed Venezuela abruptly from an agrarian country into a modernization era, an ideal market for imports and consumption.

The change has been profound and rapid. The dependency on oil has increased. The first effect of this impact was the spatial displacement of the Venezuelans with all its implications. By 1936, 34.7% of the population lived in urban zones. By 1980, already 80% lived in cities. During the same period the population increased four times. The riches of oil, have enabled the State to promote notable development in the metallurgical and hydroelectric sectors of the economy, but the system as a whole had not an independent life. Everything has a connection with this derived rent. So, oil did not alter the permanent condition of economic dependency, as always Venezuelan society has submitted to monocultures and the decisions of transnational enterprises.

In the past, it was the same with the pearls and gold, then the cocoa, and now oil. In contrast, thanks to oil and its artificial riches, a democratic system can be guaranteed –an unusual example to Latin America- resulting in the emergence of a powerful middle-class, non existent 50 years ago.

Perhaps the most disruptive impact has been the transculturation produced by oil. It has profoundly changed the way of living and being of the Venezuelans. The roots of this culture change came from the establishment of the oil industry and with the consequential international pressures placed upon the country (i.e. mass-media technology). The national identity of the Venezuelans is not precise and profound. A nationalist reaction put on the table this question of identity. The transculturative process, from the conquest to the present has been violent, traumatic and brief. The diversity of elements are not yet composed. This explains the mixture of our population with indians, peasants, urban marginals, and modern elites. Only the indigenous people are excluded from this process. The rest are deeply affected in their comportment, values and even through language, by the mass-media, by the import of consumer goods, and by a saturation of commercial publicity. All this is sustained economically by the rent of the oil boom. Venezuelan society has passed from a slow traditional style to an extremely accelerated modern one without assuming its culture.

The result has been over consumption, social uprooting, and an ecological damage in nature. The country seems not to have a

dimension of time:"our cities could be erected in Texas or Kuwait, because all in them is new, without modules nor proper character of any order"(Liscano, 1980). In 1974, the oil industry was nationalized, but it did not break its links with the international companies in aspects of refining and marketing. The pace of society has changed: "all seem to be late in Venezuela". Indeed, when we record its reality, this has already changed. Venezuela is a Tropical, Andean, Caribbean, Atlantic, and Amazonic country with a vast horizon. Unfortunately, its future is strictly determined through a programme controlled by powerful international interests. May be, for this reason the life there is sudden.

Where the country is going now since the beginning of the XXIth century? Nowhere. We were a rural society, illiterate, unhealthy, unable to exercise democracy. But in the span of a decade, from the late twenties of the XXth century, unexpectedly began to change and the country began to be up-date, growing, and so became one of the most prosperous economy not only of Latin America but also in the world. That was the miracle that produced oil! From then until the eighties of the last century, while the world quintupled its living standards, and Latin America tripled, Venezuela increased tenfold! Six decades of grow, rapidly and without problems. Six decades of peace and stability. But then, suddendly it started to decrease, and broke the thread of the story: we entered into a general crisis. It was a strange road, again sad and difficult, still are producing oil.

Now, as 100 years ago, when the country again stands still, we turn to ask what horizon do we have? The answer is the same as yesterday: oil. But there is a difference with what happened a century ago, now the Venezuelan State is the sole owner of oil, is rich, the country is a modern one, but corrupt, and the people are poor. The State became the richest trader in the country, the opposite of before. Therefore, from the 1980s, there is a generation of young Venezuelans who have not known the development, but only the crisis.

The collapse of the Venezuelan society living on oil rent brought an overwhelming political storm that has brought back the country to the past, in a fruitless search for lost time. Already too late to return to that idyllic past rentierism. Now, they face a new and dramatic reality of this country: the economic and political power is in one hand, the hand of an inefficient ruler, with vast oil revenues which are wasted while poverty is growing by leaps and bounds. Look at some numbers, more than 60% of the country is now poor, high unemployment, strong devaluation of its currency, increasing inflation, low human development, increases malnutrition and tropical diseases or pests, low milk consumption for children, corruption increases. But there is something more serious that accompanies all this, in recent years, a Court in London and other in Canada have certified that Venezuela violate human rights and that torture is used by the security organs of the military government. In addition to this, the regime showed no mercy against the oil workers, when more than 22 thousand oil technicians

of high level were fired from their jobs, and their families were subject to harassment, eviction from their homes occupied and their children were denied enrollment in their schools. This is the paradox of the oil boom. Now the country face an authoritarian regime. Some day, someone might ask why the Venezuelans plenty of oil arriveds to this sad destiny?

CHAPTER III. THE PRESENT TIME

The term Latin America is closely connected with the ideas of Simón Bolívar -The Liberator-. It comes from his notion of a "grand homeland" fused in the creation of the Great-Colombia, and extended by José Martí with his dream of "Our America". But the concept of Latin America, based on these premises, has only been used during our century and particularly at the present time. Today's re-emergence of the ideas of "The Liberator" can be seen to receive careful attention from the two hegemonic powers of the world. Thus, the international conflicts of the individual Latin American countries are not envisaged as small and provincial areas of focus, but global political problems.

This is the present reality, whether we like it or not. It is a complex reality with a strong component of inter-relationships. But this concept of Latin America today, does not mean a complete unity. What is remarkable is a fundamental consciousness of continental cohesion, especially amongst the people. We must remember that our main historical sickness has been "non-unity". Our experience has shown that unity is only achieved when external threat comes.

The past seems to be ever present in today's Latin America. Externally imposed conflicts seem to be the price of this relative unity of the people. Conflicts still exist in Central America, and yet not militar interventions. Past history is again reflected in present

day events. Once more, Central America has become a focus of attention in the world. The only valid explanation to this situation is found in the analysis of the historical factors of the zone. Continuing instability, varying between revolution and dictatorship, has been-the destiny of our continent.

The most dramatic example of fascism in Latin America was found in Chile. The socialist transition project of President Salvador Allende, affecting foreign interests as it did opened an external front which finally was perverseness and inexorable, resulting in military intervention. This was a serious mistake. Since the ninety, and after the fall of the Berlin wall, democracy has returned. The Chilean people, once the self-considered Britons of South America, now share the same history as the rest of the countries of the region. They have paid a high price to discover that they could not go on living from myths and fables.

The same phenomenon was repeated in Argentina. The army was not prepared for either governing nor struggling. The country was deeply shaken by the defeat of the Malvinas - Falklands- Islands war, and consequently re-encountered its unity in a new democracy and in a continental solidarity to its cause. Argentina, the most European country of the continent, now knows it is Latin American as well.

After more than ten years, the Uruguayan dictatorship remained isolated from the rest of the Latin American countries, The Uruguayan people, once self-considered the Swiss of South

America, now are united and living in democracy, receiving absolute solidarity from the democratic countries of the region.

After a terrible decade of the eighties, some countries in Latin America arrived at a peaceful rest along a rough road. The transit from military dictatorship or authoritarian rulers -modern versions of fascism- to democracy has been hard, but it is possible, thanks to the unity of the people. Another process of a democratic aperture, although slower, was Brazil where the pressure of the people has obligated the Generals to call for democracy. Peru also has returned to a democratic system after trying all kinds of military government, rightist and nationalist. In other countries, democracy still falters as in the case of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, with authoritarian regimes since the ninety.

It is interesting to observe the efforts made by the Catholic Church in order to bring evidence of the violation of human rights and to support social justice in Central America and in the rest of the Continent. The Church, guided by the Puebla Conference's theme of "a preferential option for the poor and by a commitment to defend human rights" has been described by many countries as a "subversive force". The Church also has emphasized the historical perspective of the conflict through The United States Bishops' Testimony to Congress (1983), stating that the position of the Church is clearly defined and its role in the region hardly can be confused with Marxist interests. On the contrary, its pastoral aim is guided by a teaching based on the Gospels but profoundly committed to the defence of human rights.

Carlos Fuentes (1983), the Mexican writer, represents the general Latin American opinion when he clearly identifies the main conflicts in the region and their alternative solutions: "The problems of Cuba are Cuban... The problems of Nicaragua are Nicaraguan ... many of our countries are struggling to cease being banana republics. They do not want to become balalaika republics. Do not force them to choose..."

Latin America appears in our search throughs history as an unique camp, complex and variable. Perhaps non-existent in itself. Reality shows that few Latin American peoples live as individual nations. It is indeed as Sartre said "a being that is what is not, and it is not what it is". For us, that which has been imposed over five centuries is our differentiation. The different heritage of the conqueror in Perú, the Caribbean, New Spain, La Plata, the original zones of the present nations. But, for the image of "the other", from the beginning we were a unique world. The novelty of The New World eliminated its own diversity. Thus, for the Europeans we were always a whole -as John Donne would say, "that unripe side of earth"- where industrial countries meet their necessities of cheap materials, a source of additional markets for their products, a place for foreign investment of capital, and recently an area for operation of the multinationals (Cohen, 1974). Our challenge is to give an accurate out-line of Latin America, which we believe is not only possible, but necessary for our future. For this we reject that view coming from "the other", for it follows the maintenance of our

Continent in the present situation, divided, uprooted, and alienated after more than five centuries of dependency.

Obviously, any improvement in our situation has to be made on the basis of questioning our dependency through the elimination of our compliance to external pressures and all things leading to dependence and its hidden unit total extermination. In contrast, we must assume an attitude of liberation and autodetermination. The problem is to pass from the first to the second one, after such long period of docility. The first could be a approach is to concentrate on its effects on our area. This is a compulsory task. This is not defeatism nor reactionism, especially if we take into account the displacement of the global powers from the socio-economic sphere to the ideological and military one, which implies the highest degree of rational violence (Abdel-Malek, 1977). The socialist sentiment can aid our reconstruction, but the phenomenon itself remains unchangeable: the world enters an epoch of universal dependency. For a majority of the Latin Americans, the only way possible is a deep sociopolitical change. Either through a democracy or revolutionary process, the internal relationships must change.

"This is my friends, the knot of our solitude", said Gabriel García Marquez (1983), winner of the Nobel Literature Prize. He added, "perhaps the venerable Europa would be most comprehensive if it tried to see us in its own past. If it recalled that London needed 300 years to construct its first wall and other 300 to appoint a bishop... But I think Europeans of clear spirit, those who

also fought here for a grand and more just fatherland, could help us better if they reviewed in a profound sense the way they see us... his is my friends, the size of our solitude". After studying our reality, we find out on the one hand the spuriousness of our history and on the other hand the possibility of Latin America.

Latin America will change. We will overcome dependency. We will enter into the dialogue of the whole world, for we have a specific contribution to civilization. This contribution will consist, fundamentally in expressing as Ribeiro (1969) stated, what we are as a social, historical and cultural configuration: more human, for we will incorporate all cultural features of man. More generous, for we remain open to all influences and we will integrate all race. More progressive, for our future is founded only in the development of knowledge. More optimism, for we will emerge from the exploitation and poverty, and we know that the future will be better than the past and the present. And also more free, for our national projects will be undertaken not assuming oppression nor spoliation of other peoples. That would be our peace.

Soton (U.K)- Caracas (Ven)/ 84-11.

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