



WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM THE NEW PROGRESSIVE WAVE IN LATIN AMERICA?



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The art in this dossier uplifts icons of left political traditions within Latin America's new progressive wave: the flag, symbolising justice; the sickle, symbolising agrarian reform; the monument that celebrates people's history rather than a colonial past; the hammer for the unity of workers; and the red star of internationalism. These symbols, depicted using tarot-like iconography that draws from the imagery of Latin American and Caribbean artists and movements, directly contest the icons of the emerging fascist and right-wing movements in the region (featured in the images of dossier no. 47, *New Clothes, Old Threads*). In dossier no. 70, *What Can We Expect from the New Progressive Wave in Latin America?*, we present a second set of cards that amplify the aspirations and cultural richness on the continent and point towards a desired future for its peoples.

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The Flag

Foreword

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Over the last centuries, both the countries wrongly called ‘underdeveloped’ and those regarded as ‘developing’ have been victims of Western powers’ systematic policy to intervene in their internal affairs in order to ensure the usurpation of their resources. With varying degrees of intensity, intervention has been a permanent variable that has severely limited these countries’ autonomy to pursue decolonisation processes and has prevented them from seeking development alternatives that break with the dispossession and abuse at the hands of those who believe themselves to be the owners of the world.

In periods when transnational capital’s rate of profit has increased, intervention is carried out with low intensity, and a degree of liberal democracy is allowed to function. Western powers determine the extent to which this is permitted and impose the ever-present limits that prevent people from putting their resources at the service of their own development. When the people try to use their resources in this way, the intensity of neocolonial intervention increases to distort the course of history once again in the Western powers’ favour, even at the cost of trampling on the rules that they themselves defend when times are good.

Periods when transnational capital’s rate of profit decreases usually coincide with an increase in the influence of the left and the forces that fight for the emancipation of peoples across the world, a

dynamic that is most often the result of the exacerbation of inequalities and abuses of the ruling classes. In these periods, intervention usually increases in intensity, promoting the destabilisation of governments that are not subordinated to the Western powers' interests. This takes place through coups and the promotion of a far-right discourse that is focused on extremely conservative values and promotes the hatred of anyone different, which is expressed in nationalist and anti-immigration content and discourse that is focused on order, security, and the right to property that only those promoting this discourse enjoy.

In recent decades, alongside traditional coups we have seen the use of hegemonic media and judicial systems to persecute and imprison indigenous and left-wing leaders who might otherwise threaten the empire's hegemonic interests. This has resulted in judicial coups and character defamation on numerous occasions, with devastating effects for the world's democracies.

Dossier no. 70, *What Can We Expect from the New Progressive Wave in Latin America?*, delves into how the processes described above have unfolded in recent decades in Latin America following the end of US-imposed dictatorships across much of the continent, which sought to appropriate the resources of a continent that the US has considered as its own since the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. This dossier provides a general overview of the rise, fall, and resurgence of what have been called the progressive waves of Latin America, which arose in a context marked by the disappearance and failure of the Soviet experience and the near-complete lack of a concrete horizon of transformation that would allow

people to envision definitively overcoming capitalism and its current expression, neoliberalism.

It is clear, nonetheless, that neoliberal capitalism is absolutely incompatible with democracy, since maintaining the rate of profit for transnational capital can only make the lives of the majority even more precarious, sharpening the contradiction between capital and labour and accelerating the destruction of the planet with its constant refusal to take seriously the environmental and social crisis that this system has put us in.

There is a key role, then, then, for the left to play. The increasing influence of far-right discourse can be explained, in part, by the left becoming distant from its own people and by its own government programmes, which, though they have distributed the wealth generated by capitalism with greater equity in successive progressive waves, have not managed to transform the productive base or resolve, in a sustained manner, either the essential problems of the people or the ecosystems of which we are an inseparable part.

The political centre, whether in its centre-left or centre-right variants, which is sanctioned – at least formally – by the majority of the population, has been alternating in governments around the world for decades without resolving the most pressing issues of the people. This has led to a precipitous fall in support for these projects around the globe.

This collapse has given way to the resurgence of highly combative discourse among right-wing forces that is even more extreme than

in the era of fascism almost a century ago. This discourse is focused on promoting unrestricted 'freedom', hatred towards anyone different, and the rolling back of certain values, which has allowed these right-wing forces to resonate with the discontent, indignation, and disillusionment spreading among the most vulnerable sectors of the working class.

Meanwhile, on the left, which remains fragmented between political parties and social movements, rebellious and truly transformative discourse has almost disappeared, and struggles to humanise capitalism have become widespread. This leaves behind the main contradiction between capital and labour as the left mainly opts to take action in the political superstructures of capitalism in the absence of a concrete horizon to overcome it.

As if this were not enough, the right wing of the world is united and coordinated in defending and promoting its interests, while the left is divided and engaged in internal squabbles without any ability to recognise the enemy in each of its societies.

Reconstructing a concrete horizon – socialism – and building the unity of the left are key challenges in identifying and addressing the dilemmas we face. In order to do this, we must break from the language of our oppressors and create one that is truly emancipatory. Integration and coordination are no longer enough. A true understanding of what Karl Marx called the material unity of the world is essential to achieving the total unity of peoples and joint action across the planet.





The Sickle

Introduction

When Hugo Chávez won the Venezuelan presidential elections for the first time in 1999, a new and profound chapter began in the history of that country and of the Latin American and Caribbean region. In the twenty-five years since, numerous popular mobilisations in defence of natural resources and against neoliberal governments and platforms, such as the World Social Forum, led to uprisings among the people of Latin America, which were transformed into electoral victories for progressive governments in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Ecuador, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, among others. More than an epoch of change, the scenario came to be defined as a ‘change of epoch’ whose impacts went beyond the limits of the American continent and inspired the left around the world.

The rise of anti-neoliberal struggles and different popular projects’ access to political power coincided with a deep crisis in the United States’ control over the region. The new century that was emerging marked the failure of the neo-conservative strategy that lay at the core of US power. With the reorientation of its foreign policy, the US directed its imperialist energies towards the Middle East and embarked on its failed wars against Iraq and Afghanistan. In this context, the people of Latin America enjoyed greater levels of freedom to drive forward a continent-wide anti-imperialist strategy. Though the US government registered a certain level of concern about the anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal advance in the region, it was unable to stop it. The defeat of the 2002 coup against

President Chávez in Venezuela, in which the president was able to return to his post following three days of massive popular uprisings during the time of his kidnapping from 11–13 April, and the fight against the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas at the Fourth Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 2005 constituted two key milestones in this change of epoch, as Brazilian sociologist Emir Sader reminds us in his book *The New Mole*.

This combination of factors impeded the advance of a neoliberal agenda and led to a period defined by social achievements and protections for workers: the leadership of historically sidelined and exploited sectors, the people's increased participation in the government, and a deepened independence and sovereignty of countries across the region, with the strengthening of existing regional institutions such as the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the formation of new ones such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR). The most radical sector of this movement built the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA), a continent-wide platform founded by Cuba's Fidel Castro and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez that promotes the twin goals of sovereignty and regional integration.

The duration of this progressive wave, often referred to as the 'pink tide', varied in countries across the region. Though the emergence of China as a global power, the formation of other platforms to strengthen the Global South, and the weakening of US hegemony accelerated this rise, the 2008 financial crisis contributed to its decline and provided the conditions for a US counter-offensive

against a rebellious continent. This US counter-offensive, which employed a range of tactics, manifested in a series of coups across the region including in Haiti (2004), Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2012), Brazil (2016), and Bolivia (2019), as well as attempted coups in Ecuador (2010) and Venezuela (2019). At the same time, the US led a hybrid war against Venezuela while the right and the far right enjoyed electoral victories in a number of countries in the region.¹ This shift, which defined the 2010s, was a response to the global financial crisis, which drove US capital and imperialism to seek to control strategic natural resources, intensify their exploitation of the workforce, and reduce social rights. The ultraliberal project – i.e., accumulation through the increased plundering of nature and super-exploitation of labour – was also unable to proffer any solutions, and the shift to the right only increased the contradiction between capital and labour with direct attacks on the most vulnerable populations.

The popular dissatisfaction generated during this period soon led to protests and the electoral defeats of these neo-fascist projects (such as of Jair Bolsonaro in 2022). Furthermore, a decisive role was played by women and indigenous, black, and LGBTQIA+ people in this historic period, evidenced, for instance, by feminist movements such as *Ele Não* ('Not Him') in Brazil and *Ni una menos* ('Not One Less') in Argentina that resisted the advance of the far right. This tendency was also reflected in the electoral victories of the progressive leaders Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico (2018), Alberto Fernández and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina (2019), Luíís Arce in Bolivia (2020), Pedro Castillo in Peru (2021), Gabriel Boric in Chile

(2021), Gustavo Petro in Colombia (2022), and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil (2022).

However, today's progressive new wave faces a different reality than the progressive wave that began with the presidency of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela in 1999. On the one hand, there is a profound crisis of civilisation that encompasses financial, social, environmental, and political crises and a coordinated offensive by the global right; on the other hand, the world is becoming increasingly multipolar. The challenges, limits, and contradictions present in this disputed continent are the focus of this dossier, which was prepared by the Brazil and Argentina offices of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research in the hope that these reflections on current affairs in Latin America and Caribbean can inform popular movements and regional groupings, such as the Continental Platform of Social and People's Movements (ALBA Movimientos) and the International People's Assembly.



The Dilemma facing the New Progressive Wave

In August 2023, for the first time in fourteen years, the heads of state of the eight countries that share the Amazon met in Belém (the capital of Pará, the state in Brazil most affected by deforestation and wildcat mining). The main topic discussed at the Amazon Summit was the need to avoid the ‘point of no return’ beyond which the Amazon rainforest biome will lose its capacity to regenerate and will begin to transform, irreversibly, into a savannah. Though the event was successful in terms of President Lula da Silva’s strategy to reposition Brazil as a leader in regional and global diplomacy and an unofficial spokesperson for emerging countries, the summit’s final communiqué was criticised for containing many wishes but few concrete proposals, a result of the lack of consensus on this issue in the region.

Even though President Lula emphasised the fight against the climate catastrophe during his speech at the summit, he nonetheless advocated for oil exploration at the mouth of the Amazon River, a posture that was subsequently criticised by President Gustavo Petro of Colombia, who advocated for an end to oil, coal, and gas extraction in the Amazon region. The disagreement between the two reflects a strategic and complex question: what does the future hold for the countries of Latin America, and the periphery of capitalism, in the current geopolitical context and the financial and environmental crisis? Considering the deindustrialisation of industrial parks that the

region has experienced during the neoliberal period, the outdated technology in what remains of this structure, and the exodus of the production of knowledge and high technology in the international division of labour, how can Latin America develop, position itself as a sovereign territory, and escape the colonialist trap of being a mere exporter of raw materials?

Though the structural crisis of the capitalist system has deepened since 2008, this does not mean that this system is nearing its end nor that it is on the verge of self-destruction, but rather that capitalism is incapable of resolving the crisis that it has generated on its own terms.² This is especially true in its ultra-financialised phase. It is well known that many of the social policies of the first pink tide resulted, in part, from the global economic growth experienced at the beginning of this century, which boosted demand for agricultural, hydrocarbon, and mineral commodities. However, since the 2008 financial crisis, attempts to recover the losses experienced at the centre of the capitalist system in the Global North have only increased the super-exploitation of labour, old and new contractual forms such as ‘uberisation’, and the destruction of nature. The crisis also boosted the United States’ counter-offensive to regain political control of the region and, consequently, of its natural resources. The case of Brazil is quite illustrative: within a few months of the parliamentary coup against President Dilma Rousseff in 2016, measures were implemented that greatly weakened labour laws and redirected oil extraction profits from social funds to foreign shareholders of the state-owned Brazilian oil giant Petrobras.

According to Brazilian professor José Luís Fiori, as the US recognises that its national values are not universal, it turns to its ‘national interests’ as its only compass and, to maintain what it refers to as its ‘position of strength’, it admits that its economic prosperity, as well as its currency and finances, are a fundamental instrument of its struggle for international power.* In Fiori’s interpretation, the US has given up on offering the countries that see it as a model any hope of a pathway to the future. Nowadays, unlike during the Cold War – when the US proffered a world of democracy and economic prosperity for those who joined the capitalist bloc – it only offers recognition of its global power, reinforced by its military empire and technological competition. As US economic control declines, it turns with ferocity to its military power to sustain its domination of the world. For the United States, projecting the idea that there is no other possible future is central, which, as we will see, is reflected in the discourse of the Latin American far right.

China’s emergence as a global power is another fundamental factor that has triggered this new US offensive. Today, China is the main trading partner of nine Latin American countries. In 2021, imports and exports between China and Latin America reached US\$247 billion – US\$73 billion more than imports and exports between the United States and Latin America (excluding Mexico).³ According to the World Economic Forum, trade flows between Latin America

* This perspective is particularly evident in *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, prepared jointly by the Departments of State and Defence, the Pentagon, and the CIA with the Department of Commerce and the Treasury Secretariat of the US government in 2017. See also: Fiori, ‘A síndrome de Babel’; The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 3.

and the Caribbean and China will double by 2035.⁴ China's policy differs significantly from US aggression, though the country's strategy towards the region is nonetheless quite pragmatic, and automatic alignment with China is no guarantee of an alternative for the continent.⁵ As the Argentine researcher Claudio Katz writes:

Beijing is well aware of Washington's great sensitivity to any foreign presence in a territory it considers its own. For this reason, it is especially cautious in this region and avoids interference in the political sphere, limiting itself to advancing its interests through fruitful business relations. Its only extra-economic demand involves its own interests in reaffirming the 'one-China principle' in the face of ruptures with Taiwan. China does not act as an imperialist dominator, nor does it favour Latin America.⁶

Lastly, environmental issues can no longer be neglected. The more frequent the disasters caused by the climate catastrophe, the more inoperative and innocuous the communiqués of the diplomatic forums that are supposed to be acting on the Kyoto and Paris agreements. As Vijay Prashad, director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, explains, the shift away from carbon-based fuel has been stalled by three main obstacles: right-wing forces that deny the existence of climate change; sections of the energy industry that have a vested interest in carbon-based fuel; and Western countries' refusal both to admit that they remain principally responsible for the climate catastrophe and to commit to repaying their climate debt by financing the energy transition in developing countries whose wealth they instead continue to siphon off.⁷

It is in the midst of this scenario that the new wave of progressive leaders has emerged, though it is more fragmented than during the previous one. In the first wave, there were two markedly distinct groups of progressive leaders: one led by Brazil's Lula and Argentina's Néstor and Cristina Kirchner that emphasised structures such as UNASUR and CELAC and one emanating from Venezuela and Cuba that focused its attention on the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA). These two groups were not in competition but rather complemented each other, despite differing in their methods, the velocity and scope of their policies, and their positioning vis-à-vis the United States. The new wave has yet to form any projects at a continental or regional level, even several such projects already exist; instead, what we are seeing are individual or bilateral developments that do not have the strength of scale necessary. As Katz pointed out, this lack of a large-scale project has held back the creation of a project that can resist the United States or develop a sovereign alternative.⁸ In the words of professor and former Bolivian Vice President Álvaro García Linera:

We are, therefore, faced with a paradoxical fact that characterises the world: neoliberalism does not propose a long-term plan that is not simply a violent and melancholic return to the structures of the past, nor does progressivism present a horizon that has the capacity to overcome the difficulties that emerged from the pandemic and the economic and environmental crisis. Thus, we find ourselves in a moment of collective stupor, of a certain paralysis, in which time seems to be suspended.⁹



The Monument

Internal Contradictions

A striking characteristic of the new progressive wave is that it operates alongside a strengthened right wing that exhibits neofascist traits that are reminiscent of but even more ideologically radicalised and politically violent than the old right wing. This new right continues to deploy instruments of destabilisation against leftist leaders, such as lawfare, which uses legal mechanisms to drive an agenda against a target or perceived enemy.¹⁰ Colombia's President Petro is a current target of this strategy, preceded in recent years by the lawfare deployed against Argentina's Vice President Cristina Kirchner, Brazil's President Lula, and Ecuador's former President Correa.

In the case of Peru, the right was not defeated politically or ideologically despite the electoral victory of Pedro Castillo in June 2021. The election of Castillo as a leader of the left coalition who ran a campaign based on a left-wing discourse awakened hope in Peru and a large part of the Latin American left. However, it soon became difficult for him to govern as he found himself embroiled in internal contradictions that led to his removal from office a year and a half after being elected.¹¹

A particularly emblematic case of right-wing radicalisation in the region in recent years was the coup against Bolivian President Evo Morales in 2019, which combined a traditional military coup with fascist methods such as the organisation of urban combat groups; the invasion and burning of the headquarters of grassroots and

left-wing organisations; public humiliation, murders, kidnappings, and death threats against political leaders and their relatives; and street mobilisations of urban sectors in areas dominated by the right. More recently, the murder of the presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio in August 2023 in the midst of the electoral process in Ecuador makes it clear that, to some extent, instability remains endemic in Latin America.*

In the wake of the radicalisation of the right, Latin American politics have become increasingly militarised, with the re-emergence of military coups and a rise in police and paramilitary violence. The death of left-wing leaders, which was already common in Colombia and Mexico, has spread to other countries. This trend reflects a return to the political-institutional challenge that seemed to have been overcome by the re-democratisation processes in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, during which civilians gained control of the armed forces and military personnel were held to account for the crimes they committed. In Brazil, there was an increase in political crimes committed by military forces during the government of Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022) and his 2022 re-election campaign. These crimes – such as the military’s participation in the coup attempts during Lula’s inauguration at the end of that year and the beginning of 2023 – have yet to come before the courts. While the new progressive governments in the region have not overcome this dilemma,

* On 9 August 2023, Ecuadorian presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio was assassinated while leaving a rally at Anderson College in the city of Quito. The motive for the killing is still being investigated by the local authorities, but suspicions point to a criminal group linked to an Ecuadorian drug cartel.

the active presence of military and paramilitary forces in politics has created an environment of fear that impedes the actions and advancement of left-wing forces and leaders.¹²

Thus, while the first wave of progressive governments was built based on the programmatic and moral defeat of the neoliberal right, the current political landscape has forced the newly elected progressive governments to prioritise the construction of pacification processes to the detriment of any ideological and programmatic offensive. One example of this is the government of President Gabriel Boric in Chile, which was elected at the end of 2021 when the popular uprisings against neoliberalism and the social malaise it has created were already in retreat. Boric and the left suffered successive setbacks in the following years, with the rejection of the proposal for a new constitution in a referendum and, subsequently, the 2023 elections of the new Constituent Council, tasked with drafting this constitution, in which the right wing won the majority of the seats. As a result of these elections, the extreme right, including those who have historically aligned with the dictator Augusto Pinochet, is poised to play a significant role in drafting the new Constitution.

As with the left, the main figureheads of the right no longer bear the same characteristics as those of the 2000s. If the old right prioritised its socioeconomic principles (defending the free market, monetary stability, commercial and financial openness, fiscal austerity, withdrawal of social rights, privatisations, and so on), today the far right prioritises conservative beliefs and values. This creates a stronger ideological pillar that is more difficult to break because it appeals to religious and moral themes that are rooted in popular culture. In

addition to the traditional corruption agenda, the right has doubled down in mobilising to defend the heteronormative nuclear family structure, 'Christian values', and the right to bear arms as well as to combat abortion, what it refers to as 'gender ideology', and the rights of the LGBTQIA+ population. Using mass digital communication tools, the extreme right emphasises and leverages a postmodern discourse, questioning, relativising, and denying objective truths (such as the climate catastrophe). In doing so, it seeks to present itself as anti-system, all while defending capitalism in full force. This anti-system discourse focuses on the duties of the state, which leaves left-wing forces to defend the institutions and mechanisms of formal, and limited, bourgeois democracy.

The new right-wing offensive that focuses on religious and moral themes thus tends to put the left on the defensive, fearful of incisively opposing agendas in ways that could result in electoral backlash. The debate over the legalisation of abortion in Argentina, for instance, provided an object lesson in how difficult it is for a progressive government to garner mass support around 'taboo' topics. Even after abortion became legal in Argentina and was implemented as a public policy, this issue continues to be used to chip away at the popularity of President Alberto Fernández, who supported the measure.

An agenda built on religious and moral themes with no real sincerity about a public dialogue lends itself to exaggerations, manipulations, and fake news that can erode the popularity of progressive candidates and presidents. The sensationalist lies spread on social media alleging Lula's intentions to close Brazilian churches if elected in 2022, for instance, are further evidence of this. At the same time,

the right has used the escalated tensions around so-called family values to hinder the construction of a consensus about more 'classical' economic and social themes, such as combating inequality and hunger, distributing income, overcoming the country's position of dependency in the global arena, and implementing agrarian reform.

This in no way means that the far-right agenda sees economic issues as secondary. On the contrary, as reflected by the rise of Javier Milei in Argentina, economic issues feed primarily on the discontent of the lower and declining middle class, as well as that of the elites, to advance an ultraliberal discourse. Projecting the prospect of a futureless society and lack of alternatives, the far right paints a picture in which it is only possible for entrepreneurs to compete if the so-called 'obstacles' placed in their way by the state are removed.

The new progressive wave that we are seeing today does not mean that the correlation of forces in the region is leaning towards the left: the right remains politically active and is competing for power, and, in many countries, it enjoys a parliamentary majority. In part, the left itself is responsible for not being able to change this reality, despite its opponents' strength on the continent. Firstly, the organisations that are now coming to power in several Latin American countries no longer have the same characteristics as those in the previous wave. This is evidently linked to a general ideological degradation in a context in which geopolitical disputes present themselves much more as struggles for spheres of influence in the world than between antagonistic societal projects. Across the region, the anti-neoliberal political forces elected in the 2000s were, to a large

extent, a continuation of the resistance to the dictatorships of the 1960s and 1970s. Since the 2010s, however, the left, faced with the neoliberal offensive, has limited its horizon of struggle and appears to be incapable of overcoming the bureaucratic perspective that to govern is merely to manage the state in a more progressive and humanitarian way.

In other words, the left today has shown itself to be incapable of achieving hegemony when it comes to a new societal project. The irrevocable defence of bourgeois democracy itself is a symptom that there is no prospect of rupture and revolution. This is reflected by the reluctance of certain left-wing leaders to support the current Venezuelan government, which they consider to be undemocratic – despite the fact that Venezuela, alongside Cuba, is one of the few examples of a country where the left has managed to face these crises without being defeated. This meek position and failure to commit to the fight against imperialism marks a significant setback.

This brings us to the debate of whether or not it is possible to overcome the neoliberal order and, therefore, if it is preferable to coexist with it. While in the previous political wave the left's impulse was to defeat neoliberalism, the horizon now seems to go no further than an attempt to repeat previous experiences. However, the successful experiences of the past may be insufficient to face the most recent transformations of capital and the world of work. If twenty years ago there was talk of a 'change of epoch', today the left seeks little more than to create successful governments.



The Hammer

Nonetheless, it is true that Latin American governments have become increasingly aware of the global shift towards multipolarity. Though some of these countries have become closer with China and Russia in recent years, this rapprochement is more a product of pragmatic economic interests than a strategic construction, and very little is said about the importance of these new relationships in confronting US imperialism.

The almost total abandonment of the debate on people's political participation in the region has been another significant setback. In the previous progressive wave, there was an effort to create new forms of participation that involved not only representative but also direct democracy. These changes took shape, for instance, in the constituent processes in Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution, in the creation of the Plurinational Republic of Bolivia, and in the emergence of people's movements and platforms, collectives, and united fronts across the region. Today, however, little is said about the need to change how the region's democracies function.

Thus, though the new wave of progressive governments in Latin America is significant, it does not have the same transformative tendencies as the previous wave and faces a number of significant barriers to realising this possibility. As Prashad explains:

Even the mildest centre-left governments will be forced to address the serious social crises in the hemisphere, crises deepened by the collapse of commodity prices and by the pandemic. Policies against hunger, for instance, will require funds either from the various domestic bourgeoisie or from

the royalties raised for the extraction of natural resources. Either way, these governments will be forced into a clash with both their own bourgeoisie and US imperialism. The test of these governments, therefore, will not be merely in what they say about this or that issue (such as Ukraine), but how they act when faced with the refusal by the forces of capitalism to solve the major social crises of our time.¹³

Exiting the Labyrinth

The shifting geopolitical order has opened up an opportunity for Latin America. Even though bilateral agreements and specific treaties may, at first, appear more attractive or profitable for each country, taking advantage of this opportunity to further an agenda that centres the wellbeing of its people is only possible within the framework of a collective project that advances regional cooperation and sovereignty. Only by negotiating and acting as a bloc can Latin American countries achieve a lasting and influential position in relation to other continents and blocs.

In this sense, more than institutional structures, what Latin America lacks today is a common project of regional integration and global action. More than new forums and diplomatic spaces, it is necessary to move towards collective productive projects, be they shared infrastructure or technologies, especially when it comes to managing and preserving natural resources. The collective action of countries in the region to protect and manage commodities such as lithium

and oil would make it possible to both secure adequate prices for these commodities and prevent corporations' accelerated destruction of nature. Likewise, at the heart of this project there must be an energy transition that does not resort to dead-end market solutions such as the issuance of carbon bonds. This regional integration must also be financial and monetary. To achieve this, it is important to put into practice a series of measures such as cooperative and collective actions that prevent the global financial system from suffocating economies, as has been the case in Argentina and Venezuela. It is essential to build commercial and local development alternatives, such as cooperative actions by state development banks. There must be a common currency for transactions between the countries in the region.

Finally, a regional integration and transformation project cannot and should not be the work of governments; rather, such a project must take root in and be incorporated by the peoples of Latin America. This can only be achieved through mass organisation and mobilisation, common agendas, and shared spaces for the construction of struggles and political programmes by people's organisations.





The Red Star

Notes

- 1 For more, see Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, *Venezuela and Hybrid Wars in Latin America* and *New Clothes, Old Threads*.
- 2 For more, see Tricontinental: Institute for Social, *The World in Economic Depression*.
- 3 Jourdan, Aquino, and Spetalnick, 'Exclusive'.
- 4 Zhang, 'China's Trade with Latin America'.
- 5 For more, see Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, *Looking Towards China*.
- 6 Katz, *Las Encrucijadas de América Latina*, our translation.
- 7 Prashad, 'Capitalism Created the Climate Catastrophe'.
- 8 Katz, *Las Encrucijadas de América Latina*, our translation.
- 9 Linera, *La política como disputa de las esperanzas*, 60, our translation.
- 10 For more, see Tricontinental: Institute for Social, *Lula and the Battle for Democracy*.
- 11 For more, see Tricontinental: Institute for Social, *A Map of Latin America's Present*.
- 12 For more on the active role of military and paramilitary forces in Latin American politics, read Tricontinental: Institute for Social, *The Military's Return to Brazilian Politics*.
- 13 Prashad, 'Latin America's Fourth Left Wave'.

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