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Savage Capitalism and the Myth of Democracy: Latin America in the Third Millennium

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**SAVAGE CAPITALISM AND THE MYTH OF
DEMOCRACY**

Latin America in the Third Millennium

MICHAEL HOGAN

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CHAPTER IX: SAVAGE SUBSIDIES

Few U.S. citizens are aware of the incredible resentment caused by the policy of subsidizing agricultural products which are dumped on the international market, while insisting that manufactured goods, in which the U.S. has a competitive advantage, be strictly subject to the laws of free trade.

It is estimated that governments of developed countries, largely the United States and the European Union, provide more than \$300 million¹ in domestic support and export subsidies for agricultural products: most notably sugar, cotton and corn which depress world market prices, diminish the earnings of poor countries and prevent them from competing with the developed world's artificially low prices. This is one of the major reasons that, despite the proclaimed economic advantages of "free trade" and the Washington Consensus², the poverty in Latin America has doubled over the past decade.

The economic competitive advantage of countries such as Brazil and Guatemala is that they can grow and harvest sugar cheaper than the United States. Mexico can produce corn cheaper and Argentina, beef. However, subsidies to agricultural conglomerates in the developed countries have created an artificially lower price whose

net result is an economic depression in these Latin American countries, abandonment of farm and ranch lands, and—in Mexico—the net importation of corn from the United States. Mexico at least has some leverage to fight back since it is the United States' largest trading partner. Recently it has sought an exemption from the Canadian and U.S. agreement to eliminate tariffs from all agricultural imports. Mexico has been negotiating a side agreement which will exempt beans and white corn from the tariff elimination process. Regardless of the outcome, opposition leaders in the Mexican Congress will make the agricultural aspects of NAFTA a major issue in the coming years.³

The West and Central African nations (Chad, Mali, Benin and Burkina Faso) produce cotton five times cheaper than the United States and it accounts for 80% of their exports. However, with 4 billion⁴ in subsidies to its own cotton farmers, the United States is able to flood the market with “cheaper” cotton, thus simultaneously bleeding the U.S. taxpayer and poor Africans. Nor do the subsidies protect independent U.S. farmers, since they go mostly to massive agribusiness corporations. Subsidies are, in effect, corporate welfare provided by successive administrations that have removed safety nets for marginal workers, cut food stamps and welfare, while transferring the surplus thus provided to double-dipping corporate agribusinesses. When a representative group of African nations at the Cancún Conference called for an immediate elimination of subsidies on cotton because they were destroying the livelihoods of African farmers and impeding

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development in the region, their proposal was greeted with contempt by the U.S. delegation. One U.S. negotiator reportedly quipped, “Create a larger demand for T-shirts!”⁵ The depths of resentment and even hatred that encounters such as these create abroad are considerable, and undermine the United States’ legitimacy as a world leader. According to the *New York Times*:

Any hope that the United States would take a moral high ground at Cancún, and reclaim its historic leadership in pressing for freer trade, was further dashed by the disgraceful manner in which U.S. negotiators rebuffed the rightful demands of West African nations that the United States commit itself to a clear phasing out of its harmful cotton subsidies. U.S. business and labor groups, not to mention taxpayers, should be enraged that the administration seems more solicitous of protecting the most indefensible segment of United States protectionism rather than protecting the national interest by promoting economic growth through trade.⁶

A report by the Carnegie Endowment, an independent Washington research group, found that after ten years of NAFTA, Mexico was worse off than it was before it signed the agreement. Jobs in the manufacturing service sectors had fallen by 2%. But those who suffered the worst were the farmers “who were adversely affected by falling prices for their crops, especially corn,”⁷ a problem intensified by the lowered tariff barriers to U.S.-grown corn which because of farm

subsidies could be sold at a lower price than the domestic Mexican commodity.

This issue of subsidies is interesting, too, in the light of the U.S. public's negative attitude toward foreign aid (less than 1% of the federal budget). We give more economic aid to multinational corporations to increase their profits than we do to all the countries in the world combined. And if we were to end those subsidies tomorrow, as the African delegation suggested at Cancún, the economic growth of those countries exporting their products at market prices would obviate the necessity for more foreign aid. Another boon to the U.S. taxpayer.

In Miami two months after the Cancún walkout, there was a conference to formulate guidelines for the new Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), a plan by the Bush administration to construct a set of rules upon which economic relations in the Western Hemisphere would be organized. Knowing the inconsistencies, inequalities and disruption that NAFTA caused in Mexico, Miami became a site for protests by union leaders, environmentalists, feminists and workers' groups. Their suppression by the Miami police was both brutal and unprecedented. According to a report filed by Rebecca Solnit there were over 200 demonstrators arrested and over 100 injured, most as a result of tear gas, pepper spray and blows to the head and face by police batons. People were pulled from their cars at gunpoint outside the International Hotel in Miami: "mostly white, mostly labor organizers, environmentalists and religious..."⁸ who saw the dangers inherent in

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another NAFTA-like agreement which would despoil the lands of Central America, pollute its rivers, dislocate its farmers and plunge the economies into a nose dive similar to that experienced by Mexico after the signing of the 1994 accord.

Ms. Solnit's comparison of the two agreements is not accidental. FTAA is an agreement which the current administration touts as having many of the same "benefits" as NAFTA. However, a close look at the results of the agreement over the past ten years show that besides loss of growth in the Mexican sector and the displacement of farmers, "close to 400,000 jobs have been lost in the U.S. since NAFTA with new jobs paying, on average, only 77 percent of the wages of their earlier employment."⁹ So that explains why the labor leaders and union members were there in Miami—ten thousand of them.

The FTAA, as presently written, could force countries throughout Central America to accept genetically modified foods. "Being forced to buy expensive patented seeds every season, rather than saving and planting their own, will force traditional subsistence farmers in the developing world into dependency on transnational corporations and closer to the brink of starvation."¹⁰ Of course, that's the point. But, lest we think this is a Central or South American problem, keep in mind that more than 80% of the planet's biodiversity in corn and potatoes is in Latin America. If that biodiversity disappears and a virus infects the common Idaho potato which is now the one most

commonly grown and sold today, the result will make the Irish Famine look like a walk in the park, not to mention what will happen to lovers of McDonald's french fries, deprived of their staple until the end of time.

As to the environmentalists, they know that since NAFTA "fifteen wood product companies from the U.S. have set up operations in Mexico, and logging there has increased dramatically. In the Mexican state of Guerrero, 40 percent of the forests have been lost in the last eight years, and massive clear-cutting has led to soil erosion and habitat destruction."¹¹ Those who risked being assaulted and imprisoned in Miami to protest the destruction of the U.S. middle class, the right to fair wages, the preservation of a strong labor force and the conservation of the last remaining oxygen sources in our hemisphere were doing work which honored us all. The contempt with which they were treated is akin to the contempt with which Martin Luther King was treated when he was similarly beaten and imprisoned in the U.S. South after he spoke up to protect the right and dignity of human beings fifty years ago.

The U.S proposal of the FTAA is not a method for shaping a global accord. It is rather a plan for a regional agreement in which U.S.-based multinationals have an economic advantage and are provided with preferential positions. So, while the administration preaches free trade and globalization, what it is actually seeking is a restriction on globalization with a competitive advantage for

multinationals based in the United States rather than those based in the Far East or Europe.

This in itself would not be wholly objectionable as it would simply encourage competition between regions. However, there is little that is “free” in it, either as free trade or as *laissez-faire* non-government interference in the market. It is direct manipulation of the market and so we have a gap both in ideology and in credibility.

U.S. labor unions and even the National Association of Manufacturers in the U.S. have suggested that the FTAA should not be approved by Congress unless there are revisions in the agreement for labor and environmental accords.¹² The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, most multinationals, and the Bush administration on the other hand were “flexible” on these issues because, of course, low wages and lack of environmental accords are exactly what allow large companies to make disproportionate profits. The price though, is high: child labor, brutal conditions, lack of social services, destruction of lakes and rivers, deforestation—and not one the businesses will have to pay. These costs will be absorbed by the host countries in terms of loss of potable drinking water, disease, fetus malformation, polluted air and generations of physically and mentally marginalized citizens. They will also be absorbed by the U.S. taxpayer in terms of increased unemployment, global warming, increased immigration, anti-U.S. sentiment, and a less secure world. Add to this the displacement of hundreds of thousands of farmers who can no longer make a living on

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the land due to agricultural subsidies and the flooding of the market with the products of those subsidies, and you have a cauldron of civic unrest, domestic disorder, and the violence born of desperation throughout Latin America.

When Henry Ford opened his factory in Dearborn, Michigan he had a revolutionary new theory. His idea was to mass produce automobiles, pay his workers a fair wage, and sell the automobile at a price his workers could afford. The idea worked, resulting in generations of highly paid workers, market growth, new designs and technological advances, and increased prosperity for his nation. He did not find the cheapest materials, the lowest paid workers; he did not move his plant to Guatemala or Cambodia. The reason: he wanted to create a larger market for his cars, not just sell them to the affluent. Ford knew that if he wanted his business to continue to grow, and the economy to grow, he needed to create customers for his products. In the process he provided business to the steel mills, the tire factories, to oil speculators and refineries. He provided millions of jobs to upholsterers, mechanics, oil workers, traffic cops and construction workers. And he sold more cars.

This sane economic reasoning has been lost on the new generation of global marketers. They want to move the companies to areas where the labor force is most mobile, most desperate and cheapest, and where the environmental laws are most lax. We are already seeing the inevitable results. The increase in inventory of hard

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manufactured goods, growing poverty in Latin America, irreparable damage to the environment, loss of employment in the United States, and recession.

A factory worker in Mexico making \$300 a month cannot purchase a new Ford. An electronics assembler in Guatemala making \$45 a week cannot afford the digital camera or computer she assembles. If the workers in the factories where the products are produced cannot afford to buy those products, what is the result? Short-term profits for a few manufacturers, cheaper prices for a few buyers, but—ultimately—stagnation, lack of growth, because even though more units are being produced, there are fewer people with the wages or savings to purchase them.

When United States Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick stated that opponents of globalization might have had “intellectual connections”¹³ with terrorists he was signaling a very dangerous formulation which is part of the Newspeak which underlies an ideological divide as far from Henry Ford’s model of capitalism as the World Bank is from Jeffersonian democracy. What the new formulation consists of is a combination of cooperate greed and anti-populist ideology which seeks to derive short-term economic advantage from the marketplace while destroying the economy now for the poor, ten years from now for the middle class, and a generation from now for those who will inherit the no-growth companies and paper wealth their forebears accumulated.

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There are, of course, alternatives. They don't appear on CNN or in White House press releases. However, they do exist. The policies that now encompass globalization are, in fact, merely corporate strategies marketed as global priorities and supported by those few who have their fingers in this very rich pie. It is in their self-interest to convince the public that there are no real alternatives, that free trade equals democracy, that its opponents are either communists promoting class conflict or intellectual bunkmates of international terrorists. In fact, there are hundreds of thousands around the world who are creating grassroots alternatives to this corporate globalization. Citizen groups composed of workers, small business people, investment counselors, doctors, attorneys, economists, teachers and scientists from around the world who have formulated the "Alternative Agreement for the Americas"¹⁴ which offers a view of what a totally responsible and environmentally sustainable economy in this hemisphere would look like. You can find this document on the Global Exchange website.¹⁵

The media tells us largely by its silence, that there is little happening in Latin America besides earthquakes, hungry masses and economic chaos. When proposals such as NAFTA and FTAA are decided on, when international economic conferences in Cancún or Miami are reported on, the media tells us that the protests outside the conferences are organized by anarchists and radicals whom the police need to keep in check to maintain public order. We are told that we are blessed to be living in the United States and that the problems of the

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Third World are ones we should let the experts in trade, finance and diplomacy take care of. Never in the course of human history has that been less true, never has the U.S. citizen's knowledge and awareness been more important. We need to be proactive; we need to ask questions of our representatives in Congress, read alternative versions of events on ZNet, Alterinfos, and other alternative publications¹⁶ and sites which report economic and social news of the hemisphere that affects us daily.

As Noam Chomsky once wrote in another time and place:

Whether they're called "liberal" or "conservative", the major media are large corporations, owned by and interlinked by larger conglomerates. Like other corporations they sell a product to the market. The market is advertisers, that is, other businesses. The product is audiences... There are systems of illegitimate authority in every corner of the social, political, economic and cultural worlds. For the first time in human history, we have to face the problem of protecting an environment that can sustain a decent human existence. We don't know that honest and dedicated effort will be enough to resolve or mitigate such problems as these. We can be quite confident that the lack of such efforts will spell disaster.¹⁷

Notes

1. John Ross, quoted in "Stop Racing to the Bottom." *The Progressive*, November, 2003, p. 8.
2. The term "Washington Consensus" is now synonymous with market fundamentalism applied globally. It was first used by economist John Williamson in 1989 to describe the agreement between the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. Treasury Department on those policies which would best promote economic reform in Latin America while, at the same time, promoting U.S. interests.
3. *NACLA: Report on the Americas*. Vol. XXXVII, May/June, 2003, p.5.
4. Teo Ballvé, "Globalization Resistance in Cancún." *NACLA: Report on the Americas*. Vol. XXXVIII, Nov./Dec., 2003, p.17.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
6. "Harvesting poverty: The Cancún Failure," *New York Times* (on-line headline service), September 16, 2003.
7. *NACLA: Report on the Americas*. Vol. XXXVII, May/June, 2003, p.5.
8. Celia W. Dugger, "Report Finds Few Benefits for Mexico in NAFTA." *New York Times* (on-line headline service). November 19, 2003.
9. Rebecca Solnit. "Report from Miami." <Tomdispatch.com> November 25, 2003.

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10. "Ten Reasons to Oppose the FTAA." *Global Exchange*. December, 2003, p. 1.

11. "Stop Racing to the Bottom." *The Progressive*, p. 9

12. *Global Exchange, op. cit.* p.2.

13. "House Leaders Urge Halt to Business, Labor, Environmental Effort." *Inside U.S. Trade*, February 16, 2001.

14. Quoted by William Finnegan in "The Economics of Empire" from *Harpers Magazine*, May, 2003, p. 41.

15. Available at www.zmag.org simply check the index.

16. www.zmag.org; www.alterinfos.org; see also www.orionline.org. MIT professor Noam Chomsky contributes many articles to the ZMagazine site and with his volunteer research staff and friends around the world provides an alternative view of the economy and of social and political conditions. Wendell Berry is a frequent contributor to the Orion site who offers alternatives to the corporate view of a globalized economy. Another important alternative resource is www.america.org which is the Center for America's Connection to the Americas.

17. Noam Chomsky, *What Uncle Sam Really Wants*. Odonian Press. Tucson, 1992, pp. 93-100.

CHAPTER X: LOST LIVES AND IMPOVERISHED SOULS - The Failure of the Church in Latin America

When the conservative Catholic cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI, many observers saw this as the beginning of a reactionary period for the Catholic Church; with the Cardinal's well-known opposition to female clergy, gay unions, cloning, freedom of choice, ecumenical movements, use of contraceptives to prevent AIDS, liberation theology, community organization of lay Catholics, and social activism. To those who have followed the politics of the Church in Latin America, however, his election came as no surprise and is clearly seen, not as a new position of the Church, but one which began in the 1980s.

Cardinal Ratzinger, well-known as the Vatican enforcer for Pope John Paul, ordered the 1984 "silencing" of liberation theologians, forbidding them to publish their work, and removing bishops who supported their views; as well as declaring Rome's opposition to the social activism and organizations for self-help which priests in impoverished regions had long regarded as central to their Christian mission.

To understand what this has meant to poor and disenfranchised populations in Latin America and what the election of this cardinal to the papacy is likely to mean in the years ahead, it is useful to look back at recent history—most notably in Central America.

El Salvador: Archbishop Oscar Romero was a traditional prelate when appointed to his position in El Salvador in the 70s. What made him exceptional as time passed was that he paid attention to the poor and disenfranchised in his congregation. He listened when they told him stories of family members kidnapped by government death squads, when they tried to organize agricultural workers, or when they spoke out against government policies of repression. He looked at the pictures of the tortured bodies of civilians who opposed the repressive regime, and he wrote to the authorities asking for help to put an end to the fear and oppression in which his parishioners lived. When the government was unresponsive, he began to reflect on the need for these people to organize to obtain redress and change their situation. He realized that the conservative tradition of the Church in Latin America, allied to the plutocracy, catering to the rich, and helping the poor solely through the distribution of alms to those most needy, merely served to perpetuate injustice. He felt that the poor and powerless had the right to try and alter their situation through self-help organizations, through education and community action. He also felt that the Church had an obligation through its leadership to assist this process in concrete ways.

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His efforts to serve these parishioners offended not only the repressive government and the upper classes, but even his wealthy parishioners who felt the Church was undermining their privileges. When he baptized Indian babies in the same baptismal font as the privileged white babies, they were outraged. His support of lay Catholic self-help groups was attacked as socialist activism. And, when he stood in the pulpit and called for an end to the government's violence against opposition groups, he was shot down in broad daylight.

At his funeral, held on March 30, 1980 at the Cathedral, government troops opened fire on the overflow crowd. The massacre left 44 dead and hundreds wounded. Among the witnesses that day was Maryknoll lay missionary Jean Donovan.

A year later Jean Donovan, along with two Maryknoll nuns—Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, and Dorothy Kazel, an Ursuline sister, were abducted, raped and shot to death by National Guardsmen. The next day peasants discovered their bodies alongside an isolated road buried in a shallow grave. Everyone familiar with the case knew that these women were killed by National Guardsmen and that the murders were countenanced, if not actually ordered, by the government.¹ Yet, when the Pope visited El Salvador in 1983, he purposely refused to address the murder of his bishop, or the murders of Jean Donovan and the nuns. He pointedly said the purpose of the Church was to teach that Jesus is the Son of God and to provide spiritual counsel to the flock. Privately,

he met with the priests and nuns in El Salvador and told them to discontinue their involvement with community self-help groups. He replaced the murdered Archbishop Romero with a conservative, giving him identical instructions in an effort to restore the Church to its former alliance with those in power—no matter how corrupt or complicit in organized violence—for which the Church was notorious a century before.

Nicaragua: The day before the Pope's visit to Managua in 1983, 17 members of a youth organization who had been murdered by Somoza's soldiers were buried after a memorial program in the same plaza where Pope John Paul II was to say Mass. It was hoped by most of the mothers and young people in attendance that the Pope would make some sympathetic remarks about the deaths of these teenagers. He did not. Instead he gave a sermon which demanded that the people of Nicaragua abandon their "untenable ideological commitments," and urged the bishops to be united. Previously, he had chastised Fr. Roberto Cardenal at the airport for his association with the farm workers' association, so a few in the congregation knew that no expression of unity with the people was likely to be forthcoming. Many others, however, believing the Pope was truly on the side of the people, began to chant: "A prayer for our dead" and "We want peace."² The Pope ignored them and finished his sermon. At the consecration, one of the mothers of the murdered boys broke in with a megaphone to say: "Holy Father, we beg you for a prayer for our loved ones who have been

murdered.”³ The Pope not only did not offer that prayer but skipped the Lord’s Prayer as well, with its traditional “sign of peace.” He offered Communion to a few dignitaries, gave the last blessing, and exited.

Later the BBC announcer would call it one of the “most unusual Masses in this Pope’s career.” For President Daniel Ortega, who asked the Pope before leaving for a solid proposal for peace in Nicaragua, to say “one word which would strengthen the people,” it was more than unusual. It was the turning away of this representative of the Prince of Peace from a clear opportunity to have an impact. To say that he left behind many alienated Catholics is an understatement.

It has been said by insiders that when the Pope asked what the people were shouting during the Mass (“Queremos paz!” We want peace!), he was told by one of his aides that it was of no importance, and that those calling out were Communists. With his own experience of Communism in Eastern Europe, this statement was like flashing a red cape before a bull. Not long after, the liberal bishops were replaced by conservatives as the Pope, encouraged by Ratzinger (who wrote a thesis on the subject), was shown alleged links between elements of liberation theology and Marxism. “The Pope began listening to those who were portraying liberation theology in caricatures—priests with guns, Marxists—and they just weren’t accurate,”⁴ said Dean Brackley, a theology professor at a Latin American Jesuit university. The following year, leading Brazilian liberation theologian Leonard Boff was ordered to Rome and sentenced to a year of “obsequious silence”

by Cardinal Ratzinger's committee, during which time he was denied permission to publish or to teach publicly. He has since resigned from the Franciscan order.⁵

Preferential Option: It could easily have been otherwise, without Ratzinger's influence. Pope John Paul II was also familiar with the Solidarity Movement in Poland, which was far more similar to the farm organizations and rural artisan groups in El Salvador and Nicaragua than with Marxism. But the die had been cast and the Church abandoned two decades of social activism and the "preferential option for the poor" to return to the "benevolent absence" which characterized so much of Latin America's hierarchy in the years of the dictators.

The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable was a concept that had evolved in the early sixties and became part of the Church philosophy at the Conferences of Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia (1968) and Puebla, Mexico (1979). Essentially it noted that there was a growing awareness of the poor's solidarity among themselves, their efforts to support one another, and their public demonstrations which, without recourse to violence, presented their own needs and rights in the face of the public authorities' inefficiency or corruption. "By virtue of her own evangelical duties," the bishops stated, "the Church must stand beside the poor, to discern the justice of their requests and to help satisfy them without losing sight of the common good."⁶ The bishops went on to say that, "As followers of

Christ we are challenged to make a preferential option for the poor, namely, to create conditions for marginalized voices to be heard, to defend the defenseless, and to assess lifestyles, policies and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor. The option for the poor does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather it calls us to strengthen the whole community by assisting those who are most vulnerable.”⁷

Cardinal Ratzinger’s Reversal: “An analysis of ‘liberation theology’,” wrote Cardinal Ratzinger in 1984, “reveals that it constitutes a fundamental threat to the faith of the Church.” He goes on to discover “radically marxist (sic) positions” in those who teach the theology and, although he acknowledges that “no error could persist unless it contained a grain of truth...an error is all the more dangerous, the greater that grain of truth is.”⁸ The grain of truth, of course, is the mission of Christ and his apostles as defined by the Gospels, most notably by the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus clearly affirms the “option for the poor.” Cardinal Ratzinger replies that this is an amalgam of a basic truth of Christianity and an un-Christian fundamental option, which is seductive and has the semblance of truth. “The Sermon on the Mount is indeed God taking sides with the poor,” he writes. “But interpreting the poor in the sense of the marxist dialectic of history, and taking sides with them in the sense of class struggle, is a wanton attempt to portray as identical things that are contrary.” While acknowledging the “irresistible logic of the liberation

theologians,” Cardinal Ratzinger suggests that this new interpretation of Christianity is tainted, that we should return to the “logic of faith, and present it as the logic of reality,”⁹ and that theologians, priests, lay people and nuns cannot interpret God’s word, only the Church herself has that authority.

The order to silence the liberation theologians which came shortly thereafter not only deprived professors of their jobs, priests of their most salient message to the poor, and removed bishops from their dioceses to be replaced by men who agreed with Cardinal Ratzinger, it also had a more deadly effect. It sent a message to the repressive regimes in Latin America that these people did not have the protection or support of the Church. Lay missionaries, nuns, priests, teachers, even aid workers were immediately seen as soft targets for the repressive regimes. One of the most brutal massacres which followed was the assault on the Central America University (UCA) in San Salvador. There, in the early hours of November 16, 1989, soldiers entered the Jesuit residence and assassinated the university president, Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria, and five other priests. Their cook Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina, who asked to stay the night for their own safety since soldiers had surrounded the campus, were also murdered.¹⁰

The murders of the Jesuit priests at the university sent a message to all those associated with liberation theology. With the withdrawal of Rome’s support for their work, with the clear import of Cardinal Ratzinger’s “Instruction” that this was a Marxist tainted

movement, everyone working in Latin America outside official government channels was vulnerable. The priests at the university were teachers and scholars. Fr. Ellacuria, a Madrid native, was internationally known as an educator and was even friends with former U.N. ambassador Jean Kirkpatrick. In the words of Fr. Charles Beirne, S.J., “They were priests, not partisan politicians. They dealt with the *polis*, the poor, and they explored the ethical dimensions of the national reality. For this they were silenced.”¹¹

The Red Herring of Marxism: Jean Donovan, the lay missionary who was murdered along with the nuns in El Salvador, was the daughter of a Sikorsky aircraft engineer from Westport, Connecticut. Raised in relative affluence, she had a masters degree in business administration from Case Western Reserve, was a dedicated Catholic and a lifelong Republican.

Well on her way to a successful management career in Cleveland, in 1979 she volunteered through her local church to work at a mission in El Salvador with the organization Caritas, after hearing of the work of Bishop Romero and the desperate plight of the children in that country. Shortly after her arrival in Central America, her letters home began to note mounting evidence of the connection between U.S. policies and the violence in El Salvador.¹² With the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and his promise of a strong stand against “Communism” in Central America, she saw that the U.S. had effectively given the repressive regimes in that region exactly what

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they needed: a free hand to eliminate opposition, stifle worker organizations, and intimidate (or even eliminate) relief workers whose support of “the people” rather than “the government” could be interpreted as Marxist. “Things grew progressively worse in El Salvador after the U.S. election...The military believed they were given a blank check—no restrictions.”¹³

The conflation of Catholic social work and Marxism by both governments had its effect. Reagan administration officials parroted the Salvadoran government’s excuse for the rape-murders, saying that the women had “run a roadblock,” and were “not just nuns but political activists.” When the Donovan family approached the State Department for information regarding the apprehension of those responsible for the murder of their daughter, they were treated coolly and then with hostility. The U.S. government, which they had formerly believed in so strongly as a bastion of justice, now appeared allied with the forces of repression. Eventually they were told to stop bothering State Department officials. The final insult occurred when they received a bill from the State Department for \$3,500 for the return of Jean’s body.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the head of the National Guard who was responsible for the murders, General Eugenio Vides Casanova, went on to become Minister of Defense under the U.S.-supported, “democratic” regime of José Napoleón Duarte. And thus the revolutionary era of the 80s came to an end in Central America.

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What followed in the 90s was a retreat from activism on the part of the Catholic hierarchy, the replacement of hundreds of bishops by more conservative prelates, a ban on teaching liberation theology in the universities, the silencing of major Latin American theologians, and a slow retreat of the Church from social activism. In Central America, local organizations have since lost much of their initiative and support, and true democracy has disappeared to be replaced with neoliberal “show” democracy in which one of the two wealthiest candidates gets to take control of the government with the blessings of the U.S. Today, war-ravaged El Salvador and Nicaragua, as well as Guatemala, are worse off than they were fifty years ago, with more than half the population receiving less than the minimal daily food intake for sustenance, with high unemployment, war and hurricane-damaged infrastructure, skyrocketing illiteracy rates, juvenile crime waves, and hopelessness. The charitable soup kitchens and food baskets of 2009 are a far cry from the self-help groups, organized *campesinos*, trade unions, and health clinics that the Church help organize and support in the 1980s.

In South America (with Venezuela, Brazil and Uruguay being exceptions), most countries have surrendered their political autonomy to the IMF, the World Bank and corporate investors. In some of these countries, most notably Brazil, liberation theology has deepened and broadened, especially where it is apparent that only pastoral work can serve the poor whom the State and neoliberal policies have left behind.

In Venezuela, the vacuum left by the loss of an activist Church has been filled by the populism of President Chávez who, fueled by the U.S. premature “recognition” of his replacement during an unsuccessful coup attempt,¹⁵ has created a war economy (“Avoid the U.S. Invasion, Pay Your Taxes”)¹⁶ while carefully distributing some of the oil largess to the most visible of the needy sectors.

Attempting to compete with the large numbers of poor who now flock to Christian evangelical churches where they can sing away their blues, praise the Lord, and hope for a better world after death, the new Pope (with the recruitment help of Opus Dei) has begun searching for young, good-looking, charismatic priests who can run the same type of operation with the Catholic imprimatur. They have had some limited successes especially with youth camps and rallies in which young people gather in open fields to attend what appear to be Christian versions of sixties rock concerts. Pope Benedict’s call for a new “evangelical mission” in recent communications to Latin America seems to be basically this: a removal of the Church from any real effort to work for social justice in Latin America and a decision to compete not for souls, but for audiences in a new evangelical movement, where hymns, invocations of the Holy Spirit and shouted amens and alleluias will provide an other-worldly escape from reality, and where religion will finally become, as Marx so prophetically noted, merely an opiate of the people. The genuine irony is, of course, that liberation theology and the option for the poor which Cardinal Ratzinger denigrated as

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Marxist, was a clear and powerful alternative to Marxism, and, unlike populism and the militarism which will likely follow as current regimes fail to deliver social justice, it continues to be the best hope of empowering people to change their lives, to create grass roots democratic movements, and to form safe, self-sufficient and prosperous communities.

NOTES:

1. There are numerous sources which recount in detail what happened to Jean Donovan and the three nuns. Among the best is the recent book: *Salvador Witness: The Life and Calling of Jean Donovan* by Ann Carrigan. Obis Books. Maryknoll, NY. 2005 from which some of this background is drawn.

2. From “The 1983 Visit of Pope John Paul II to Nicaragua” by Katherine Hoyt. http://www.hartford_hwp.com/archives/47/030.html
This is the text of a letter written by Hoyt to her parents a few days after the Pope’s visit to Managua. It was later posted on the web because of the authoritative nature of the account. Hoyt is the national coordinator of the Nicaragua Network Education Fund.

3. *Ibid.* The quotes which follow are all from Hoyt’s account.

4. The Dean Brackley quote is from “Part of the Flock Felt Abandoned by the Pope” by Cris Kraul and Henry Chu. L.A. Times, April 10, 2005. <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-libtheology10apr10,0,4626986.story>

5. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

6. From “An Introduction to the Principles of Catholic Social Thought. University of Notre Dame.”
<http://www.centerforsocialconcerns.nd.edu/mission/cst/cst4.shtml>

7. *Ibid.*, p.1

8. From “Preliminary Notes to Liberation Theology” by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger which preceded the “Instruction” of Fall, 1984.
<http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/retzinger/liberationtheol.htm>

9. Ratzinger, *op. cit.*, Sec. III, “Central Concepts of Liberation Theology.”

10. *Ibid.*, pp.7-8.

11. This information is from the Religious Task Force on Central America located at UCA, where the Jesuits were murdered. See “Martyrs of the University of Central America.”
<http://www.rtfcam.org/martyrs/UCA/UCA.htm>

12. “Ordinary People Made Extraordinary” by Fr. Charles Beirne, S.J.
<http://www.companysj.com/w171/ordinary.html>

13. From “Jean Donovan: Except for the Children.”
http://www.rtfcam.org/martyrs/women/jean_donovan.htm

14. *Ibid.* Quote is attributed to her mother, Patricia.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

16. In an April 13, 2002 editorial following the attempted coup, the *New York Times* declared, “Venezuelan democracy is no longer threatened by a would-be dictator.” The *Times* went on to explain that Chávez was “forced down by the military and replaced by a business leader.” Three days later, the *Times* offered a slightly apologetic retraction: “Mr. Chávez has been such a divisive and demagogic leader that his departure last week drew applause at home and in Washington. That reaction, which we shared, overlooked the undemocratic manner in which he was removed. Forcibly unseating a democratic leader, no matter how badly he has performed, is never something to cheer.”

17. This was on a banner viewed by the author near the Caracas airport on October 20, 2005.

CHAPTER XIV: THE SUNSET OF U.S. EMPIRE

BUILDING - The Rise of a New Latin America

A century and a half of interventions, costly miscalculations, even outright invasions, did not do much to push Latin America away from its sometimes passive-aggressive, sometimes envious, but always dependent relationship with the United States. It took the generalized failure of neoliberalism, coupled with four years of U.S. indifference to the region following the events of 9/11 and the unilateral megalomania of pre-emptive war, for Latin Americans to decide it was time to determine their own destiny.

Increased poverty, the failure of the Washington Consensus and the IMF, privatization and corporate greed, the marginalization of large groups of people—in what Washington touted as democratic reform and free trade—led to a gradual rejection of advice from U.S. economic and political experts pushing the neoliberal agenda throughout the hemisphere. The perceived hypocrisy of the United States government which, while condemning torture by the Latin American military in the past, exceeded the worst examples of it at Abu Ghraib; the failure to consult allies on a massive preemptive invasion; the callousness of a government which deported Central Americans during one of the worst

hurricanes in history and then failed to provide significant humanitarian aid, all contributed to the loss of U.S. moral authority in the region.

It used to be that the more the U.S. blundered, the angrier Latin Americans would become. Now, they are mostly grateful. Global television satellites carry pictures and narratives describing a government they no longer envy, and behaviors they find deplorable. The governmental indifference they saw as they viewed the poor in New Orleans slighted by elected officials, the incompetence which was apparent as they viewed \$300 million in mobile homes abandoned at an Arkansas airport, the intransigence which they observe as they watch U.S. marines dying in what is essentially a civil conflict in an Arab country, the violation of basic human rights of which they read as U.S. citizens have their phones tapped to provide more “national security,” have all made Latin Americans turn inward in recent years and rely on themselves, and on their neighbors with whom they share common cultural backgrounds and common goals. It has also helped them to avoid the ideological dichotomies and rhetorical traps which are so ubiquitous in U.S. public discourse, and to openly question the sacredness of strong executive democracy, global security, free trade, privatization, and creation of more ownership wealth; while taking a second look at socialism, community action, regional alliances, Bolivarian revolution, public resources, common space, state utilities, and equitable distribution of wealth. They have moved beyond traditional formulations and clichés, and toward a more pragmatic

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approach to true democracy “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” in the proto-socialist language of Abraham Lincoln.

The result has been more autonomous action in recent years: characterized by more self-reliance by Latin American republics, the growth of regional alliances, the use of true democratic instruments such as referendum and recall to change a constitution, unseat presidents who were toadies of the IMF, and to curtail the abuses of state power. It has made political leaders more responsive to the people, resulting in a new recognition of indigenous rights, discarding IMF guidelines and World Bank suggestions, discounting debts which were bleeding the populace of social services and basic subsidies, and refusing to privatize water and other resources which properly belong to the citizens themselves, and are their legacy to their children. It can be seen in the almost unanimous condemnation of the war with Iraq by Latin Americans, a general distrust of the hemispheric security alliance proposed by Washington, and a rejection of corporate theories maximizing profit at the expense of people—seen most significantly with Wal-Mart, which has devastated the U.S. landscape and undermined small businesses, but has been rejected by much of Latin America and may be forced to close its doors permanently in some regions because of declining profits.

A Simple Corrective

What the U.S. government and pundits (both conservative and liberal) characterize as a Leftist movement and a resurgence of Marxism in the region, most Latin Americans view as a simple corrective, much like that implemented during the era of Franklin Roosevelt after the disaster of the Great Depression and the incompetence of the Hoover Administration. What North Americans view as unholy alliances such as those being formed between Venezuela and Cuba, most Latin Americans see as practical solutions to real problems of survival, no less pressing than those of the United States when it formed a 1940s alliance with Russia to ensure the survival of its people. What North Americans see as disorderly and chaotic, for example the teacher strikes in Mexico, the indigenous blockades of highways in Guatemala, the removal of presidents in Argentina, the constitutional reforms in Venezuela; most Latin Americans see as true democratic processes where the people are finally having a real voice in governance, and correcting plutocratic republics which have long been tilted in favor of inherited wealth and privilege—much as our U.S. activist labor organizations operated as a corrective against the abuses of the Carnegies and Vanderbilts in the early part of the 20th century. For too long Latin Americans have been denied their own history while the U.S. forced them to operate as addenda to the North American story. Now all that has changed. Latin

Americans are writing this new chapter of continental history and they do not want U.S. editors or spellcheckers involved in the process.

Erosion of Neoliberalism

Grassroots reactions against globalization policies, promoted by U.S. multinationals and the IMF, have been having their effect throughout Latin America. The voices of organized labor, the unrepresented working poor, university students, indigenous people, environmentalists, professors, middle and leftist political candidates, are finally being heard. The regional press, which used to call any such opposition “globophobia” and demean the protestors as unorganized and without a clear agenda, has now begun to report more seriously, occasionally even editorializing on their behalf. Moreover, the protests are having concrete results as more and more governments are beginning to see the futility of trying to lead without “the consent of the governed.”

A Broader Democracy

When Abraham Lincoln gave his celebrated Gettysburg Address, the oft-quoted “four score and seven” referred to the American Revolution, and the ideal of equality defined in the Declaration of its principles. He observed that the Republic had failed. That was why they were meeting on this “great battlefield” in

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Pennsylvania to dedicate a massive graveyard with tens of thousands of dead on both sides.

The failure of the hemisphere's first revolution and the claim of its Declaration that "all men are created equal" was apparent by the 1860s with 13% of the population enslaved (47% in the South). Lincoln wondered whether "this nation or any other nation so conceived and so dedicated" could endure. Even then, of course, indigenous people were not even in the equation, nor were women. While the Republic was a government "of the people," that is, ostensibly a democratic republic, it was certainly not **for** the people, except for white men, nor **by** the people, except by the landed gentry, merchants, the plutocrats of Washington and their minions. He hoped on that battlefield in 1863 that the country would experience "a new birth of freedom."

What we are seeing in Latin America is exactly that: a new birth of freedom, a more inclusive democracy. We are also seeing the end of ideology, and a different kind of social enterprise. The new models are certainly not socialism as it was known in the past, with indigenous workers excluded from the process, with bureaucracies and party bosses calling the shots. They seem instead to be genuine attempts at government by the people and for the people, demanding that political leaders, business owners and corporations behave responsibly and in the best interests of the governed; not condoning privatization of a country's natural resources, interested in neighbor alliances, encouraging indigenous participation at every level and condemning

the cronyism common to U.S. politics where lucrative contracts are awarded to friends and pristine lands are exploited at the behest of Washington lobbyists on the payrolls of coal, gas and oil companies.

The Sanctity of Private Property

The U.S. has expressed concerns about investments in the region and has invoked the sanctity of private property which appears to have been violated with workers taking over an abandoned hotel, a private school and a factory in Argentina and running them successfully. It has also raised this issue when indigenous people reclaimed untenanted hectares in Brazil and Bolivia, or forced corporate timber cutters to leave ancestral lands. However, in the case of Argentina, these properties were deserted by absentee landlords; in the case of Brazil and Bolivia, these ancestral lands were either left fallow or at imminent risk of being denuded and destroyed.

Meanwhile, in the United States, good houses and profitable small businesses are condemned so that Wal-Marts can be built, in clear abuse of the true spirit of eminent domain statutes. In addition, this same company and others like it, having destroyed businesses and put people out of their homes, often abandon their own sites within a few years to avoid paying municipal taxes.

Who is instructing whom on the sanctity of private property? Ownership of property is a right which carries obligations. When property is neglected and becomes an eyesore and a health hazard, it is

the right of the people in that neighborhood to take action. When a public forest is being denuded, streams polluted, and fertile lands expropriated by international corporations to grow soybeans for China, it is certainly the right of indigenous people to protect their heritage. This is democracy and this is what we are seeing in Latin America. In the U.S., Wal-Mart's use of its economic clout to manipulate the courts into condemning perfectly good homes and businesses is a clear corruption of the system, and clearly undemocratic. The U.S. invocation of the sacredness of property shibboleth is clear hypocrisy.

Peace Movement

The demilitarization movement in Costa Rica, spearheaded by Nobel Laureate Oscar Arias, is an example of the winds of change in Latin America. I spoke with Arias in San José two years ago and he said that he envisioned Costa Rica as a regional leader in demilitarization, which would set an international example of peace, regional cooperation, social welfare, and environmental efforts. Costa Rica has replaced its armed forces with a national brigade (focused mostly on rescue operations, border and airport security, and disaster relief), and has thus reserved millions of dollars for its education budget, and spearheaded international aid efforts and peace initiatives (Arias brokered the treaty in Central America which ended a decade and a half of war, and has more recently been involved with the Honduras accords after the military removed a sitting president).

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Meanwhile, Costa Rica leads the world in environmental custodianship, while the U.S. Congress debates such measures as whether or not it should ravage its pristine arctic habitats for the last remaining drops of oil.

Mexico's refusal to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and most of Latin America's reluctance to be part of the Security Alliance of the Americas, its distrust of U.S. military intervention including a century and a half of invasions throughout the Americas, leaves only seven countries out of the thirty-four in Latin America as reluctant supporters of the U.S. presence in Iraq, and that support is largely based on trade accords not ratified by the populace.

Most people in Latin America felt that the Administration's use of 9/11 as the *casus belli* for invasion of Iraq made as much sense as invading Canada in retaliation for the Oklahoma City bombing. They saw the 9/11 attack, like that by the home-grown terrorists in Oklahoma, as one perpetrated by individuals and not by a sovereign State, to which the logical response should have been to investigate and track down the perpetrators and their supporters who, the world knows, happened to be Saudis not Iraqis.

The latest Washington-inspired proposal for the Latin American region, an "Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism" seems to most people in the southern hemisphere as patently absurd. Central America has real and present problems with public safety in the form of trained-in-the-U.S. Latino gangs which have infested their communities

and are a far more real and much more imminent danger than Osama Bin Laden. The U.S. seems to have little to offer in terms of help for the problem of these hemispheric terrorists. People in Venezuela and Brazil are much more concerned with problems of crime and delinquency fostered by inherited social problems, than they are with U.S. threats from the Middle East. To them, the hemispheric security alliance is just another U.S. nationalistic plan which will draw off funds, security personnel and technology from areas where they would be most effective for their own citizenry.

Current U.S. Latin American Policy

There is no consistent U.S. policy for Latin America. The most significant aspect of our policy has been pervasive neglect in recent years. There has been, of course, promotion of trade agreements beneficial to international corporations and U.S. economic interests, the creation of *maquiladoras* (which, while destroying the environment and putting female workers at risk, ensure low costs to U.S. consumers), and a refusal to end U.S. agricultural subsidies, thus depriving Latin American farmers of a fair price for their produce. In some cases such as Venezuela and Nicaragua, there has been leverage applied to the electoral process, in Paraguay an installation of U.S. troops, in Colombia a massive amount of funding to impede drug traffic which has also hindered the growth of leftist opposition, while at the same time ensuring the relative immunity of right wing vigilantes. For the

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rest, mostly ignorance and neglect to such an extent that few Latin Americans take the U.S. seriously, just as no one takes an elephant seriously. One has respect, of course, for its size and power as an entity, but not as an intellectual, cultural or moral force, and certainly not for its leadership abilities.

President Obama's recent participation in the Conference on the Americas in Port of Spain was heralded as a step in repairing these relationships. However, its effectiveness was diluted considerably by the U.S. media's concern over his receiving a gift book from President Chávez, and his ostensible overtures to Cuba (which was not even invited to participate in the conference). Despite what U.S. pundits have said about the administration's new concern for a Latin American partnership, President Obama's response to the gift he received from Chávez was noteworthy. The book, *The Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano, is one of the best historical analyses of the region. It has sold millions of copies and is required reading in most international studies programs. When asked about it, President Obama's replied, "Just because I accepted the gift, doesn't mean I intend to read it." Whether his response was dictated by a need to mollify his critics on the right or by simple ignorance of the book's content, it was unfortunate.

The Colombian Exception

Despite some justifiable criticism of Plan Colombia since its inception, the continued presence of right-wing security squads and human rights abuses in rural areas, Colombia has gone from a war-ravaged, drug-infested, insecure country in the 90s to one of the most prosperous and generally safe regions in Latin America. I have visited every major city there and the capitol a half dozen times over the past eighteen years. I was impressed by the cosmopolitan excitement of Bogotá, which compares favorably with Boston in term of cultural activities, music, museums, documentary film-making, fine universities, and continental cuisine. The young people are stylish, educated, and multilingual. It has a strong middle class and, while it has its poor, there is little evidence of the homelessness and beggars which one can see any day in Washington or San Francisco.

Medellín, once considered the “murder capital” of the world, is now one of the most attractive cities in the Americas. It has the feel of an Austrian metropolis surrounded by pristine farms, lushly wooded hills, and crisp mountain air. It has a well-maintained infrastructure, with clean streets, excellent public transportation, and one of the most prestigious medical universities in the Americas. Medellín is, in fact, so safe that it was where former Secretary of State Rice chose to visit on her last official trip to the region.

Much of Colombia’s success is due to its president, Alvaro Uribe, whose family was victimized by drug-related violence; he has

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since been committed to its eradication. But, in fairness, it is more than that. There also has been a genuine effort by the U.S. Department of State to work in a cooperative way with local officials in the country, not only to help contain the violence and eradicate drug cultivation, but also to eliminate corruption in the police and armed forces, and to secure the already-strong educational system. While engaged in these activities, U.S. representatives in the region have also exhibited respect for the culture, and there have been virtually no negative incidents involving U.S. personnel.

Colombian universities are now attracting new students from all over the world; secondary schools are involved in the Advanced Placement program; the president has implemented a plan to stop the brain-drain of the best and brightest and is also offering financial incentives for the 4,000 or so Colombians with doctorate degrees now living abroad to return to their native country.

In 2007 a local newspaper conducted a survey asking whether readers felt more secure now than a decade ago, whether they trusted the police, and whether the president was doing a good job. Affirmative responses were in the 70th percentile. That same year I went down to visit a school in Barranquilla and I was again impressed by the quality of education, the determination of young people to get ahead, and the enthusiasm of those who attend the (sometimes free) concerts offered by Juanes and Shakira, two Colombians whose international acclaim and wealth have not distracted them from their obligations to their

homeland, and who have made significant financial and moral commitments to building peace and aiding Colombian youth. Shakira's *Pies Descalzos* (Barefeet) Foundation has given aid to thousands of children displaced by civil wars and violence; Juanes has brought global attention to landmine removal, and has turned paramilitary rifles into guitars to highlight the disarmament process.

I have read (and have myself written) a great deal of criticism of the U.S. in Latin America, most of it justified. However, for those who criticize our cooperative efforts of the past decade with Colombians to work for a safer and more prosperous country, I would say come to Medellín, come to Bogotá. You will see what can be accomplished.

The Bolivarian Alternative

Just as Abraham Lincoln invoked the hope of a “new birth of freedom” in the United States, José Martí, hero of Cuban independence, also called for a “second independence” in the Americas, this one from U.S. dominance. Now, President Hugo Chávez seems poised to make that happen. The new “alliance for progress,” popularly known as ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas), is a plan for regional alliances and sharing of resources. It has resulted in a Development Bank of the South and a Latin American Development Fund to replace dependence on foreign capital and expand Latin American trade with Europe and Asia. For Venezuela, it has also spearheaded the construction of 600 comprehensive health clinics with Cuban

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assistance, and sent 30,000 Cuban medical technicians to train cadres of health workers. In Cuba, aspiring Venezuelan doctors and nurses will receive free training at Cuba's prestigious School of Medical Sciences where 43,000 students from 17 countries (including 71 from the U.S.) are now working to get their medical degrees. In exchange, the Venezuelan government will provide 90,000 gallons of oil a day to energy-deprived Cuba, and invest in Cuban electricity production and oil refining.

Meanwhile, energy sector agreements between Venezuela, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay have been enacted which include PetroCaribe for the entire Caribbean region. In addition, Mercosur, the South American trade block consisting of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay (Bolivia, Chile and Peru are associate members), is poised to induct Venezuela as a member. It is also considering Cuba as an associate member. With all this in mind, it is worth pointing out that, despite U.S. efforts to discredit Cuba in the region and in the international arena, Cuba now has diplomatic relations with 32 of the 34 Latin American nations, the only exceptions being El Salvador and Costa Rica.

The Rise of A New Latin America

Latin America is poised to become more independent, making regional alliances, promoting a more participatory democracy, with more rights for indigenous peoples, and more use of referendum and

recall by the people to push through social legislation or remove corrupt leaders. Socialism will be regional in nature and look quite different from its historical forms (even Cuba's in the past): a bit more like Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in some aspects, a bit like direct democracy in others. Labor unions will merge into companies where labor and management share decision making, or even form worker-owned companies. There will be more worker rights in terms of on-site health care, on-site day care, and worker-managed retirement investments. Vacant land and abandoned buildings (from failed Wal-Marts to warehouses abandoned by absentee landlords) will continue to be expropriated and made productive.

Government leaders will demand more corporate responsibility from users of the environment or put their legitimacy and tenancy in office at risk. Natural gas, petroleum, water and other national treasures will remain the property of the people and be managed by the State or as cooperatives.

The United States will become less and less influential in the region as countries form local partnerships, and trade blocs for negotiations with China, the European Union and Southeast Asia. Investment in education will increase with some of the smaller states developing (much as Ireland has over the past twenty years) into significant economic entities, raising the quality of life for their citizens. As Costa Rica has already done, some will abandon armies and armaments and invest those funds in education and social

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development. Those states with no natural enemies will also become more important on the international scene by offering advice to other nations wishing to dismantle military institutions whose primary function has been to control a marginalized populace.

Countries which have weapons of mass destruction (U.S., China, North Korea, Great Britain, France, India, and Pakistan) will find the burdens of “defense” expensive, redundant and superfluous as the years go on. The real threat to the social order and the average person’s security on the planet will come from those nations with the most marginalized people and, while most of those threats will be internal (gang violence, crime), some will be external (international terrorism). Nevertheless, experience from the Latin American examples will be convincing: these problems will be far better handled by trained police forces and international security arrangements than by occupying armies, missile strikes and bombing of civilians.

Latin America will continue to be a world leader in literature, music, filmmaking, architecture, sculpture and painting. The region will produce new works of political and social thought, explore new dimensions in philosophy and rewrite the history of the hemisphere. It will become one of the most important locations for studies in medicine, pure and applied science, engineering, and—most importantly—the humanities. While the U.S. may invest, in “more advanced science and math” initiatives,” Latin America will balance the teaching of the sciences with investments in the humanities. Time

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and time again local leaders and the independent press in Latin America have cited the need for citizens to think critically, to analyze their societies, to develop an appreciation of their rich cultures, and to help create a better world. They know that a society composed only of scientists, mathematicians and engineers will not give them that. A truly educated populace is one that can take its leaders to task when they offer absurdities, can form arguments to disrobe injustice, and can instill respect in its children for many different cultures. Such a society would be multicultural and multilingual, it would value humanity over property, and culture over development. In the words of Mexican poet Jaime Sabines, *Otros saben las palabras del canto, nosotros cantamos*. “Others know the words of the song, but we sing.” Throughout Latin America, those songs are being heard.

Guadalajara, Mexico. 2009

This new collection of essays, praised by Noam Chomsky, gives an on-the-ground report on conditions in Latin America by a well-known consultant and historian who has lived and worked in the region for the past twenty years.

Savage Capitalism and the Myth of Democracy: Latin America in the Third Millennium

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