

# The future of the Latin American left?

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A critical review of the politics behind Jorge Castañeda's book, *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left after the Cold War* (1993)

Towards the end of March this year Joaquin Villalobos announced the formation of a new party in El Salvador--the Democratic Party. It was formed by three of the five factions that went to make up the former guerrilla opposition, the FMLN, plus a splinter from the old ruling Christian Democrats.

The new party was necessary, according to Villalobos, because the FMLN "persists in staying a traditional left wing party".

Villalobos was one of the main leaders of the FMLN. His new party considers itself to be social democratic and reformist, renouncing Marxism and embracing aspects of the right's pro-market policies.

It is a model of the kind of party, programme and broad alliance advocated in Jorge Castañeda's book.<sup>1</sup> Published in 1993, it has only been available in English in Britain since the end of 1994. By then it was already considered a seminal work amongst Latin American specialists, provoking lengthy reviews, inspiring conferences in Latin America, the USA and Europe.

This is not surprising, since Castañeda's book fits in well with the response of much of the left to the collapse of Stalinism. His survey concludes with a call to turn away from the search for "utopias".

The alternative to neo-liberal, free market capitalism, is not socialism, but "social market" capitalism as practised in Germany and Western Europe. Castañeda declares:

"After years of seeking vanguards and justifiably engaging in confrontational activism, the left must move on to a politics of broad coalitions, or historical compromises. It should strive to extend the backing for its programme to as much as two thirds of the electorate and political forces of any given nation. Its programme must consequently be strictly reformist, yet sufficiently radical to make a difference."

Herein lies Castañeda's own utopianism: a belief that it is possible to persuade the Latin American ruling classes to repatriate their capital and accept the higher taxes attached to a welfare statist strategy; a belief that it is possible to persuade the imperialist powers to provide massive aid, while abandoning their demands for open markets in Latin America!

Nevertheless, despite the underlying political thesis of the book, *Utopia Unarmed* is a well-researched and thought-provoking survey of the Latin American left.

The left in question

Guerrilla movements such as the FMLN were among the most important components of the Latin American left, notching up some spectacular successes (Nicaragua, 1979) and bloody failures (Argentina after 1973). But Castañeda's book deals with other major components of the left.

The rise and fall of Stalinism in the industrial working class between the wars is accounted for, as is the experience of left populism which eventually largely displaced Stalinism within the ranks of the working class.

The "social left" is also analysed: the community-based movements that arose in response to the abuse of human rights by military regimes or mushroomed with the rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation of the 1960s and 1970s.

A whole chapter is devoted to the role of the intellectual left who have played an enormous and unique role in Latin America "at the seam of a strong state and weak civil society".

But defining the "left" in Latin America is not an easy matter. By European standards, Latin America has witnessed a rapid but relatively recent growth in the urban working class. By contrast, a very large peasantry presses it on one side and a growing legion of under-employed and unemployed urban poor (often self-employed stall holders, the "ambulantes") overshadows it on the other.

All this has given a fluidity to the boundaries of the "left" in Latin America. Programmes reflecting combined, not to say confused and contradictory, class aspirations are often brought together under its banner.

Castañeda defines the left he is examining early in his book:

"Ideologically and politically, the LA left can be broken down into four groups: traditional Communist parties, the nationalist or populist left, the political-military organisations, and the region's reformists. Functionally, two groups can be added: the grass-roots and the intellectual left."<sup>3</sup>

During the course of the last 35 years the importance of these currents within the left has naturally varied, along with the key ideological and programmatic debates.

#### Paradise lost

There is no doubt, as Castañeda says, the Latin American left in the 1990s is weaker and more marginalised than at any time since the second world war. But why? And was it inevitable?

Castañeda answers the last question with a qualified yes. The existence of the USSR and, later, Castro's Cuba gave shape and meaning to the region's left. Yet the proximity and power of the USA and its determination to set aside other countries' national sovereignty in pursuit of anti-communism all, according to Castañeda, made the left's project improbable if not impossible.

Not content with this generalisation, however, Castañeda examines in detail the left's chosen strategies for power. His critique is on strongest ground when he examines Stalinism.

The Communist parties were never mass parties in Latin America the way that the Italian, German or French parties were. But in the 1940s some of the region's CPs were sizeable and well rooted in the working class. In Chile, Brazil and Uruguay they were able to win 12-17% of the vote in national elections.

These parties were among the most devoted to the implementation of Stalin's international policies. After the seventh Comintern Congress in 1935, the People's Front line dominated everywhere. In Mexico, the CP pursued "unity at any cost" with the radical nationalist Cárdenas regime from 1936.

In Chile, the party backed the government after 1938 "even in the face of strikes and discontent among its own rank and file". In Cuba, the CP was fanatical in its support for General Batista, eventually overthrown by Castro 20 years later.

When the Second World War broke out, the People's Front was formally hailed by the CPs as an anti-imperialist united front against fascism and imperialism. In reality, it was an alliance with their "own"

bourgeoisie and US imperialism against Germany.

In Argentina, this strategic alliance pitched the CP headlong against Peronism, a populist regime which veered towards Germany during the war. In this head-to-head contest Stalinism lost much of its working class constituency.

By 1947, almost all the CPs in Latin America were "seriously weakened, divided, or divorced from their traditional or political constituencies." As a result it was easy, when the Cold War was opened by the US in 1947, for the ruling regimes in Latin America to declare the Stalinist parties--in Brazil, Chile, Mexico and elsewhere--illegal.

This did not deter the Stalinists from pursuing their goal of a "national, democratic revolution" in an alliance with the national bourgeoisie, this time against the USA. But outside of Brazil, Chile and Uruguay they did not prosper. In the case of the first two they were crushed by military coups, victims of a paradox that afflicted all the Stalinist parties:

"On the one hand, no matter what it did or said, no matter how often and vigorously it stressed its moderation and pragmatism, it could not shake the image of Communist rule as it existed elsewhere... At the same time, the oldest, best-implanted Communist leaderships, could not forsake their proverbial moderation and adopt the approach of the extreme left..."

With the accelerated collapse of Stalinism, after Gorbachev's assumption of power in 1985, the writing was on the wall. By the 1990s, only in El Salvador and Uruguay did Stalinist parties retain any influence.

### **Cuba, Sí**

The Cuban revolution was a defining moment for the left in Latin America; in many ways it still is. With the passing away of the Sandinista revolution and the unremitting hostility of the US to this small island, there are no causes remaining for many on the left except "defence of the Cuban revolution".

As bad as things are, it is reasoned, things will be a lot worse if the mass of oppressed and exploited of the region are forced to watch either the self-destruction or forcible overthrow of the Cuban revolution.

Castañeda gives full recognition to this:

"The Cuban Revolution impacted the left in Latin America as nothing had ever done before . . . Before Fidel entered Havana, the left in Latin America was reformist, gradualist, or resignedly pessimistic about the prospects of revolution. For the three decades that followed, revolution was at the top of the agenda . . .

The 1956 Granma expedition launched by Castro opened an era of revolutionary guerrilla struggle in Latin America which even now has not completely ended.<sup>9</sup> Armed struggle was not new to Latin America. In Colombia, for example, the Stalinists were leading a peasant-based guerrilla movement (Marquetalia) from 1955.

But Castro's victory inspired a continental movement and induced splits within the Communist Parties which (Colombia and Venezuela apart) were firmly opposed to armed struggle.

Castro declared the revolution to be armed and socialist, not just peaceful or national. He insisted that the national bourgeoisie and the working class were not revolutionary classes, but the urban and rural petit bourgeoisie were.

It was not a revolution carried out by the masses but a strategy carried out by dedicated nuclei (foco), by turns inciting, evading and leading the small band to victory. Importantly, given the nature of Latin

America's exploitation and oppression at the hands of imperialism, the Cuban road was relevant to all countries in the region.

In Argentina and Uruguay, where the population was heavily concentrated in urban centres, or in Brazil where the CP was well rooted in the main cities, the Cuban revolution inspired urban guerrilla movements.

They were, in the main, not mass organisations and were led and mainly composed of disaffected urban intelligentsia, including students. Manual workers were an important but secondary group.

The Tupamaros in Uruguay were the most resilient and successful in terms of putting the ruling regime on the defensive for periods, but they, like all the others, were ruthlessly crushed by military dictatorship. It was the ferocious destruction of the guerrilla cadre in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay that brought this strategy literally to a dead-end.

In addition, Che's death in 1967 took the shine off the foco version of the guerrilla struggle. Castro's support for the Kremlin's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 left many of the armed groups disillusioned with the Cuban regime.

Between 1967 and 1975 the uneven process of convergence between the foreign policies of the Cuban state and the Kremlin was finally completed<sup>12</sup> signalling an end to tacit or overt support for the guerrillas inspired by the Cuban revolution.

### **The second wave**

In the 1970s, a new form of guerrillaism was to emerge, this time in Central America. In 1969 Salvador Carpio, leader of the Communist Party in El Salvador, split with his own party to launch an armed struggle. He expressed a different conception to the foco line:

"The new organisations had to lead two struggles simultaneously: the mass struggle and the armed struggle . . . We understood that the people had to be the ones to make war and that the armed groups should not become an elite, a bunch of heroes unlinked to the masses, who were going to save the masses the trouble of making the revolution."

The second wave remained wedded to guerrillaism as a strategy but realised that they needed a broader and firmer base of social support for their actions as well as a less immediate and provocative attitude to the armed struggle (the "prolonged war" concept). Additionally, the new wave placed less reliance upon Moscow or Peking as models or bastions of support.

In El Salvador many groups of this kind were formed in the 1970s, only gaining a serious military capability around 1980 when they joined together to form the FMLN.

They began to receive arms from Ethiopia and Vietnam, shipped via Cuba. They reacted to the army's huge urban offensive by taking to the mountains. They fought a "prolonged war" in the countryside, establishing liberated zones and organising big political protest movements in the cities and towns.

Castañeda claims that the FMLN developed what would "qualify as the most important mass movement in Latin America since the Popular Unity in Chile."

But in the last analysis the political struggle was subordinated to the military. Both, in turn, were increasingly subordinated to bourgeois horizons. Castañeda says that the FMLN "became essentially an army with a political wing, instead of remaining what it had set out to be--a broad based political movement that also participated in the armed struggle." Urban mass political actions became less and less important

in the strategy.

The great success of the "second wave" was the revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 led by the FSLN.

Castañeda stresses the importance to this victory of having won over sections of the bourgeoisie:

"The national bourgeoisie was brought over to the revolutionary camp because serious concessions had been made in its direction, and because it had nowhere else to go."

When Pedro Chamorro (leader of the bourgeois opposition to Somoza) was assassinated by the dictator in 1978 the main part of the bourgeoisie went over to the Sandinistas.

Although committed guerrillaists, the FSLN carried out fewer major actions and possessed fewer arms than the FMLN. Years after victory Humberto Ortega acknowledged that, "the central axis of victory was not the military aspect, but rather the masses' participation in the insurrection."

In fact, Castañeda makes clear that the greatest militarisation of politics, so characteristic of guerrillism, came after victory in 1979. Determined to not to be overthrown by internal or external armed force, the FSLN drafted in the Cubans to build a massive security apparatus and armed forces. The Sandinistas had the armed power, while the bourgeoisie retained its hold over much of the economy.

The Nicaraguan masses suffered both ways. They paid the price of economic concessions to the national bourgeoisie. But they also suffered from having no control over their political administration. It was clear from around 1985 that political support for the FSLN from the masses was ebbing away.

Castañeda is uneasy with the Nicaraguan revolution. He admires the way it brought the bourgeoisie into the fold, and the way the factions inside the FSLN avoided internecine conflicts, unlike so many other groups in Latin America. But in the end, for Castañeda, despite the fact that it was a popular and justifiable revolution, it proved ultimately unsustainable and thus should not have been attempted:

"If revolution was the goal, theirs was probably, regrettably, the only way to go about it."

But, of course, Castañeda's goal is not revolution but how to avert it. He is wrong.

It is certainly true that in a small economically backward Central American republic a successful revolution that overthrows or restricts capitalism will not be likely to survive indefinitely without outside help when faced with hostility and sabotage from stronger states. But from where should that help come and of what character should it be?"

The FSLN should have put all their efforts into extending the revolution in Central America. Conditions between 1979 and 1982 were particularly favourable for this in El Salvador. The US bourgeoisie was also divided and weakened at precisely this time, before Reagan came to office in 1981. But the FSLN decided to lean upon Castro. This bureaucratized the revolution and, by 1983, turned the FSLN into Cuban intermediaries in seeking to wind down the El Salvador struggle.

The FSLN thought they were buying time by this, but it only emboldened the White House. The FSLN refused to overthrow capitalism and with it get rid of the main long term source of counter-revolution--the national bourgeoisie. They gambled on its patriotism and decency--and lost.

Castañeda abjures guerrilla wars that have a social content. He regards them as doomed to end in a glorious failure that underscores the futility of the revolutionary armed struggle for power. Castañeda sees the militarisation of politics as the inevitable result of any recourse to arms and therefore best resisted.

Revolutionary socialists, in contrast, see militarisation as endemic to guerrillaism when elevated to a strategy.

In this case political mass struggle is subordinated to armed actions. The secrecy and conspiracy required atomises class consciousness and prevents political control of the struggle by the oppressed masses themselves.

In the revolutionary Marxist strategy for power, the development of mass organisations of political struggle and the general strike weapon are central. They are the overwhelming preoccupation of revolutionary forces for most of the time. In most urban societies the military struggle will be confined to necessary self-defence actions before the insurrectionary wave.

Propaganda and agitation inside the standing armies of the state in order to destabilise them are as, or more, important during most of the revolutionary process. But even where, as in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), protracted armed struggle over much of the country is forced upon the working class, political strategy is decisive. Popular frontism, the failure to offer the Spanish colonies their freedom or the Spanish peasants the land--these were the main causes of the ultimate victory of Franco, not German planes.

The other main lesson of the "second wave" that Castañeda fails to draw is that the Nicaraguan revolution stopped half-way.

While certain compromises with the national bourgeoisie were legitimate and necessary to secure the overthrow of Somoza, they should never have extended to guarantees on its property rights.

The decisive force in pushing aside Somoza's military was the action of the masses. Concessions to the bourgeoisie meant that the material foundation for a social and political backlash were left in place and, after 1985, were built upon. The loss of popular support guaranteed the downfall of the revolution--not any intrinsic fault in revolution per se. At the end of the day, the link between the first and second waves of the guerrilla struggles in Latin America was their petit-bourgeois character.

They were never aimed at the overthrow of capitalist private property and as such could never ally themselves with the only class that had the power to effect fundamental social change--the working class

The alliance with plebeian social strata such as the peasantry and proletariat was, in the end, not fundamental to their objective. It was a necessary expedient ? a way of broadening their support, giving their armed struggle some chance of durability in the face of a hostile regime.

## **Convergence**

As a social democrat who sees the only future for the left in Latin America in a revival of social democracy, Castañeda has the honesty to admit that it has been a poor relation of the region's left for much of this century. The structures of capitalism that gave birth to it in Europe (e.g. large industrial working class) are absent or much eroded.

Even where these conditions existed most (Argentina) it was at its weakest. Squeezed between Stalinism and populism in the first part of this century, social democracy "found little more than barren soil in which to take root.

Indeed, those parties formally affiliated to the Socialist International (e.g. Acción Democrática in Venezuela) are on the right wing and are Cold War creations of the CIA.

But according to Castañeda the broad reformist left has improved its fortunes in the 1980s. A melting pot

of ex-guerrillas, democratic populists (Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas? Party of the Democratic Revolution in Mexico) ex-Stalinists, and new forces, (Lula?s Workers Party in Brazil) has created a spectrum of parties broadly characterised by their commitment to an electoral road to power, social justice and redistribution, and the assertion of national sovereignty.

The problem for reformism, as Castañeda sees it today, is that competing fragments of social democracy exist inside several of the region?s countries and this undermines the overall effectiveness of reformism. Because of this division, reformism has not successfully solved the problem of marrying a large, electorally viable, constituency with a realistic yet radical programme.

Castañeda clearly sees the stance of the Workers? Party (PT) in Brazil in maintaining its independence from other "reformist" forces, the PSDB (President Cardoso?s party) and the PDT, as an example of the divisions that must be swept away to achieve his new "broad alliance".

In Venezuela, the MAS, after wild ideological&Mac223;uctuations in the 1970s and 1980s, has "many facets of a social democratic programme" and around 20% of the vote but is narrowly based within the young urban middle class.

Meanwhile, Causa-R, very similar in origins to the PT in Brazil and controlling several mid-sized cities in the biggest regions of the country, is marred, for Castañeda, by a too simplistic, radical reformist message.

In Mexico, the Party of the Democratic Revolution?s (PRD) emergence in 1988 seemed to present the best hope for the reformist left. It originated as a split within the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and immediately had to champion the cause of free and fair elections, a novelty in Mexico where by fraud and manipulation the PRI has sustained itself in power for sixty years.

Moreover, while the PRD is mildly redistributionist, it is no enemy of the market. The very formation of the PRD also united the left in Mexico. The PRD won 30% of the popular vote in 1988, mainly from the lower-middle class in the cities, with pockets of rural support.

But the development of the PRD shows the problems for such movements. After these elections the PRI pursued a twin track strategy. First, it continued to harass and exclude the PRD. Secondly, through various social programmes, the government sought to lure back much of the of the PRD?s urban support.

By 1991 the PRD?s vote was down to 9%. In the 1994 Presidential elections, the vote for Cárdenas was well down on the 1988 vote. Failure to break the PRI?s populist, state-corporatist ties with the trade unions was another reason for this marginalisation.

As the Cold War ended, reformism in Latin America faced considerable problems of its own: restricted access to a level electoral playing&Mac222;eld (in some cases no access), absence of a broad enough constituency for electoral change and a programme that was either insuf&Mac222;ciently radical, or ambivalent about the virtues of the democratic process.

### **Reinventing reformism**

Despite the history of failure, Castañeda is optimistic about the future; he is convinced that there is a future for the left in Latin America.

On the one hand, the degree of social inequality and poverty in the region--directly a function of the right?s neo-liberalism of the 1980s--has hardly ever been greater. The fact that there have not been more social explosions against this state of affairs is in part due to the spread of electoralism over the last ten or so years, a trend that has diffused struggles and redirected them off the streets into the electoral and parliamentary arena.

Ideologically, the collapse of Stalinism opens up the chance that the left can free itself from its political dependence on the Moscow-Peking-Havana axis, while the end of the Cold War removes a major rationale for US interference in the region's national affairs.

To take advantage of the opportunities Castañeda believes that a new modernised reformism is necessary.

Demilitarisation has created the possibility of a level playing field and the left can advance its programme for major structural reforms within this context without resorting to the pitfalls of vanguardism or insurrectionism.

There is nothing inevitable about success; democratisation and economic decline have not always, or necessarily, benefited the left in Latin America.

Castañeda's reformism is a detailed and costed programme, carefully argued and grounded in a thorough knowledge of the continent. It is a reformism that is clear:

"that there must be a fundamental shift in resources and policy emphasis from the rich to the poor in order to solve the region's problems . . . "

It has three interlocking components:

- \* a reformulated nationalism;
- \* a commitment to structural changes in bourgeois democracy;
- \* an economic policy that is based on export-led growth and the redistribution of the fruits of this growth.

For its viability the programme depends upon welding a coalition of two-thirds of the region's population around it. It explicitly appeals to the bourgeoisie, nationally and internationally to make the necessary sacrifices out of self-interest and self-preservation.

Vertical nationalism"

Castañeda argues that the left in Latin America never had any choice but to be nationalist. Ever since independence the white elites excluded the mass of poor and indigenist peoples (sometimes a majority) from nation-building.

The elites could not build the nation since they were too foreign oriented; they speak foreign languages, are educated abroad and send their children to foreign schools. They even live abroad for much of the time. Most importantly, they have been agents for the (mainly US) foreign domination of the nation's economy. Part of the struggle, then, against the right has involved a struggle to "recapture the confiscated nationality".

Yet Castañeda is aware that Latin America may have already arrived too late on the scene of nation-building in the early 19th century; it is certainly too late now:

". . . it could well be--indeed, everything today suggests--that for many, if not all, of the developing countries, time has run out to construct nations like others: with their own national language, administration, market and currency."

The development of a fluid world economy, mass migration, continuing poverty and exclusion of the masses ? all combine to make this so.

But Castañeda does not think this makes nationalism redundant; far from it. Social change involves bringing "the excluded" into the nation. But this nationalism should not be aimed indiscriminately at other

countries; rather, it must be targeted at issues, above all issues of sovereignty in domestic non-economic affairs. He is opposed to US involvement in drug enforcement or immigration controls, for example.

At the same time dependence on and using scarce economic resources abroad necessitates abandoning anti-Americanism; rather, when it comes to gaining support for debt cancellation or help with human rights abuses, some of Latin America's best allies may be found in the USA. Meanwhile, some of the worst enemies of the nation's progressive causes are to be found inside the nation itself, not least among the rich and powerful.

What Castañeda calls "vertical nationalism" is, at its best, internationalism, though he will not call it that. The problem is that Castañeda is happy to see the region's poor best served by US Congressmen rather than the working class and progressive middle class of the USA.

He believes that the answer to squaring the circle of nation-building and global economic integration is best served, in the medium term, by regional integration. He fully supports Mercosur and the CACM and suggests that they are ways the left can strengthen the economies of the region (while avoiding unequal integration under US domination, such as NAFTA) with minimum loss of national sovereignty.

His model for development is the European Union, with each nation state within this arrangement pursuing a mixture of German-style social market economics (worker participation, social insurance and welfarism) and Japanese-style state directed and export oriented industrial development.

Castañeda's ambitious programme will not materialise in the actions of government in Latin America. His artificial attempt to graft onto the region this combination of everything that is efficient and just in capitalism's post-war development while discarding everything that was reactionary, exploitative and yet necessary to that development, is astonishing in its naïveté.

It does not occur to Castañeda that Germany's success depended on the systematic super-exploitation of millions of Turkish and Kurdish "guestworkers", deprived of citizenship rights and as much excluded from the German nation as any Indian in Peru or Bolivia are from theirs.

It seems not to cross his mind that the condition of the Japanese state's success in directing industrial growth was bought at the price of the almost complete loss of trade union independence of the Japanese working class, as extensive as that to be found in the history of Argentina.

The fact that in Argentina it was incorporation into the state, and in Japan, into a handful of business corporations, is purely secondary.

Castañeda abstracts from history. At the time when the economic models he so reveres are coming under strain as a result of international capitalist competition he seeks to emulate them and to do so when none of the specific historical conditions that made them possible are in place.

Idealising the state.

Much the same criticism can be levelled at Castañeda's political project. He does not disguise the limits of democracy in Latin America. Although universal suffrage has existed for a long time in most countries, liberal bourgeois democracy has never delivered much.

In Colombia in the 1950s, Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s and Chile in the 1990s, it has been hoped that "representative democracy" would sink roots and evolve. The left, meanwhile, has rightly been sceptical of liberal democracy, since whenever it won elections it was kicked out of office (Chile 1973, Guatemala 1954).

In each country of Latin America the ruling class has found various ways of rendering the vote of the people meaningless: suspending democratic rule; buying votes and manipulating the poor. Bourgeois electoral politics remain a game played within a narrow circle of the business and intellectual elites of each country.

Castañeda thinks things can and must be improved. But he demands changes in the practice both of the left and the ruling elite. The left must set aside its "instrumentalist" view of democracy which uses it and exploits it when it seems useful to it and not otherwise.

In addition, the political left must respect the autonomy, indecisiveness and even chaos that comes from too much democracy in the social and community left; a price worth paying according to Castañeda because the:

"ravages of the Leninist tradition are so pervasive and the distrust regarding the left's democratic convictions so widespread and justified that there can be no excess in this direction for now." His attacks on the left may well hit home when directed at guerrillas and Stalinists, but not at genuine Leninists.

In fact, the intellectual laziness of Castañeda in his easy and false elision of Leninism and Stalinism is one of the worst aspects of his book. One never finds a discussion or an argument to prove his attacks on Leninism.

Its "Jacobin" hostility to democracy or its "dogmatic and abstract" critique of "bourgeois democracy" are asserted and no more.

Leninism does not dismiss bourgeois democracy. Leninism defends the widest extension of democratic rights since the exploited and oppressed gain most from their preservation.

But Castañeda wrongly identifies these rights (labour rights, human rights) as synonymous with parliamentary liberal democracy and the bourgeois state. It is not at all the same thing and it is Castañeda who is wrong to place the defence of these rights in the hands of the state and its personnel.

As for relations with the non-party left, the answer is, in essence, a simple one. The meeting ground between leadership (i.e. "vanguardism") and democracy is accountability. All social layers are stratified politically and in terms of their consciousness; how else can the poor be manipulated, a practice, which, as Castañeda observes, is endemic"

How can this be overcome except by leaders formulating policies that correspond to the objective (i.e. historic and long term) interests of the poor, as against their illusory ones" But leadership cannot subordinate the vitality of the mass organisations wherever real meaningful accountability exists. And on this issue Castañeda is incredibly weak.

For all his detailed proposals for viable-but-radical reform, Castañeda never once attempts to refute the central objection raised by the Marxist revolutionary left to his schema; namely, the partisan, class character of the capitalist state.

His programme depends for its plausibility on his assumption (for it is no more than that) that the state (in contrast to venal governments or Presidents) is essentially neutral or can be made so with a few policy reforms.

He is clear that holding free elections has been insufficient. He makes detailed proposals for electoral reforms (among others on party financing, proportional representation, access to media).

He calls for an "independent judiciary" and a professional civil service since "destroying the symbiosis between public office and private patronage is the paramount structural reform Latin American democracy requires".

In this way:

"Congressional majorities and the governments they support come and go; the continuity of the state is guaranteed by the stability of an apolitical and honest civil service".

The idealisation and limitation of his version of democracy is obvious here. Leave aside that these structures exist in many countries outside the region and do not prevent the state's permanent executive machine being pro-capitalist.

It never strikes Castañeda for a moment that there is a contradiction between his critique of the left's lack of democracy and his own advocacy of an unaccountable and apolitical civil service that remains permanently in place to oversee state affairs, while elected governments come and go!

Castañeda shares the thoroughly idealist view of the state as being raised above the contending classes, and promotes the gross deception that the more unaccountable and "professional and hierarchical" the permanent executive of the state is, the more likely it will be to promote a major structural transformation of capitalism and repair centuries of social injustice.

The whole history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is one in which the growth and extension of suffrage has been accompanied by a parallel growth in the unaccountable, non-elected state machine which acts as a safeguard against the vagaries (as far as the bourgeoisie is concerned) of elections.

Castañeda sees it all upside down. He wants to strengthen the state bureaucracy against civil society and even against government because he believes that private business interests have abused the political machine for their own narrow class interests.

But every structural democratic reform Castañeda proposes would be balanced by a further undemocratic safeguard, some of which he unwittingly suggests himself.

Castañeda's democracy is also timid. He never once--despite the detailed provisions--calls for the military, the armed power of the state, to be even fundamentally democratised, still less done away with. Nor even, though he favours an independent judiciary, does he insist that it be elected.

Leninists are not dogmatic opponents of democracy; we just happen to have a more realistic (that is, one grounded in the lessons of history) view of how states operate. We favour more democracy not less--every day and everywhere.

We favour the democracy of struggle to the democracy of incorporation and diffusion of anger. Leninists aim to direct the energy of the "social left" to smash the edifice of exclusion and oppression that atomises and manipulates the mass of people.

Therein lies the difference between Castañeda's pragmatic reformism--which in the end shares the same deficiencies of the reformists and ex-guerrillas he criticises--and the real revolutionary left.

## Conclusion

The scale of the social problems in Latin America are only too evident to Castañeda. His book is a catalogue of injustices, inequality and repression.

The necessity for an EU-type evolution for Latin America is clear to Castañeda since mere redistribution of

existing wealth is insufficient to solve the scale of the problem. Castañeda wants to generate a capitalism that can sustain a welfare state for a majority of the population and so growth has to be the long-term key to this.

In the short-term, however, he proposes massively expanding the tax base, cutting military spending in half and implementing a major debt relief programme.

In proposing these reforms he explicitly makes an appeal to the common sense of the domestic and international capitalist class. The West must help out, since if it fails to respond to a worsening situation then the drugs, the poverty, the destruction of the eco-system, the crime--all will be exported to the USA and Europe. The OECD tax payers must foot the bill for tax relief for Latin America.

They must also close the present tax loopholes which allow the national bourgeoisie to evade their responsibilities at home by keeping their assets abroad, safe from tax claims.

Castañeda shows a touching, if completely misplaced, rationalism. The rich will prefer to keep their wealth safe from the hands of the tax of&Mac222;ces and use some of it to fence themselves off from the sight and smell of the poor and oppressed who create their wealth.

For exactly the same reason, they will defend the level of military spending, not because there is any pressing external threat to national sovereignty, but in order to&Mac222;nance a machine of domestic terror against the workers and poor peasants.

The in&Mac223;uence of Castañeda's book in the end depends not so much on its internal coherence or novelty, but on the manifest failure of the non-social democratic left in Latin America this century. Stalinism and left populism were indeed varieties of reformism. The guerrillas turned out to be no more than liberals (or social democrats) with guns.

In fact, it is reformism and petit bourgeois revolutionary democracy that have back&Mac222;red in Latin America. Like all utopias, ("socialism in one country" or the "third way to national development") they turned out to be reactionary failures in practice.

Castañeda's wealth of insights into the weaknesses of those utopias should not blind anyone to the reactionary character of his own--elaborate if less ambitious--utopia.

His striving to reproduce the structures of European and Japanese capitalism on Latin American soil, this time stripped of the very social defects that made them successful, is a project whose time has passed.

When the book was in preparation Fernando Cardoso found his way into the book as a Brazilian sociologist and social democrat (member of PSDB). Now he is President of Brazil. He is formally committed to many of Castañeda's policies.

Whether there, or somewhere else in Latin America, the laws of history dictate that when put to the test of office this project will, to use Castañeda's own words about his opponents, "be exposed as irretrievably incompetent and obsolete."

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