Latin Americanism and Imperialism after 9/11

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> Resistance, far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history. It is particularly important to see how much this alternative reconception is based on breaking down the barriers between cultures.—Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

Discriminating between a "before" and an "after" September 11, 2001 is a matter of seeing continuity rather than discontinuity. The USA Patriot Act was preceded by the systematic criminalization of protest directed against the global justice movement by governments in the U.S., Europe, and Latin America. Direct military interventions in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, and Haiti; the Gulf war, the Iraq sanctions and bombing missions, the cruise missile attacks against Sudan and Afghanistan; the perpetual U.S. subsidy of Israeli state terror against the Palestinians, the continuing embargo against Cuba, the Kosovo war, Plan Colombia—all of these events helped to set the stage for the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq.

The current military occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq themselves fulfill parts of a pre-existing plan for a New American Century. Right-wingers, to be sure, may have hatched the plan, but the so-called Bush doctrine has enjoyed bipartisan support for some time. In a 1997 interview aired on CNN, Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry stated that, "We know we can't count on the French. We know we can't count on the

Russians. We know that Iraq is a danger to the United States, and we reserve the right to take pre-emptive action whenever we feel it's in our national interest." Indeed, when it comes to "taking care of business," North America's rulers remain as united as ever around the first imperative of their imperialism. As evidenced by the twin offensive to secure control of oil flows (Afghanistan, Iraq), that imperative calls for insuring that U.S. corporations "gain control over as much of the sources of raw materials as possible—*wherever these raw materials may be, including potential new sources*" [italics in the original].[1]

Putting to good use its control over the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. scored huge victories against Latin American businesses in the competition for markets from 1980 to 2000. The imposition of neoliberalism, along with the refusal to cancel the external debt of Latin American nations, drastically reduced the margin of economic and political independence once held by local and regional capitalists. Those members of the national bourgeoisies that did not find themselves hurled into the abyss during Latin America's second "lost decade" (the 1990s) survived only by renewing and deepening their role as imperialism's junior partners. With their help, the U.S. now looks to further expand and to fully institutionalize its neoliberal hegemony through the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

The battles around the FTAA have not ended, but the U.S. will most likely realize the imperialist interests and goals it has embodied in the accord—if not through the form of a global FTAA, then through the growing list of bilateral trade agreements. In part, this is because no Latin American government or bourgeoisie seriously opposes the FTAA. If it did, it would withdraw from negotiations. Not even the Lula government in Brazil is

[1] Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism Without Colonies* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003): 42.

willing to scuttle the FTAA. The spats between Brazil and the U.S. around agricultural subsidies are just so much smoke and mirrors—diversionary tactics that the U.S. happily acts out in order to hide the real prize on which it has fixed its eyes. Indeed, the U.S. will no doubt phase out its agricultural subsidies as long as it receives what it has been bargaining so hard for behind the scenes: access to natural resources.[2]

The FTAA is clearly important to the U.S. It is the primary mechanism through which the U.S. hopes to ward off European, Chinese, and Japanese economic competition. But inter-imperialist rivalry within the economic sphere does not explain the extreme degree of militarization that the U.S. has also imposed across Latin America during the past decade.

> The United States maintains a complex web of military facilities and functions in Latin America and the Caribbean, what the U.S. Southern Command (known as SouthCom) calls its "theater architecture." . . .
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> Much of this web is being woven through Plan Colombia, a massive, primarily military program to eradicate coca plants and to combat armed groups (mostly leftist guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). In the last five years, new U.S. bases and military access agreements have proliferated in Latin America, constituting a decentralization of the U.S. military presence in the region. This decentralization is Washington's way of maintaining a broad military foothold while accommodating regional leaders' reluctance to host large U.S. military bases or complexes.[3]

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[2] Lourdes Ma. Regueria Bello, "El ALCA después de Miami. Reflexiones para una evaluación," *Revista Cuba Socialista* No. 29 (3ra época, 2003). http://www.cubasocialista.cu/texto/csalca8.html

[3] John Lindsay-Poland, "U.S. Military Bases in Latin America and the Caribbean," *Foreign Policy in Focus* (August 2004), *www.fpif.org.*

Again, it is important to note that the U.S. military offensive in Latin America pre-dates 9/11. Perhaps most significantly, Plan Colombia was brought to you by Clinton and the Democrats. 9/11 simply gave the bipartisan militarization program a fresh ideological justification. For example, it allowed the U.S. to label regions such as the three-border corner of northeast Argentina as a staging area for terrorism. It also immediately led to intensified state repression in Bolivia and Colombia.

The U.S. military menace in Latin America in the coming decades will not represent a "clash of civilizations" in which religion vs. CD players, or veils vs. mid-rift T-shirts, will play a significant role. To an appreciable extent "culture" will play a role, since the various indigenous societies are threatened with involuntary change, and since they often inhabit the regions that will constitute the battleground. But the real basis of war and genocide in Latin America will be the U.S. drive to control increasingly scarce natural resources (oil, natural gas, water, medicinal plants, etc.) and its willingness to destroy (using the armies of friendly governments, or by direct U.S. intervention itself) any social or insurrectionary movements that contest its imperial greed.

The new nationalism

The "new imperialism" in Latin America—like any earlier imperialism—has produced a "new nationalism" across the continent. Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez, Brazil's President Lula, and Bolivia's presidential hopeful Evo Morales all can boast fervent followers who view them as nationalist champions in the fight against U.S. imperialism. Ecuador's President Lúcio Gutiérrez, who spent little time in office before revealing himself to be a neoliberal stooge, once could claim the same. And although

Argentina's President Néstor Kirchner draws his appeal from the middle class rather than from the *piqueteros* and the workers of occupied factories such as Brukman and Zanón, he still benefits from the same kind of nationalist sentiment.

This is not the place to pursue an in-depth discussion of the character of each one of the administrations or sets of politics that comprise the "new nationalism." Broadly speaking, the new nationalism in Latin America is perceived as a "left nationalism," and as offering the only real hope for mitigating the effects of U.S. imperialism in the region. At the same time, the new nationalism remains rife with contradictions that lead to an overall negative impact on the popular constituencies who, for the moment, accept its anti-imperialist rhetoric at face value. Brazil furnishes the most obvious example of such contradictions, especially in light of the euphoric expectations that accompanied President Lula's election. Despite Lula's perceived anti-imperialism, his armies now police Haiti in the service of Bush's imperial policies of kidnapping and international thuggery; Lula's neoliberal pension reform and his failed land redistribution have betrayed millions; his fiscal measures have delighted Wall Street bankers and the IMF, while forcing a diminished standard of living on blue- and white-collar workers.

As happened in Spain following the election of Felipe González and the PSOE in 1982, the majority of left-leaning intellectuals in Latin America have climbed on the bandwagon of the new "progressive" nationalist leaderships. Such intellectuals ape Lula and Kirchner, for example, in looking to Mercosur to defeat the FTAA, forgetting that it has been and will be Mercosur that then imposes economic conditions favorable to Latin American bosses and harmful to the region's urban and rural workers. Intellectual apologists of the new Latin American nationalism see the solution to local and regional

control of oil and natural gas as the formation of one giant "Petrobras" incorporating Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Argentina—as if Petrobras itself were not an enormous conglomerate run as a capitalist enterprise. And they fear the concession of the political right of self-determination to indigenous nations, fostering instead the illusion that the publication of three or four Quechua or Aymara novels—however necessary and welcome that may be—will pave the way to a socially just form of "national unity."

Among the Latin American intelligentsia, only a few brave souls speak any more about workers' self-management, public ownership *from below*, the right of nations to self-determination, etc. The same is true of Latin Americanists based in the U.S. North American Latin Americanists who in their majority lean toward liberalism and a progressive take on political issues, have a history of serving as *uncritical* cheerleaders of Third-World nationalism. It is one thing to oppose U.S. economic domination and U.S. military intervention in Latin America on the basis of distinguishing between a nationalism of the oppressor (i.e., imperialism) and a nationalism of the oppressed. The recent CIA-sponsored coup attempt in Venezuela, as well as the long-standing economic embargo against Cuba, are perfect examples of the validity of *unconditionally* opposing U.S. imperialism in Latin America. But that sort of welcome, even "knee-jerk" anti-imperialism should not be conflated with seeing nationalism, and the fortification of the nation-state in Latin America, as the alternative to U.S. imperialism in Latin America.

Aijaz Ahmad has perceptively chronicled the trajectory of literary and cultural theory in the academy over the past fifty years. As the identification of "socialism" as the effective alternative to imperialism waned in the post-colonial environment of the Cold War and, later, as a result of the betrayals of May 1968, Third World nationalism

replaced socialism as imperialism's main nemesis in the eyes of a majority of literary and social critics. A period unfolded in which wars of national liberation "with a distinctly socialistic trajectory" proliferated across the globe (roughly 1960-1980). As this period itself subsided, the "Marxist-Leninist" rhetoric of many of the victorious nationalist regimes revealed itself to be hollow. Out of this double disillusionment, then, first with socialism and subsequently with Third World nationalism, what we call postmodern sensibility emerged with its full panoply of simulacra and "undecidability."

> In the post-colonial states where the nationalism of the national bourgeoisie had been expected to work all kinds of wonders, one witnessed, on the one hand, enormous consolidation of the national bourgeoisie itself . . . ; and, on the other, the stagnation, increasing dependence, dictatorial brutality, religious millenarianism, and general fracturing of polity and society. . . . When the degeneration of the Iranian state into clerical fascism became unmistakable, the last remaining illusion of Third-Worldist cultural nationalism finally had to be abandoned. What to replace it with? Socialism had already been renounced as the determinate name of imperialism's negation. Nationalism—the whole of it—also now went. This is the redoubled vacuum which, in the radicalized versions of metropolitan literary theory, poststructuralism [came] to fill.[4]

Ours is an age that demands choices. The heyday of "undecidability" feels positively Pleistocene in the face of today's challenges to humanity's future. Latin Americanism, along with the rest of mainstream literary and social theory, moved from Third World nationalism to one or another version of postmodernism. Now it stands on

[4] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London and New York: Verso, 1992): 34.

the verge of a return to Third World nationalism as the front line of anti-imperialist struggle. Nevertheless, if the nationalisms of the 1960s and 70s played out as tragedies from the point of view of actualizing human dreams and human potential, the new nationalisms of the twenty-first century will play out as farces. The question for us, therefore, is not whose nation, or whose trading bloc, can we beef up in order to trounce imperialism. The question is: whose side are you on *internationally*? The imperialists and their junior partners in the national bourgeoisies? Or the rural and urban workers of the world?

Muddy waters

The role of scholars and intellectuals in any progressive social movement is to clarify ideas. Rank-and-file militants themselves should democratically decide the movement's goals and courses of action, but intellectuals can contribute to the decision-making process by providing facts, knowledge, debate, assessments, and interpretations as needed or requested. Has a largely postmodern practice of Latin Americanism helped or hindered social struggles in Latin America? The outline of an answer might best be attempted on the basis of a concrete example.

The concept of the "multitude" has gained widespread currency throughout Latin American intellectual circles. At its strongest, its uses derive from recognition that a "new world of labor" has supplanted in many countries of Latin America the vast Fordist concentrations of the region's working class, especially those formerly found in state-owned industries. Neoliberal privatization has disarticulated the mass of workers, consigning the substantial majority to an existence defined by insecurity, atomization,

fragmentation, and hopelessness.[5] Simultaneously, trade-union combativeness has declined, as union officials hitch their wagons to the new nationalist governments (CUT in Brazil; CGT and CTA in Argentina). Even where a renewed union militancy has emerged (COB in Bolivia), the weight of a bureaucratic past and the difficulties of organizing across traditional categories—such as full- and part-time, employed and unemployed workers—means that union activism only contributes to, rather than defines as it once was able to, the terrain of struggle.

One of the most salient characteristics of social struggle in the 1990s and 2000s has been the way in which Latin American social movements have found it necessary to flow around the traditional unions in order to pursue their goals. The MST in Brazil, for example, represents a break away from the CUT. The *piqueteros* in Argentina did not form their own organization(s) until they had sought without success to interest first the CGT, then the CGT-Moyano, and finally the CTA in organizing them. And although the local Federation of Factory Workers played a central role in winning the water war in Cochabamba, the national COB sat on the sidelines. With the absence of much of the organized working class from many of the largest social struggles, therefore, many intellectuals have concluded that

> asistimos en la última década a la disolución de la única y duradera estructura de unificación nacional con efecto estatal que produjeron las clases trabajadoras, abriendo un largo período de pulverización de demandas y agregaciones de los sectores dominados de la sociedad . . . pero a la vez, a una lenta y multiforme reconstitución de identidades laborales, a partir y por encima

[5] See, for example, the chapter entitled "The New World of Labor," in Oscar Olivera, *¡Cochabamba! Water War in Bolivia*, in collaboration with Tom Lewis (Cambridge, MA: South End Press), forthcoming November 2004.

de esta fragmentación que, en la siguiente década pudieran poner en pie nuevas formas históricas de movimiento obrero y de agrupamiento de las clases laboriosas.[6]

What refreshingly surfaces in this last quotation from the very fine Bolivian social theorist, Álvaro García Linera, is the identification of the "multitude" with reconstituted *working-class* identities. Yet this point is often lost in the theoretically weaker attempts to employ the concept. In John Holloway's *Change the World without Taking Power*, for example, a version of the "multitude" stands as an explicit negation of and alternative to the concept of social "class." Of course, García Linera's own development of the concept of the "multitude" is much fuller and original than can be captured here, and, like anybody else's efforts in theory, is not without problems of its own.[7] But García Linera's conception clarifies that the "multitude" is meant to express the form of *working-class* agency in the changed conditions of work brought about by neoliberalism.

Of course, one might be forgiven for missing the attribution of such a class-bound discursive role to the concept of the "multitude," given that the book that first facilitated the broad dissemination of the term among the Latin American left—Michael Hardt's and Toni Negri's *Empire*—occluded it so well.[8] Indeed, this aspect of the "multitude"

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[6] Álvaro García Linera, "Sindicato, multitud y comunidad: Movimientos sociales y formas de autonomía política en Bolivia," in García et al., *Tiempos de rebelión* (La Paz: Muela del Diablo Editores, 2001): 38.

[7] García Linera's elaboration of the concept of the "multitude" differs from substantially from the one to be found in Hardt and Negri's *Empire*. "Lo decisivo de la multitud es que a diferencia de la muchedumbre, que permite agregar individualidades sin filiación o dependencia alguna que no sea la euforia de la acción inmediata, ésta es mayoritariamente la agregación de individuos colectivos, esto es, una asociación de asociaciones donde cada persona que está presente en el acto público de encuentro no habla por si mismo sino por una entidad colectiva local ante la cual tienen que rendir cuenta de sus acciones, de sus decisiones, de sus palabras" (*Tiempos* 41).

[8] Michael Hardt and Anotinio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard U P, 2000). In this essay I deal critically only with Hardt and Negri's concept of the "multitude." For my full criticism of Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, including their attempt to discredit concepts of "imperialism" and

remained so subterranean for most readers that the two authors have felt it necessary to publish a second book in which they affirm, "Multitude is a class concept."[9]

In *Empire*, the term "multitude" broadly refers to the global population of socially oppressed people. To be fair, however, one can discern in the book a fundamental link between the "multitude" and a new working class. Hardt and Negri make an explicit point of not limiting the "multitude" to workers engaged in industrial production. They do so, however, in order to rightly reject the notion that only blue-collar workers comprise the contemporary working class: "This is a *new proletariat* and not a *new industrial working class*. . . . Labor—material or immaterial, intellectual or corporeal—produces and reproduces social life, and in the process is exploited by capital. This wide landscape of biopolitical production allows us finally to recognize the full generality of the concept of proletariat" (*Empire* 402).

It is easy to embrace this dimension of Hardt and Negri's definition of the multitude. Most individuals in so-called white-collar jobs do in fact belong to today's working class—irrespective of whether they are direct producers of commodities, and therefore exploited directly for profits (food factory workers, computer software designers), or whether they are indirect producers whose labor contributes to the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist exploitation (bank workers, teachers, clerical workers). Even so-called "unproductive" workers—"unproductive" in the sense of laborers who neither directly nor indirectly produce commodities that can be sold (janitors, health workers)—form part of the contemporary working class. "Unproductive"

"revolutionary organization," see my "*Empire* Strikes Out," *International Socialist Review* 24 (July-August 2002): 46-54.

[9] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004): 103.

workers, just like other laborers, must work for a living. And they possess little or no control over the conditions in which they work and the ends which their labor serves.

Nevertheless, Hardt and Negri go beyond updating the composition of the contemporary working class in *Empire*. In fact they amplify the arena of class struggle to include the entire social realm. Recycling from earlier texts Negri's notion of the "socialized worker," Hardt and Negri expand the notion of "proletariat" to include virtually everyone, and they extend the notion of class struggle to include all the dimensions of everyday life: "class struggle has the potential to erupt across all fields of life" (403). Thus they elide the classical Marxist emphasis on the importance of workplace struggle by abstractly conflating the spheres of production and social reproduction. As a result of this abstraction, they end up eliminating concrete distinctions among various forms and objects of struggle. Each act of resistance or opposition—from factory occupations and mass demonstrations to on-line sites and boycotts of Wal-Mart or State Farm—becomes equally effective, and enjoys equal priority, as a weapon in the struggle against Empire. [10]

That it is crucial to fight capitalism on each and every possible front; that unions cannot limit themselves to wage issues alone but rather must act, as Lenin pressed upon the Bolshevik cadres, as "tribunes of the people" who should organize against all forms of social oppression; that part-time and unemployed workers must be organized into the same unions that organize full-time employed workers; that women workers and indigenous workers suffer the most extreme privations inflicted by neoliberalism; that modern capitalism has commoditized and thus reified even the most minute recesses of

[10] For an excellent discussion of this question, see Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London and Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002): 152-175.

daily experience—all of these ideas can be affirmed. Nevertheless, many Latin American intellectuals and U.S. Latin Americanists subsequently leap from these truths to the deeply ideological conclusions that the "working class is dead," that "class struggle is outmoded," that the categories of class analysis no longer serve to describe reality, etc. Perhaps intellectuals reach such conclusions because they can find support for these ideas, too, in *Empire* and the other sacred texts of postmodernism.[11] Or perhaps it is because of careerism and/or self-preservation: the analysis of some kinds of oppression count higher on the hiring lists and promotion and tenure charts than others. Perhaps it is because some have lost a former faith in class struggle. Or perhaps it is because global capitalism has taken on the unfathomable proportions of a sublime entity and, hence, social transformation appears unthinkable on such a grand scale. Perhaps it is because intellectuals need grants from funding agencies that look askance at unruly supplicants. Or maybe intellectuals honestly think that "capitalism with a human face" can be made a reality. Maybe they know which side their bread is buttered on.

Whatever reasons may explain the intelligentsia's self-dissociation from class and class analysis, the point here is that its use of the concept of the "multitude" clouds the character of contemporary social struggle. Such uses muddy the waters even in the cases of struggles whose self-conception already rejects a class basis, for the real (if unexpressed) links between a particular struggle and class needs and capabilities—say,

[11] For example: "To continue to take inspiration from a certain spirit of Marxism would be to keep faith with what has always made Marxism in principle and first of all a *radical* critique, namely a procedure ready to undertake its self-critique. . . . We would distinguish this spirit from other spirits of Marxism, those that rivet it to a body of Marxist doctrine, to its supposed systemic, metaphysical, or ontological totality (notably to its 'dialectical method' or to 'dialectical materialism'), to its fundamental concepts of labor, mode of production, social class, and consequently the whole history of its apparatuses (projected or real: the Internationals of the labor movement, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the single party, the State, and finally the totalitarian monstrosity)." Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994 [orig. French edition,1993]): 88.

for the nationalization of natural gas, or for the creation of safe houses to shelter battered women—are therefore neither made nor encouraged.

Returning to the social theorists of the "multitude" themselves, their elision of distinctions between the spheres of production and social reproduction actually impedes the progress of the social movements. Neglect of the effort to engage with and to involve organized workers *qua* organized workers (not just as neighbors, or as women, or as consumers) weakens the social movements. Refusal to give high priority to the battle against ossified or sold-out trade union officialdoms also weakens the social movements, for the assumption that addressing the interests of workers *as workers* is identical to addressing oneself to the labor bureaucracy is disabling. It is not that "workers" are an undifferentiated mass, with no section suffering special injustices. Nor is it that the "working class" enjoys any kind of moral superiority that would cause its form of exploitation and oppression to deserve priority over "women," "the Mapuche," "the unemployed," or "gays and lesbians."

Opposing the working class to the list of identities just enumerated remains a false operation in any case, for the overwhelming majority of the individuals comprising such groups structurally belong to the working class. Indeed, the centrality of the working class in the social struggle derives from its structural power to shut down capitalism. The working class can stop the production of commodities and close the doors of business; this is a structural and historical capacity, not a morally acquired or philosophically idealist one. Other organized groups also have structural powers: the Argentine *piqueteros*, or the Bolivian peasants and *cocaleros*, whose road blockades have shown themselves to be tremendously effective. But if the failure of the *Argentinazo* to liberate

Argentines from the clutches of neoliberalism and the IMF demonstrates anything, it is that the participation and power of the organized working class—however difficult it may be to achieve—is decisive. Virtually every sector of Argentine society had mobilized, from the *piqueteros* to the emergent *asembleas populares* to the middle-class *caceroleros*, in December 2001 and January 2002. Without the support and action of the organized and employed sectors of the Argentine working class, however, no qualitative break-through toward a society based on greater justice was possible.[12]

Our little pond (:

Michael Denning has recently suggested that, "If there is a neglect of class in cultural studies that should be noted, it is not the neglect of a certain class identity in favor of racial or gender identities; it is rather a neglect of class struggle."[13] Although he goes on to develop his insight in a different direction, I take his suggestion as a reminder that, no matter how tiny and mediated an undertaking it may be, Latin Americanism occupies a place in the class struggle—not only in Latin America but also in the U.S. In other words, I take Denning's remark as improbably reintroducing the notion of intellectual "partisanship."

The task of Latin Americanism is to discover and to elaborate knowledge about Latin American societies. This sounds like an old-fashioned idea, since so few of us "believe" in the possibility of "knowledge" anymore. Nevertheless, the vocation of

[12] When Luis Zamora (one of the leading progressive politicians in today's Argentina, and a former spokesperson of the Movimiento al Socialismo during the 1980s) refused to run as a left unity candidate in the wake of the *Argentinazo*, he was influenced by Holloway's *Change the World Without Taking State Power*. The consequence of the absence of a left alternative in the elections that brought Kirchner to power has been what many observers thought impossible at the time: the resurrection of the Partido Justicialista and Argentine populism.

[13] Michael, Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (London and New York: Verso, 2004): 153.

producing knowledge—as opposed to lies, myths, empty neologisms, and intoxicating bullshit—retains as much urgency post-9/11 as pre-9/11. If there is a post-9/11 difference that is relevant to the practice of Latin Americanism, perhaps it consists of a feeling that the field needs to regain a seriousness of purpose that it lost somewhere in the 1980s and 90s.

Intellectual commitment in the class struggle does not of its own diminish or impair the production of knowledge anymore than a commitment to women's liberation necessarily impedes a feminist researcher from accurately describing and/or interpreting gender inequalities. You can, of course, be committed to the *wrong* side, in which case you will usually produce falsehoods and myths instead of knowledge. You can also be committed to the *right* side and still produce empty neologisms and intoxicating bullshit. Indeed, intellectual commitment to the exploited and oppressed of the world does not guarantee knowledge production. Without such a commitment, however, you are much less likely to generate knowledge, at least in the human and social sciences.

No a priori conflict exists between partisanship and objective analysis. At any given moment, reality manifests an array of opposing, contradictory, countervailing, and closely or distantly related tendencies and processes. Within this objective totality—a totality constructed by theory as a form of knowledge, but one which involves and rests on empirical evidence—certain tendencies and processes will prosper over time and others will not. There is nothing teleological about this last assertion. For example, history is filled with more failed and defunct civilizations than with successful and living ones. Yet no serious contemporary scholar would suggest that the gods or any other teleological form had predetermined the unfortunate fate of the dead civilizations. Rather,

knowledgeable scholars demonstrate that at the time of the existence of now defunct societies there were other paths which might have been followed, other realities that might have formed the basis of different actions, etc., until it became too late to reverse directions.

Similarly, a genuinely classical Marxism does not ask the question: how soon will socialism arrive? Instead, it poses the question: socialism or barbarism? It frames the question in this way because there is an ineluctably subjective component to the realization, or actualization, of present and future realities—realities that simultaneously exist as objects and as projects of knowledge practices. Global warming offers a transparent example. It is an objective reality. It is not only a naturally caused reality (cyclical ice ages) but also a socially caused reality (green house gases). Humans can decide to act subjectively to control the effects of the part of global warming which they cause—or they can fail to act. If humans act, then historians in 3050 may produce knowledge of our society today that describes and interprets our actions as real entities and real processes. If humans decide not to act subjectively in a way that alters global warming, then there may well exist no human historians in the next millennium. Our only consolation will be that the cockroaches may have learned how to perform historiography from reading the books in our decaying libraries, and that they have analyzed our mistakes and passed on the lessons to future species.

There are two theoretical points to be emphasized here. Reality—whether understood as Nature or Society, whether in its non-human or human forms of objectivity—embodies not only already realized tendencies and processes but also as yet unrealized tendencies and processes. Furthermore, depending on the temporal frame of

reference, subjectivity already is, or will become, part of objective reality. There is also a "practico-theoretical" point that suggests itself. Capitalist production is the source of global warming. Real limits exist to the measures that can be taken under capitalism to stop environmental degradation. It may be the case that sustainable development is only possible without the profit motive and within a society based on democratic socialism. This is a possibility that can be raised because of real tendencies and processes in objective reality—ones that already create preconditions for democratic socialism, but which require subjective human awareness and action in order to come fully into being.

Thus partisanship—the intellectual choices we make in response to deciding on which side of the class divide to position ourselves professionally—does not conflict with our responsibility to produce knowledge. It is a commitment that we make as individuals, and perhaps as a group, toward reinforcing or bringing into existence certain real tendencies and processes instead of others. By way of contrast, a lack of partisanship means surrendering such a crucial professional decision to the agency of other people, ones who arguably understand better than we do both how reality works, as well as how to work reality, including how to put our knowledge to their uses.

Since 2000, objective conditions in a number of Latin American countries have developed that could enable a series of revolutions against neoliberalism and corporate globalization. The factors missing that might have brought, or may still bring, such revolutions into existence are subjective in nature: the failure to unify the social movements in coordinated actions; the ideological hold of nationalism and populism among ordinary working people; the backwardness of the majority of trade union leaderships; the absence of genuinely revolutionary parties of sufficient size, credibility,

and social implantation to put forward socialism as the alternative both to neoliberal globalization and to a revived state capitalism; and more. Sadly, the ideological role of TINA, so beloved and so nurtured by the majority of postmodern intellectuals throughout Latin America and the U.S., figures in particular as a subjective factor that holds back the success of the social movements. *There Is No Alternative* (to capitalism),[14] as if the banner of Latin Americanism were to read: "Neither neoliberalism nor socialism, but capitalism with a human face."

TINA stands today precisely as the biggest myth to have been embraced by the social movements. Whether before or after 9/11, the only way Latin Americanism can contribute to combating TINA is by clarifying reality through partisan knowledge produced on the basis of principled engagements with class struggle. Indeed, the explanation for the present shortcomings of Latin Americanism, as well as of the social movements whose interests the knowledge produced by Latin Americanists might advance,

> no se halla en determinismos económicos, un conveniente pretexto las más de las veces, sino en la debilidad de la voluntad política. Sin una decidida voluntad de cambiar el mundo éste seguirá siendo lo mismo. Pero quien pretenda acometer esa tarea deberá saber dos cosas: primero, que al hacerlo se enfrentará con la tenaz y absoluta oposición de las clases y grupos sociales dominantes que no dejarán recurso por utilizar, desde la seducción y la persuasión hasta la

[14] "T.I.N.A., *Tina*, was the nickname given to Maggie Thatcher, the British prime minister, who proclaimed more often than anybody and in shriller tones that there was and could be no way out of our predicament. But she was not alone. Broadcast throughout the globe by the huge machines of propaganda, first thunderously, then more surreptitiously, the message has penetrated people's minds, invaded their unconscious. Tina is now the unwritten premise of virtually the whole political debate." Daniel Singer, *Whose Millenium? Theirs or Ours?* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999): 1-2.

violencia más atroz, para frustrar cualquier tentativa transformadora. . . . Segundo, que no hay tregua posible en ese combate: si el gobernante que presuntamente intenta cambiar al mundo es halagado por la "prensa libre," los "gurúes" de Wall Street y sus papagayos locales y, en general, la opinión "bienpensante" de nuestros países (que en realidad piensa poca y mal), es porque su accionar ha caído en la irrelevancia o, hipótesis perversa, porque se ha pasado al bando de sus enemigos.[15]

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[15] Atilio A. Boron, "La izquierda latinoamericana a comienzos del siglo XXI: nuevas realidades y urgentes desafíos," *Revista de Observatorio Social de América Latina*, Año V, Número 13 (enero-abril 2004): 55.