

"The 5th International Requires a New Left Culture"

Friday 11 December 2009, by [HARNECKER Marta](#), [MANZANAREZ Jesús](#) (Date first published: 3 December 2009).

Marta Harnecker remains ardent, audacious, reflective and perceptive. A collaborator of the Miranda International Centre [in Caracas], she will today [3 December] receive a reception in her honour in the Teresa Carreño Theatre for her outstanding career, fundamentally in the study of instruments for the effective taking of power in the community and her contributions to Marxist theory.

In carrying out an assessment of the correlation of forces in Latin America, she laughs at those who reproached her about the "failure" of the left in the whole hemisphere. She is passionate about journalism, although she never studied the profession. In fact she was the editor of the magazine Chile Hoy (Chile Today), published during the government of Salvador Allende.

She is the author of more than 70 books. Her most representative work is "The Fundamental Concepts of Historical Materialism," the origin of which goes back to the year 1969 in order to interpret the historical postulates of Louis Althusser, to who she owes her initial formation as a Marxist interpreter.

Since 2002 she has been in Venezuela, after taking refuge in Cuba for a period of 29 years.

She was always on the black list of Augusto Pinochet's henchmen. Here, she has participated in the construction of various experiments in popular participation. Being consulted about the call for the 5th International, she assures that the necessity is evident but that one must take a lot of care in the way one constructs those projects.

"If we want to construct a new International it requires a new left culture. Because if the same parties with all the faults that they have from the past are going to join in this International, without overcoming their deviations, it could transform itself into a 5th bureaucratic International," she added.

Jesús Manzanárez - Correo del Orinoco - What is the concrete proposal? What should one do?

Marta Harnecker - I believe that we should think about the relationship between the social movements and the parties. One must include the social movements, making a grand (party-movement) front. Those are the things that we have to think out among everyone. That is a difficult thing. Chávez should call a small working meeting with those political and social leaders, including the representatives of the Communist Parties of course. One must understand a 5th International of

workers in its broad concept. For example, the woman that works in her house, isn't (a worker) in the classic sense of the term. Now the idea appears good to me, but I insist one should reflect a new left culture, because without it there will continue existing, today less than before, a rejection of politics by wide social sectors that continue seeing a political practice very similar to that of the right.

Internal Challenges

What are the principal challenges that confront Venezuela on the path towards socialism?

The big challenge of this process is how to overcome the distance between the projects that the President Chávez has and reality. The president is the first leader that has understood that without popular power it can't advance. Now, if you talk about power, but you don't hand over the possibility of making decisions to the people, that really isn't participation.

And what prevents it from occurring?

Chávez has made a very important effort to hand over resources to the people in order for them to be able to decide. He could take us to the society of the future if there was a great coherence among the whole the team that supports him because his ideas are extraordinary. The problem is that between the ideas and the practice there is a big distance. We should ask ourselves, "What are we doing?" The Venezuelan case, for me, is a revolutionary process that has had the best conditions in the world.

Two Lefts

What is happening inside the block of progressive governments in Latin America? Some people are talking about two lefts.

There are governments that continue doing neo-liberal politics. But one shouldn't be inflexible. I think that one should judge the correlation of forces that each government has internally and therefore one must judge them not by the rhythm with which they advance, but by the direction towards which they advance.

What are the criteria to judge them in accordance with the direction towards which they advance?

Of Lula, for example, one can't ask the same thing that one asks of Chávez, but evidently of Lula one couldn't ask more than what he does. In order to know if a government advances towards the goal (socialism) or not, it is very important to see: What have they done with regard to nationalisations? What have they faced up to the participation of workers in enterprises? What have they done regarding the ownership of the means of production which is each time more social? What have they done regarding the media and popular protagonism?

As for the right, taking into account Perú, Colombia and Panamá?

There are people who say that this is a cycle that Latin America is passing through and soon a counter-cycle will come. I am an optimist regarding the correlation of forces (favourable to the left). In Uruguay the movement continues and makes irreversible the process of the accumulation of forces in Latin America. The peoples are understanding once again that it is very different to have a progressive government, although it might not be revolutionary, than a right-wing one.

And in your native Chile?

While the left devotes itself to political maneuvering in parties, the right devotes itself to work with the communities. There is a lot work done by the right with the people there. Already Michelle Bachelet doesn't have the same popular support as before.

P.S.

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