

Chavismo: where it comes from and why it still resists

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From labyrinth to catacombs

Very soon, as soon as the historical forge in which the political identity will be made was heated up, Chavismo discovered the formula that will allow it to get out of the labyrinth.

In July 1992, the Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario Doscientos (MBR-200), which brings together the military who five months ago took up arms against the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez, published a document entitled "And how to get out of this labyrinth".¹ Solving this problem, say the rebels, requires "the inclusion of other political sectors, of other social forces" capable of creating a "new situation", a prelude to "a profound structural transformation" of Venezuelan society. In other words, the new situation must unleash "scenarios of broad participation, marked by a high profile of protagonism of the Venezuelan population"².

The participation of new political and social forces, but fundamentally their protagonism, to say, the idea-force of protagonist participation, will be the central axis of the deep trans-formation in the field of political culture that will take place during the nineties of the 20th century, undoubtedly a virtuous decade in politics.

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According to Chávez, the idea of "protagonism" was forged in the Yare prison by the Bolivarian military. It "means a capital jump, an epistemological break. It is the 'bridge' that allows to pass from democracy to revolution. Or to put it another way: it allows, without ceasing to be democracy, to pass to the revolution".³

The idea of protagonism is already set forth in "The Blue Book", written in 1991 by Hugo Chávez, and adopted by the MBR-200 as a document that summarizes the philosophy that guides him "the tree with three roots".⁴ Chávez interdicts participation as it is conceived and practiced by the "formal democracies" and their instruments, the "populist political parties", which reduce it to an end in itself, "with such narrow and rigid limits that prevent civil society from intervening in decision-making". On the contrary, "Bolivarian popular democracy" aims to "bring the limits of action to the level of protagonization in decision-making".⁵

But how to achieve this? How to overcome the limits of bourgeois de-mocracy and achieve popular protagonism? "To do this, the political system must implement the necessary channels, both at the local, regional and national level [...] through which popular power will play a leading role. In this sense, the communities, neighborhoods, towns and cities must have the mechanisms and power to be governed by a system of self-government that allows them to decide about their internal affairs by themselves".⁶

With these ideas in mind, convinced that new forces must assume the political protagonism for a revolution to be possible in Venezuela, prefiguring the forms of popular self-government that he will actively promote during the following decade, already in the Presidency; Chávez leaves prison on March 26, 1994. "For now I have nothing to do in Mira-flores, first I go to the catacombs with the people"⁷, he says. He goes to the catacombs with the people because, radically questioning the principles of bourgeois democracy, willing to reinvent the way of doing politics, Chávez and the Bolivarians have already managed to get out of the labyrinth.

A politics of the commons

How is this epistemological rupture to which Chávez has referred became concreted? Its political effects are immediate and decisive: to the extent that the idea-force of the protagonist subject gains ground, the way of relating to the popular subject is substantially modified, and the popular subject begins to be conceived as an equal. Understood in this way, the relationship between revolutionary militants and the people results in a policy of the commons, which implies at the same time a re-politicization of the militancy (which is obliged to unlearn the old political culture), as well as a popular politicization in a leading role.

Chávez summarizes it as follows: "The people know what they want, or to put it another way, what they do not want. I speak to the people about politics, with honesty, with concrete and precise arguments. And I respect it".⁸ In another place, referring to a general strike that took place in Guasdalito, Apure, in February 1995, and that left a deep impression on Bolivarian leadership, he expresses: "They are processes in which the people stop being objects to become subjects. And this vindicates the real history that has been hidden from us [...] Despite their efforts to cover up this fact, these events are part of a resurrection, of a people that once again has faith in their selves and in the transforming power it holds within [...] But what we do believe is in the power of the people, we believe in the rebellious man of Albert Camus, that solidarity leads people to unity

[...] I think those facts will be the order of the day in the years to come. And I believe that there is this change from the people who are the object, to the people who are the subject of their own history, transforming themselves by the discovery of their potential strength.⁹ It is not only a matter of relating to the popular subject on the basis of the respect that is certainly due to a subject who knows what he wants and what he does not want; neither is it enough to recognize the popular force, its capacity for transformation.

The passage about Guasdualito, in particular, gives an account both of the cultural transformation that is taking place in the catacombs, but also of the singular interpretation of these facts that is making the emerging revolutionary leadership more lucid, which has understood that it is not there to give lessons to the people who "don't know", but whose job it is to catch up with these people who, discovering their own strength, are finding themselves. Chavez assumes this: "And I believe that our movement has gone to the roots, to try to remove the web and the dust from a history that is buried, but that throbs in the places, in the memories of many people.

[...] We must go in search of it, immerse ourselves, plunge into the dark depths of ourselves to seek there the secret of what we are and what we can be'.¹⁰ Manifesting his will to reveal the secret of what the people is and can be, what Chávez is doing is nothing less than describing the emergence of Chavista political identity: Chavismo is that which appears when the Bolivarian movement decides to remove the dust of history.

Rarely does one have the opportunity to access historical documents that show us these moments of political enlightenment in such a transparent manner. Notwithstanding, the birth of Chavismo is frequently translated as the appearance of the "myth of Chávez", sometimes out of incomprehension, other times with the express intention of ignoring one of the elements of the equation: the popular subject; other times with the purpose of delegitimizing the genuine leadership of Chávez, who will be accused of being a "caudillo".

The record of the "myth of Chávez" is resorted to "as a way to extinguish the flame of rebellion that has lit up the national soul... They despise the people. They think that he 'does not understand', that he 'does not know', that he is like an 'eternal child', always minor, always pre-dependent, always waiting for someone to take him by the hand". Notwithstanding, Chavez affirms: "I am not a myth. That is what my adversaries would like. I am a reality. And a reality that is becoming more concrete every day.

On the other hand, I remind him that Aristotle said: 'Myths always contain a nucleus of truth' [...] That 'nucleus of truth', in the collective mentality of Venezuelan society from 1992 to 1998, was based on the rebirth of hope. The people were once again claiming their right to dream and, even more so, their obligation to fight for their dream. In that way, at that time, the idea of political utopia returned to the national mind. In other words, the desire for a new country with more justice, more equality, and less corruption began to exist in the collective imagination. And that is precisely when utopia is confused with myth. But a myth that cannot have a concrete personification. A myth that is an expression of a collective hope. That was my mission: to give content, in the psyche of the Venezuelan people, to the prodigious invention of a possible country. I had to create a concrete utopia. In other words: to create the collective myth of a realizable future. The 'Chávez myth', personal, had to die so that the 'new Venezuela myth', collective, would emerge".¹¹

The left that didn't understand a thing

In the same way that the court poets sang about Heracles' alleged deception of the poor, the left will denounce Chavez' caudillismo: "Because he maintains an autonomous position and direct links with the people, various leaders of the left accuse him of being a caudillo and begin to criticize his creative positions. ¹² Chavez himself said: "Those so-called 'leftist' parties [...] did not understand a thing. What was there, unfortunately, was electoral exploitation and opportunism. ¹³ While the "myth of Chávez" was dying from the beginning, making the birth of the collective Chavista myth possible, the leaders of the left-wing parties "were all on the lookout for campaigns for the mayor's office or for such a position. I repeat: it was the degeneration of real politics. We realized that these parties did not have a policy of struggle for housing, nor for employment, for wages, food, education, health¹⁴ Meanwhile, the catacombs, where real politics were in full swing, were a hotbed.

Referring to the mythical "Hundred Days Tour", which led him to tour the entire country after his release from prison, Chavez summarizes: "In the eyes of the people one could see a great desire for revolution. The poor were not demanding an electoral victory, what they had was an enormous hope that a social revolution would begin¹⁵ Again, the general strike in Guasdalito in February 1995 gives him a rough idea of the magnitude of the transformation underway: "There is no party formed there that is guiding that struggle. There are peasants, Colombians, Venezuelans, teachers. oil-field workers, retired militaries. Three years ago they were there at the task force and you see them now lying next to students on hunger strike. Then you say to yourself: what is going on here? A captain now on hunger strike?¹⁶ That same year, he says, "in those contacts with the people, when you arrive in small towns and see popular assemblies, you see quality of thought, quality of questions, of peasants, of high school students, inaugurations of Bolivarian houses, and the peasants talk to you about Páez, about Zamora [...], experiences that you get from visiting those catacombs.¹⁷

Chavismo emerges in a context of severe crisis in the traditional forms of political mediation, beginning with the political parties: "I was sure that, with those political parties that existed [...] with those political forces it would have been impossible to break [with] the system by any means, armed or unarmed. This crisis became more acute at unprecedented levels after the support of the left for the candidacy of the Christian Socialist Rafael Caldera in 1994: "this meant [...] the definitive surrender of the political class. Even, on the support he receives from the same left-wing parties for his candidacy, in 1998, Chávez affirms: "I believe that all those parties, without any exception, were only seeking to occupy spaces, to gain positions, either through regional elections or in the national government".²⁰ But it's not just the political parties that are in crisis: "It must be said that the social movements were also in disarray, the unions were fighting among themselves...

We made contact with some [...] There were also student movements... But I repeat, it was a pulverized left. Once a coordination instance of social movements was appointed, and I attended many meetings [...] Until one day I burst out: 'Look, I'm tired of these meetings, I'm going to the streets'. Those were endless discussions²¹

A certain intelligentsia is also in crisis: "I believe that one has to die in battle, but not to maintain a very revolutionary and very pure flag, and to do nothing, not even the smallest thing, in a battle. Not to risk anything. Sometimes that position seems very comfortable to me [...] 'I don't go there because I'm very revolutionary'. Revolution means go into battle, advance at least one millimeter in the direction you think, instead of dreaming utopically. ²²

In contrast, the 'project' of the Bolivarian movement would have to be the result of 'a broad discussion, of the people themselves as 'collective intellectuals'²³, of the common citizen. In April 1995, Chavez asked: "Which intellectuals? Doesn't the peasant, the villager of the Arauca River in Elorza, think? Thinking is something immanent to being human. Let's see what's there"²⁴

In September 1997, he insisted on the point: "Or the peasants of Arauca, confronted with the guerrillas and the paramilitaries and the army, who have a morality that must be absorbed, we need to go there to be impregnated with that morality, with that philosophy, which perhaps is not in the texts, nor in the ideological and philosophical treatises, finished and thought by very enlightened people, but who at best do not know or did not know the concrete reality of Venezuela and the morality that lies beneath immorality or excrement, or collective desperation. ²⁵

Simultaneously to this crisis of traditional forms of political mediation "there are forces unleashed. One sees them, feels them, and it is possible [...] to mobilize them, to bring them together. ²⁶ These historical circumstances define the type of leadership exercise that will characterize Chavismo: 'Let us say that, between the leader and the masses, there were no intermediaries; no parties -our organization was just being born- no intellectuals, no nothing. Chávez and the people²⁷.

In July 1995, he affirmed: "There is an immense leadership vacuum in the workers' and peasants' sector, in the districts, in the collective, but I believe that given this vacuum, and given this historical situation, we must commit ourselves to transforming collective science into action²⁸ From then on, the Bolivarian movement will work on transforming popular force into power: "Real, concrete power that can move, that can tear down what already exists, as a counter-power. A power against another power. But that power that is transforming itself against the established power, the constituted power, has to be very big. If we do not mobilize this power, accelerate it, assemble it, give it strategic meaning, it will not be possible to overthrow the constituted power [...] There is the power of the people. There are hundreds of thousands of people, but we have to accelerate it. This is a power that is loose, dispersed.

Politics with subject

On May 29, 1993, still in prison, Chávez writes a letter to First Sergeant Andrés Reina Alvia. The document is a passionate plea in favor of the abstentionist line, a position maintained by the majority of the MBR-200 before the presidential elections to be held in December of the same year. Towards the end of the letter it may be read: "On the other hand, abstention, according to the most optimistic calculations, should not go down from 30 to 40 % and it has already become the electoral phenomenon of the century in Venezuela. There are approximately 2 million people (not including those who, being of electoral age, are not even registered in the electoral registry), mostly constituted by the marginal class, which continues to grow every day and which represents the ground where the seeds of future changes have sprouted "³⁰.

But what is the marginal class?³⁰ In April 1995, he used the same expression to refer to the one who considers the subject of the Bolivarian Revolution, and he dispelled any shadow of doubt: "The Bolivarian movement has an impact on the marginal classes, in the neighbourhoods of the big cities, in the countryside, among the Indians [...] That is where we have felt the furor, the

interest, the fervour of the people to get out of this misery in which they are immersed.

...] It will be difficult for them to twist our arms, so that the movement will serve interests other than those of the majority, those of the poor-people, of the marginal classes. That is where the movement is headed, that is where it is fed, and therefore that is where it must direct its transformative action.

Once this diagnosis is made, Chávez' reluctance to devote much time to discussions that, nevertheless, the left considered fundamental, is absolutely understandable: is the Bolivarian movement right or left? Does it assume itself to be Marxist? Does it consider that the working class is the central subject of the revolution? In May 1996, with a deliberately provocative spirit, Chávez marked a distance from "Marxism," that is, from the left that really exists in Venezuela: "And when I told you that the solution is not in Marxism, I am not excluding Marxism, but that we must go beyond Marxism. It can embrace it, but it is not the solution, especially for our countries, for these conditions, where I believe that there is no working class. I tell you, I have made efforts in these two years in unions, I have traveled to factories, we have made proposals and discussed with workers' leaders, trying to create a workers' force. And there are trials, advances [...] But where is that force?³² In February of the same year, and in the same spirit, he reflected: "Where should we place our movement ideologically? On a left-wing or a right-wing game-board? I believe that in the first place the game-board does not exist anymore [...] The MAS is supposedly left, and there it is supporting a reactionary right-wing government. The PCV until recently was supporting Caldera. The MEP, a socialist party in its beginnings, and it is in government too. If we look at the Soviet Union, Eurocommunism, Felipe González is socialist, I think the frame is over. If we look at the Soviet Union, Eurocommunism, Felipe González is socialist, I think the game-board is over. This is a world in which, from the ideological point of view, the standards were lost. I do not share the thesis of the end of ideology, and perhaps for that reason, because we have no standards of reference, left or right, we have boldly tried to find an original and indigenous point of reference for an ideological model that could be united around the Bolivarian, Zamorano, and Rodríguez approaches, as an expression of an

era, of something that was born here, and that is not of the left or right. If you ask me to define ourselves, I will tell you: we are a revolutionary movement, a popular movement for the cause of the dominated in this country and on this planet, for justice, for the revolution'.³³

The Bolivarian movement had identified the subject and the terrain, and had decided to direct all its efforts there. The left had been left without a game-board, that is, without a terrain. Even worse, they had been left without a subject, no matter how much they talked about the working class.

From the catacombs to Miraflores

A few days before getting out of jail, Chávez has decided to go straight to Capanaparo, Apure, with the Cuibas Indians, and from there start his mobilization throughout the country. ³⁴ His closest comrades make him give up the idea, and finally he starts in Caracas. He travels through Catia, La Vega, El Valle, Coche, Petare³⁵. By July he had already traveled all over the country³⁶. Four years later, he had gone through it five times³⁷. He went to the catacombs and never left them. He left the prison convinced that the key lay in the people's protagonism, and this has guided his countries ever since: "I believe that the people have been the protagonists, sometimes more, sometimes less, of a historical process [...] And now, the vision that we have is based on that conception. We've talked about it a lot: without a collective there's nothing. Only the people save the people. Here there are no saviors, no messiahs, no Chávez. If there is no popular organization and a well-oriented movement, there is no change possible here³⁸. Even then, he was equally convinced of the need to promote forms of popular self-government.

The preceding lines, a fragment of the history of the origins of Chavismo as told by Chávez himself, illustrate the extraordinary changes taking place during the virtuous decade: an emerging revolutionary political leadership that relates to the popular subject as an equal; a people that politicizes itself in a protagonism keyline, that regains faith in itself, in its transforming force; a people that discovers what it is and what it can become; a leadership that tries to live up to the popular subject; the death of the "myth of Chávez" and the birth of the

collective myth of an achievable future; the re-birth of popular hope, a people that claims its right to dream and assumes its obligation to fight for its dream; a people with a great desire for social revolution; the terminal crisis of the traditional forms of political mediation; the delegitimization of the political class, within the political left; the bet on the "collective intellectual," on knowledge anchored in reality; a leadership that is obliged to dispense with these political mediations in crisis, privileging direct contact with the popular subject; the effort to transform the popular force into power; the identification of a subject: the marginalized and precarized popular classes, severely hit by neoliberalism, historically invisible; the vindication of ideological references in accordance with our history and culture.

And there is more: Chávez also relates how "the people had lost their fear. There was much popular enthusiasm. While the credibility in the parties of both the right and in the case of the left wing, the inverse proportion of the left wing came down, and the credibility of our discourse and our proposal grew³⁹. Elsewhere he says: "I believe that in no other country like Venezuela does this idea of nationhood, the pride of being what we are and having a different country, exist today. One feels it everywhere". It is June 1995.

In 1998, in the middle of the electoral campaign, Chávez declared: "We are working on men's conscience. It is not even that we had that money, to go around handing out food, zinc sheets or paint in the streets, we wouldn't do it. We are talking loudly to the people. Nor do we go around telling people what they want to hear. We call on everyone to assume their responsibilities, to share collectively, in the organization of a great social front where everyone must contribute what they can. Not only from a material point of view, but also spiritually, intellectually, and in terms of time and work⁴⁰.

Venezuela would never be the same again. All this was happening and Chávez had not even arrived in Miraflores. And it happened: Chávez won the presidential elections on December 6, 1998, and on February 2, 1999, he arrived at the Palace: "When I took office on February 2, 1999, the first night I arrived here, at the Miraflores Palace, there were Alberto Fujimori,

Carlos Menem, the Prince of Asturias [...] And above all the oligarchy appeared to praise me. I met the oligarchy in full

[...] Here they all came, the Cisneros, the Azpúrua, the wealthiest families, the bourgeoisie... I was out of my mind. I had campaigned thinking of the humble, of those who possess nothing and who are the soul of Venezuela. And it turned out that the people, the forgotten ones of always, were almost not represented; well, the drivers, the escorts, the waiters... Fidel Castro looked at those rooms and said to me with irony: 'Is this the Fifth Republic?'... And he left". 41

Chavez was beginning to understand that, even when they have to be occupied, revolutions are not made from palaces. That one must always govern in and for the catacombs, at the risk of losing or selling one's soul. That being in Miraflores only makes sense if one has a vocation for subversion.

Hard-line Chavismo

A die-hard fan of self-described discourse, the average anti-Chávez is shaken when he reads in the polls that Nicolás Maduro has an approval rating of over 20 percent, well above several of his Latin American peers, and is almost paralyzed when he learns that Hugo Chávez, six long years after his physical disappearance, still commands the sympathy of over half the population.

Faced with the dilemma of surrendering to the evidence, he is explained in imprecations of legend, cursing in the most varied, eloquent, and painful ways the unfortunate day he had to come to be born in this land plagued by misfortune, surrounded by such miserable and uneducated people, so small-time.

This unedifying attitude, which some people have had to deal with for twenty years, is accompanied by the most emphatic denial: it cannot be possible, someone is lying to us. Venezuela is not a country, it is a gigantic fraud. Life itself is a tortuous and endless fraud. A nightmare from which it is not possible to wake up.

Nothing and no one is capable of making the average anti-Chavista understand reasons. As intolerable and unacceptable as it is, reality seems incomprehensible to him. His political class, his propaganda machine, his intellectuals, while doing nothing but feeding and reproducing the same discouraged, incredulous, cynical common sense, can offer little or nothing.

On the contrary, they are a permanent source of the most far-fetched explanations, and that is how they manage to make the most implausible stories acquire the rank of truth, such as the story that Chavismo can only be in power because it has committed, time and again, electoral fraud. Venezuela is a shitty country. Stop the usurpation.

For a long time, pollsters, that profession halfway between scientific practice and prestidigitation, has tried to give an account of the existence of a curious phenomenon: Hard Chavismo. If for the average anti-Chavista, Chavismo in general is the cause and consequence of all evils, if it is in itself a plague, what can be thought of Hard-line Chavismo?

Hard-line Chavismo would be the worst of the worst. If Chavismo is the disease, then Hard-line Chavismo is the aggressive terminal illness, the cause of the most terrible and painful sufferings. If Chavismo is garbage, then Hard-line Chavismo is excrescence.

Always according to the average anti-Chavista, only Hard-line Chavismo can feel comfortable in a situation like the one we are living in. They want everything for themselves, but at the same time they are satisfied with very little. Their political identification is only possible at the price of the suffering of the immense majority.

It does not matter if the attitude of the average anti-Chavista is far from the way of thinking and feeling of most people. He believes that he has the right to judge that hard, conformist, indolent, accomplice Chavismo is worthy of suffering equal to or worse than that which it inflicts, and for that reason he justifies the taking of food and medicine, the humiliation and death in hospitals, and the targeting of the latter, persecuted and murdered, swindled by traders, forced to eat from garbage,

not paid enough, victim of criminal violence, expelled from their lands and, when the occasion arises, bombed and annihilated. In the end, everything that happens to him, as well as what should happen to him, is the ultimate responsibility of the government he supports.

He believes him to be incapable of discernment and criticism, devoid of intelligence and beauty, and lacking any virtue. If someone resists, that's the average anti-Chavista. Hard-line Chavismo only tolerates, sustains, holds on to, prevents from falling what it has long been due to fall.

If the United States ordered the anti-Chávez political class not to participate in the 2018 presidential elections, it was not because it considered it impossible to win, much less because of the absence of electoral guarantees, but because it was not in its plans to defeat Chavismo electorally. The imperial sovereign has been decisive in forging this idea that Chavismo is an exterminable subject, who must die a violent death, no matter if this amounts to genocide.

The diagnosis is brutal, because it speaks to us of a certain de-humanization of politics, it refers us to deep-seated social hatreds and fears, it forces us to calibrate the scope of imperial bestiality, makes us have to deal with a reality that we already wish was different. But it is the diagnosis.

In general, the survey offers us a partial portrait of reality, but it does not delve deeply into the reasons behind the political identifications, perhaps because it is not its place, perhaps because it is so committed to the defeat of Chavismo that it prefers to patronize the average anti-Chavista, offering him few tools to understand his environment.

The first thing to understand is that the Hard-line Chavismo is not simply a stream of votes. He expresses himself, of course, electorally, but he is much more than that. One of his main characteristics and, at the same time, one of his advantages, is that he does not despise the country in which he lives. That makes the way it relates to politics a fundamentally joyful experience. He does not make politics out of contempt for others, but by recovering his own pride. In contrast to the caricatured image that has been built up of him, he is severely

critical of a government that, nevertheless, is his own, to a greater or lesser extent, and he knows well that, in the event that anti-Chavismo regains power, it will govern with its back to popular interests. And if any doubt remains, it is enough to take stock of all the damage it has caused by trying to regain it, often by appealing to undemocratic channels. He is resisting not so much for fear of losing what he has won or for fear of reprisals, as the surveyors usually say, but because he has already proved that it is possible to live better and he wants to do it again.

The pollsters lack what Hard-line Chavismo has plenty: street knowledge. The problem with the average anti-Chavista is another: he is convinced that having the streets is the same as lighting them on fire, with everything and Chavistas.

You can judge it as you like, but, wrong or not, hard-core Chavismo still feels like it owns its destiny. And even if they accuse him of genuflection, of being priced or sold, the truth is that feeling, in politics, is priceless.

Why Chavismo still resists

If the existence of hard-line Chavismo allows us to understand why the government can be sustained despite everything, the profound transformations in the field of political culture that took place during the 1990s, which were briefly described at the beginning of this text, provide decisive hermeneutic keys, and in fact explain the very existence of hard-line Chavismo.

Perhaps the key fact is that it is not possible to assimilate Chavismo with the government. Historically, the relationship between one and the other has been one of permanent tension, even open conflict. In effect, since 1999 Chavism has assumed the reins of government, but immediately this same government and, beyond that, the State itself, became the terrain of dispute both with the forces opposed to the Bolivarian revolution, as well as between the diverse lines of Chavist forces, from the most conservative to the most radically democratic.

This initial certainty regarding the Government and the State as grounds for political conflict, for a fierce struggle of

forces, strengthened as the Bolivarian Revolution was consolidated, in general allowed the social base of Chavismo to avoid naïve readings about power, and rather persuaded it of the imperative need to take very seriously that of participatory and leading democracy. In other words, from the beginning, the bulk of Chavismo's social base was very clear in that, while it was a significant advantage to have control of the government, the revolution would not have to be made from there, but rather leveraged on the strength of the organized people, an idea, moreover, that was always insisted upon by Hugo Chávez.

If it is understood that Chavismo is a political reality that goes far beyond the control of the government, it should not be so difficult to assimilate that it resists the brutal attacks of imperialism as well as the anti-democratic opposition, more or less independently of the evaluation it may have of its government. In fact, it can rightly be said that most of Chavismo's discontent with the latter is directly related to the way it confronts such aggressions.

Today, an important part of Chavismo has a very negative evaluation of what could be called the pro-middle class civil service, of the partisan and governmental political leadership, which it judges as inconsequential, disconnected from the daily problems of the population, pusillanimous, permissive, dedicated to amass fortunes or do business with the powers that be, which of course are contrary to the Revolution and the interests of the popular majority, and in many cases the resulting unrest leads to demobilization, popular withdrawal, even reluctance to identify with Chavismo in power. But an equally crucial fact is that this malaise, with its associated political effects, does not translate into a political identification with anti-Chavismo.

For the popular majority, which comes from the intense process of politicization exposed in broad strokes at the beginning, anti-chavismo, with its deep class and racial prejudices, is far from meaning an alternative. Likewise, there prevails the popular certainty that the brutal coercive measures of U.S. imperialism fundamentally affect the entire population, without distinction of political identity, and therefore they are unviable and intolerable.

On several occasions, anti-Chavismo tried, in vain, to create the conditions for a popular revolt against the government, something like a 27F in 1989 in a laboratory. This pretension exposed, again and again, not only its profound ignorance of the popular soul and its ignorance of the historical conditions that made possible the emergence of chavismo, but also its rootless disdain for the Venezuelan people.

On February 27, 1989, without an invitation card and without asking permission, the Venezuelan people took the streets of the country's main cities. It was the country's anonymous rebellion, the one that did not appear on maps or in directories. The same country that sympathized with the military rebellions of 1992, the country that witnessed the programmatic surrender of the political class, almost all of it on the right and left, to neo-liberalism, from which comes, in good measure, that anti-party position that it assumes as a matter of principle. The excluded country, almost always without experience of partisan militancy, marginalized from the polis, without recognized citizenship, with precarious links or no link whatsoever with other forms of representation, such as the unions, outside the sphere of public administration, alien to the uses and customs of the middle class and its imaginary, and without any relationship with the elites, has been a country of the past.

The first is the elemental one, which determines their subordinate position in the social pyramid.

In attempting to recreate the conditions for a similar social "explosion," anti-Chavismo proposed to the popular majorities nothing less than rebellion against themselves. At most, anti-chavismo succeeded on several occasions in organizing pockets of violence in various states of the country: it did so in 2004, then in 2007, 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2019. In each case, it was hoped that counterrevolutionary sparks would ignite the prairie. The violence escalated over the years, and the country came to the brink of civil war, as in 2017. But at all times, and contrary to the legend that the Hegemonic media have spread about the events, Chavismo acted mainly as a force of containment and dissuasion of violence.

Chavismo is still capable of resisting because those force-ideas around it was forged are fully viable. Not only does it resist and will resist beyond the existence of a Chavista government, but it is resistance made body including among the millions who, with their voices, manifest their will to disaffiliate themselves from political identity. In this manifestation of will, there is much uneasiness regarding the actions and omissions of the government in dealing with the situation, as I have already mentioned, and on the other hand, very little intention of removing the historical flags of Chavismo.

Chavismo is a living body because it continues to struggle, even if a part of it has decided to adopt another name. And while it will certainly continue to fight, it will also continue to live.

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