

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

# FORUM

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# President's Report

by CHARLES R. HALE | University of Texas, Austin | crhale@mail.utexas.edu

In a seminar on Central American integration at the University of Texas, held in the second week of November, UT economist James Galbraith opened his presentation with an arresting observation. "This is," he announced, "the beginning of the end of neoliberalism." His analysis had a panoramic scope, from China to Chile, and the specific impetus for his remarks was surely the deep critique of U.S. domestic and foreign policies brought forth by the U.S. midterm elections. Still, his assessment provokes two observations that are especially relevant to the central theme of our upcoming Montréal Congress. First, not only is the prediction itself subject to debate (as any prediction of course would be), but equally important, it dramatizes how important it will be for us to analyze both neoliberalism and the related idea of the "Washington Consensus" through a prior clarification of what we take these terms to mean. Whether we understand neoliberalism as an abstract and limited set of economic policy prescriptions, or a multifaceted and evolving strategy of governance, or something different from either of these two, will have everything to do with whether our analysis bears Galbraith out. The second observation moves beyond this problem of "definitional pluralism," to note the dramatic course of recent events in the region. Since my last report there have been five elections (Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Ecuador), of which four (or all five, depending on what one believes the true outcome of the disputed Mexican elections to be) delivered sharp blows of dissent to policies of the Washington Consensus. Neoliberalism is another matter, of course, and the victors represent a range of positions on its key components. Still, the winds of change are blowing hard, and they can be expected to create an especially vibrant atmosphere for scholarly exchange in Montréal.

It is also striking that over the past few months Mexico, where a candidate most clearly associated with continuity of political-economic conservatism took the helm, is also where some of the most dramatic unrest and social conflict has occurred. A few days before this writing (mid-December 2006) the LASA Executive Council (EC) received a petition signed by some 100 intellectuals, all Latin American, mostly Mexican, and about 30 percent LASA members, who expressed deep concern about the crisis in Oaxaca, and petitioned LASA to take action. The causes for concern are well known and need not be repeated here, except to note that the letter, after citing general human rights violations, goes on to specify acts of repression against academic, intellectual and artistic communities. The signatories call for a "...delegación compuesta por distinguidos miembros de LASA—de alto renombre y neutralidad..." that could visit Oaxaca, gather information, and prepare a report that could contribute to the "...conocimiento y comprensión de los acontecimientos recientes... [lo cual] podría ser un importante elemento para detener la represión y apoyar el reestablecimiento de las libertades que normalmente se gozan...."

The petition is now under consideration of the LASA EC, and a decision on the matter will be taken long before this issue of the *Forum* is printed and mailed. I bring the matter to the attention of LASA members because it raises such crucial questions for our Association. LASA has a long tradition of organizing fact-finding and research missions, especially, but not exclusively, in the context of the Central American crisis. Since 1980 (to choose an arbitrary date), LASA has sponsored eight special delegations or missions on a range of topics, from elections to peace processes to scholars under threat. In addition, again especially but not exclusively in reference to Central



America and Cuba, LASA has been asked to pronounce on a series of issues regarding U.S. policy, human rights violations, and other situations of repression or injustice. How are we to respond appropriately, responsibly and effectively to this large (and potentially overwhelming) flow of petitions?

While there are no easy answers, and quite probably no single position with which all members will be satisfied, I am glad to report that we are engaged in a process that aims to confront the matter head on. In the June 2005 EC meeting, at then-president Sonia Alvarez's initiative, we began to rethink the Task Force on Human Rights and Academic Freedom, which had been paralyzed by ambiguities in its mandate and procedures. We are now working on a proposal to revitalize the Task Force, to place it under the direction of the sitting Vice President, and to give it sharply defined guidelines. This proposal will be presented to the EC for discussion and approval in our January 2007 midterm meeting. While I cannot predict the results of these deliberations, I hope and expect that we will forge a position that lies somewhere in the middle ground between two poles in the debate: 1) that LASA should take an overtly politicized stand, potentially responding to any injustice or human rights violation in Latin America brought to its attention; 2) that LASA's mission dictates strict neutrality at all times, such that it is never appropriate to take action that influences the broader conditions under which scholarship, creative and intellectual work on Latin America takes place. Although the Oaxaca petition is quite separate from this broader question of the reconstituted Task Force, I am confident that

PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued...

working through a specific case and the broader principles in the same meeting will help us reach clarity on both.

LASA faces another largely unrelated challenge, which also will need to be resolved before this *Forum* goes to print. We have grown beyond the bounds of the three-day Congress format, especially given our long-standing practice of accepting the great majority of session and paper submissions. In many ways this problem is good news, since it speaks to the vibrancy of Latin American area studies, contrary to the opinions of some prominent voices in the U.S. academic and foundation establishments. Yet it also signals the need for hard decisions. Here are the basic facts: the rejection rate for submissions to the Puerto Rico Congress, a four-day event with the largest attendance in LASA history, was 19 percent; we received 30 percent more submissions for Montréal than we did for Puerto Rico. The crunch is somewhat eased by the higher number of venues for simultaneous presentations in Montréal (49 versus 36), but still, a three-day Montréal Congress would require us to reject about 32 percent of paper/session submissions. Each Congress day is already full and 49 simultaneous sessions is almost surely at its conceivable maximum. This leaves us, in effect, to confront the challenge by manipulating one or more of three variables: a) rejection rate; b) minutes assigned to each session; c) number of Congress days. I am deeply opposed to shortening the sessions, which already often leave insufficient time for discussion. I have become convinced that a gradually rising rejection rate can be healthy for LASA, but a spike to 32 percent seems too high, especially in a year when the express rationale for relocation to Montréal was greater inclusiveness. This leaves adding a day to the Congress as the only alternative, one that I and others have been reluctant to endorse.

This discussion is sure *not* to go away with Montréal. Although it is too early to discern a trend, it seems likely that LASA's general move to hold our Congress outside the United States will be a continued impetus for growth, both in Congress attendance and in Association membership. Our multifaceted efforts to make LASA a truly international Association, with progress toward parity in the participation and leadership of U.S.- and Latin America-based members, should also contribute to this trend. Yet this means coming to terms with the "crunch" every 18 months, as we put together the Congress program. Even if the move to four days becomes a permanent feature, the challenge will remain. In the years to come the LASA EC needs to: 1) prepare the membership for an inevitable rise in the rejection rate; 2) create conditions that encourage greater Congress attendance by those who do not give papers; 3) find incentives for membership growth and retention beyond Congress participation. (The new vibrancy of the *Forum* and the continued excellence of *LARR* already have this effect; other special projects and activities could make it stronger.)

Let me close with a brief note on the *Forum*. We are very pleased, with this issue, to inaugurate a "letters from members" section, with a contribution from Professor Peter Ranis. Although we cannot guarantee publication of every letter, we are committed to making this section a dynamic, pluralist outlet for members to express views about matters vital to the Association. So if you have praise but also critiques and constructive suggestions, please make your voices heard! ■

# Associate Editor's Report

by ARTURO ARIAS | University of Redlands | Arturo\_Arias@redlands.edu

Two issues dominate the winter *Forum*. On the one hand, the massive reelection of President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela prompts an analysis of what his Bolivarian revolution means. Seldom in the last 25 years have we found a more divisive issue in Latin America. The Cuban and Sandinista revolutions enjoyed initial consensus, but there was gradual disaffection as the years went by. This has not been the case with Chávez. From his initial rise to power, the populist nature of his rhetoric has led many to question his intentions. Nevertheless, an important segment of the academic community has been supportive from the start, and has kept a close eye on developments in Venezuela. The *LASA Forum* editorial team felt that it was time to put many of these issues on the table and gather a wide spectrum of academic opinion regarding the achievements, and/or failures, of the Chávez administration.

The other issue is LASA's decision to move its next International Congress to Canada. In the wake of this decision, there has been rising interest in non-Latin American and non-U.S. centers or programs in Latin American Studies, primarily Canadian centers. "Peripheral" Latin American programs were examined at the Puerto Rico Congress, where LASA President Sonia Alvarez asked Jeffrey Lesser of Emory University to organize a roundtable on this topic. The result was "Centering the Periphery: Non-Latin Latin Americanisms." Four scholars were asked to reflect on the epistemologies emerging from a de-centered geopolitical approach to Latin American Studies. In this issue we publish the results of this discussion.

Regarding the debate on Chávez, the first essay, "Countervailing Powers" by Greg Grandin, argues that Chávez's opponents have always accused him of incompetence, corruption, and authoritarianism. Grandin

proposes to explore those points to gauge Chávez's accomplishments. Arguing that the chaotic energy of his administration is due to a lack of ideological rigidity, Grandin sees efficiency where his critics see incompetence. He also claims that corruption is endemic to the Venezuelan state, though serious efforts to curb it have been implemented in recent years. He concludes by stating that Chavismo has its shortcomings, but that its achievements clearly outweigh its flaws. Greg Grandin is Professor of History and Director of Graduate Studies at New York University.

In a second article, "A View from the Barrios: Hugo Chávez as an Expression of Urban Popular Movements," Sujatha Fernandes argues that both supporters and detractors of Chávez attribute "a high degree of agency" to him yet they fail to fully appreciate the impact of popular social sectors in shaping his agenda. Fernandes argues that "while academics lumped together these diverse groupings as 'Chavistas...' many community organizations... did not identify as Chavistas. Rather, they have alternative sources of identity ...." By looking at "the interconnections, alliances, and points of collaboration between critical movements and the state," she concludes that the relationship between them and the state is reciprocal. This makes Venezuela more participatory and inclusive than countries often touted as successful democracies. Sujatha Fernandes is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Queens College, CUNY.

Javier Corrales and Michael Penfold's "Social Spending and Democracy: The Case of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela," argues that "under Chávez, political competition has increased, but institutions of accountability have weakened. This mix helps explain how Chávez has chosen to spend Venezuela's spectacular oil bonanza." They argue that

there are different forms of social spending, and that Chávez exploits his *misiones* for political advantage, concluding that Chávez's social policies are not necessarily pro-poor, but "vintage clientelism and cronyism," although the *misiones* have been useful politically for Chávez's cause. Javier Corrales is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Amherst College. Michael Penfold is Associate Professor at the Institute for Advanced Administrative Studies in Caracas, Venezuela.

Francisco Rodríguez begins his article, "Sharing the Oil Wealth? Appraising the Effects of Venezuela's Social Programs," by stating that it is common to assume that Chávez has reoriented the economy to benefit Venezuela's poor. Claiming that "a rigorous evaluation of the administration's social programs is required for an understanding of the evolution of well-being among the poorest sectors of Venezuelan society," he concludes that *Misión Robinson* was both a failure and an expensive endeavor. He asserts that there is little evidence that state expenditures have been redirected to the poor, or that the administration is even trying to help them. Francisco Rodríguez is Assistant Professor of Economics and Latin American Studies at Wesleyan University.

Finally, in her article "Venezuela After the 2006 Elections," Jennifer McCoy asks a crucial question: "can a democratic framework manage a renegotiation of the social contract as citizens demand fuller inclusion and expanded citizenship in all of its dimensions?" McCoy sees the threat of violence when all three dimensions—civil, political and social—are present, leading to the rise of "a neopopulist or charismatic outsider variant of either electoral democracy or electoral authoritarianism;" even so, she remains moderately hopeful about Venezuela's democratic possibilities.

ASSOCIATE EDITOR'S REPORT continued...

Jennifer McCoy is Professor of Political Science at Georgia State University and Director of the Americas Program at the Carter Center.

For the *On the Profession* section, Víctor Armony offers a tour of Montréal's universities in "Los Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe en Montréal." In this *recorrido*, he covers McGill University, Concordia University, l'Université de Montréal, y l' Université du Québec à Montréal, outlining their Latin American centers, their achievements, the number of Latin American students in those institutions, and other details, such as the CDAS, where the *Latin American Research Review* will be housed. Víctor Armony is Professeur Titulaire du Departament de Sociologie de l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Jeffrey Lesser's "Centering the Periphery: Non-Latin Latin Americanisms" is really four articles in one. It includes J. M. Baud's "Ambivalent Academia: Latin and Anglo-Saxon Influences in Latin American Studies in Europe;" "Waiting for a Second Humboldt: Latin American Studies in Germany" by Barbara Potthast; "The Antipodal Passion" by Shuhei Hosokawa; and "Re-Discovering the 'Hidden' History of Latin American Jews" by Raanan Rein.

Michiel Baud notes the major Latin Americanist trends in Europe, with emphasis on the Netherlands, claiming that geopolitical dissimilarity is the main difference between European and American Latin Americanists. Baud runs the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation, the Netherlands. Barbara Potthast writes about the difficulties of pursuing Latin American research in present-day Germany in the eroding state universities. She teaches at the University of Cologne, Germany. Shuhei Hosokawa

discusses the question of translation as crucial for understanding the globalized yet asymmetrical relationship in Latin American Studies. Shuhei Hosokawa is at the International Center for Japanese Studies. Finally, Raanan Rein talks about how general Latin American studies are growing in Israel at the same time that traditional study of Jews "with its ideological and Zionist bias," is declining. Raanan Rein teaches at Tel Aviv University.

This section also includes a short guide to other programs in Latin American Studies in Canada by Rosario Gómez, outlining those at the University of Toronto, the Indigenous Studies Minor Program at the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University's Latin American Studies Program, and the Latin American program at the University of Saskatchewan. Rosario Gómez is Assistant Professor at the School of Languages and Literatures of the University of Guelph.

Finally, the *Political Commentary* section includes an article on the official report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Charles Walker, Professor History at the University of California, Davis. Professor Davis argues that, while praised for its rigor, the report has been criticized by wide-ranging sectors of Peruvian society. The consequence is that, despite debunking the myth that Fujimori defeated terrorism, no political sector has embraced it. As a result, there is even a risk that it will no longer be available for public consultation after 2007. ■

## Los Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe en Montréal

by VÍCTOR ARMONY | Université du Québec à Montréal | varmony.victor@uqam.ca

El ámbito de los estudios latinoamericanos y caribeños en Montréal se distingue de lo que encontramos habitualmente en otras ciudades de América por las mismas razones que hacen de esta metrópolis un espacio de confluencias intelectuales único en el continente y, tal vez, en el mundo. Montréal es una ciudad cosmopolita en la que los idiomas francés e inglés y, de manera general, las matrices culturales europea continental—algunos dirán “latina”—y anglosajona coexisten, dialogan y, a veces también, entran en conflicto directo. En el mundo académico, esto se refleja principalmente en la presencia de cuatro universidades en el corazón urbano, dos de habla francesa (Université de Montréal y Université du Québec à Montréal) y dos de habla inglesa (Concordia University y McGill University). El visitante suele llegar a nuestra ciudad asumiendo que el bilingüismo predomina en lo individual y en lo institucional, pero esto no es así: la mayoría de habitantes suele manejarse con una sola lengua y, generalmente, las organizaciones públicas y privadas privilegian claramente una u otra de ellas en sus actividades regulares. Subrayemos asimismo que el francés es el único idioma oficial de la Provincia de Québec y que el inglés solamente puede ser utilizado en comunicaciones públicas (por ejemplo, comerciales) dentro de circunstancias y contextos explícitamente permitidos por la ley. Aunque esta realidad se aleja de la utopía lingüística en la que muchos quisiéramos creer, ella suscita un extraordinario dinamismo cultural en ambos idiomas y ofrece a quien esté dispuesto a cruzar las fronteras culturales—que en ciertos casos son incluso geográficas—un patrimonio intelectual fascinante. Los miles de estudiantes universitarios en humanidades y ciencias sociales de Montréal—una ciudad “universitaria” por excelencia, dada la enorme cantidad de alumnos que reside en ella—tienen la posibilidad de sondear,

durante un mismo día de clases, las mejores tradiciones británicas y estadounidenses para luego leer y discutir, en su idioma original, la obra de los grandes pensadores franceses. Para ello, no tienen más que seguir parte de su currícula (por ejemplo, los cursos “libres”) en una de las otras universidades de la ciudad, todas ellas conectadas convenientemente por el “Métro” (el tren subterráneo).

Comencemos nuestro recorrido con McGill University (estación “McGill” en la línea verde), la más antigua y conocida de las universidades de Montréal. McGill cuenta con un programa de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Caribeños desde 1971 (se trata de un “interdisciplinary undergraduate major”). En sus más de tres décadas de existencia, este programa ha mantenido una base constante de 30 a 35 estudiantes inscritos. En los años 90 fue creado el programa de grado en Estudios de Desarrollo y muchos de sus 700 alumnos toman cursos relacionados con América Latina y el Caribe como parte de su formación. Cabe señalar que los estudiantes de ambos programas, como así también aquellos de Estudios Hispánicos (en Literatura), pueden efectuar una pasantía de un semestre o de un año en la Universidad de Salamanca, en la Universidad de las Américas o en cualquier universidad latinoamericana con la que exista un convenio de intercambio. La Facultad de Artes está actualmente organizando un programa de Maestría (“MA Certificate”) en Estudios de Desarrollo Internacional, dentro del cual muchos de los alumnos realizarán trabajos sobre América Latina o el Caribe. Otras facultades, como la de Medio Ambiente y de Administración, ofrecen a sus alumnos diversas experiencias internacionales (de tipo “field study” y “summer school”, por ejemplo) en países de América Central y del Sur. No podemos dejar de mencionar la presencia del CDAS,

un centro de estudios sobre el desarrollo que alojará desde este año a la revista de LASA, *Latin American Research Review*.

Tres estaciones de Métro hacia el oeste, siempre en la línea verde, llegamos a Concordia University, la otra universidad inglesa de Montréal. Creada en 1974, Concordia encarna verdaderamente la multiculturalidad canadiense. Esto se refleja en la presencia de alrededor de 1,000 estudiantes de origen latinoamericano. La *Latin American Students Organization* (LASO) de Concordia ha cumplido veinte años y trabaja activamente para promover la cultura latinoamericana, establecer vínculos con la comunidad local y brindar una oportunidad de integración a los nuevos alumnos que llegan de América Latina cada semestre. Aunque Concordia no cuenta con un programa de Estudios Latinoamericanos como tal, sobresale su novedoso enfoque de “Individually Structured Programs” y de “Elective Groups” que permite a los estudiantes construir una trayectoria personalizada en torno a un foco de interés. Uno de los grupos electivos es “Spanish America”, formado por un conjunto de cursos orientados hacia el lenguaje, la cultura y la sociedad de habla hispana. Entre los programas de Lenguas Modernas, el de “honors” y el “major” en español dan a los alumnos una amplia formación en idioma y literatura.

Vayamos ahora a las universidades francesas. En la ladera del Mont Royal (la colina y parque que domina la Isla de Montréal)—sobre la línea azul del Métro—se encuentra la muy señorial Université de Montréal, fundada en 1878. Su Facultad de Artes y Ciencias ofrece un programa de “minor” en Estudios Latinoamericanos, en el que se inscribe un promedio anual de 25 estudiantes, generalmente asociándolo a un “major” en ciencia política, antropología, ciencias económicas, estudios hispánicos o

ARMONY continued...

estudios cinematográficos. Se trata de un programa pluridisciplinario que atrae a jóvenes de origen latinoamericano (extranjeros e inmigrantes) y también a canadienses que buscan desarrollarse en el área de la cooperación internacional y de los organismos comunitarios. Con alrededor de veinte profesores especializados en América Latina y el Caribe, la Facultad de Artes y Ciencias de la Université de Montréal presenta un núcleo importante de docencia, investigación y colaboración internacional en este campo de estudios. Varios de ellos se han incorporado al flamante Centro de Estudios y de Investigaciones Internacionales (CERIUM). Es interesante resaltar que la prestigiosa HEC—una facultad de administración afiliada a la universidad—brinda una formación trilingüe (francés, inglés y español) en el marco de su programa de grado en negocios, la primera de este tipo en América del Norte.

Finalmente, llegamos a la Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), en la confluencia de las líneas verde, naranja y amarilla del Métro. La UQAM, fundada a fines de la década del 60, se ha caracterizado desde sus orígenes por su participación en los grandes debates sociales y políticos de cada época. Marcada por el inconformismo y la innovación, la universidad cuenta con múltiples unidades de investigación que se interesan en los fenómenos contemporáneos. En ese contexto, fueron creados, por ejemplo, el Observatorio de las Américas (el principal difusor mundial en lengua francesa de análisis de coyuntura sobre América Latina y el Caribe) y el CERB, primer centro en Canadá dedicado enteramente a los estudios sobre Brasil. Por otra parte, el programa de MBA para Ejecutivos, ofrecido por la UQAM en asociación con universidades extranjeras en varios continentes, tiene polos en seis países de América Latina. La UQAM se destaca también por la proliferación de grupos de

discusión y de estudio, una tradición típicamente europea. Docentes y estudiantes se reúnen en torno a temáticas de interés común, sea la post-modernidad o los movimientos sociales. Entre ellos, mencionemos al GRIPAL (Grupo de Investigación sobre los Imaginarios Políticos en América Latina) que realiza seminarios mensuales desde el año 2000 y lleva a cabo proyectos de investigación con subsidios provinciales y federales. Por último, recordemos que la Revista de la Asociación Canadiense de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe está basada en la UQAM.

Como decía al principio, los estudios latinoamericanos y caribeños en Montréal forman parte de un espacio intelectual sumamente dinámico y polifacético. Un número cada vez mayor de iniciativas inter-universitarias generan vínculos de colaboración y de intercambio. El Congreso de LASA que tendrá lugar en Montréal en septiembre sirve ya de catalizador para diversos proyectos que reúnen a latinoamericanistas y caribeños de múltiples disciplinas. El mismo *Local Arrangements Comité*, encargado de ciertos aspectos de la organización del Congreso, constituye un microcosmos de la diversidad y de las posibilidades de complementariedad y convergencia entre los profesores y los alumnos de las cuatro universidades Montréalenses. Quienes conocen el mundo académico anglosajón saben hasta qué punto es difícil introducir referencias intelectuales de otros horizontes nacionales y culturales. Quienes conocen el mundo académico francés (y europeo continental en general) saben que los prejuicios ante los enfoques “norteamericanos” son moneda corriente. Los académicos latinoamericanos se nutren de esa dualidad, inspirándose de ambas vertientes, pero la distancia los obliga muchas veces a ser observadores más que protagonistas de las últimas tendencias en las sociedades “centrales”. En Montréal, esa

dualidad se concretiza de manera inigualable: las modas intelectuales (y políticas) de París se codean con las novedades teóricas y metodológicas que nos llegan desde New York, a apenas unos cientos de kilómetros al sur de la metrópolis. Las tensiones, las “mélanges” y las invenciones que esta realidad provoca contribuyen a hacer de la vida académica en Montréal una experiencia intensa y enriquecedora.

*Agradezco a Catherine Legrand (McGill University), a Angela Steinmetz (Université de Montréal) y a mis colegas latinoamericanistas de la UQAM por las informaciones brindadas para este artículo. ■*

## Centering the Periphery Non-Latin Latin Americanisms

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LASA president Sonia Alvarez generously invited me to convene a roundtable at LASA2006 to explore the study of Latin America outside of the Americas. I titled the roundtable “Centering the Periphery: Non-Latin Latin Americanisms” and asked Raanan Rein, Director of Tel Aviv University’s Latin American and Iberian Studies Center, to help me organize the event. Our first approach was ambitious and we invited scholars from India, Egypt, Lebanon, China and Poland to participate. Yet almost immediately the “periphery” reared its head since our colleagues in these countries were not in a position to attend a conference in Puerto Rico. We then moved on to researchers whose institutions are in fact well known although they are in national academies for which Latin America is a low priority. Our panel thus included Dr. Michiel Baud (Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation, the Netherlands), Dr. Shuhei Hosokawa (International Center for Japanese Studies, Japan), Dr. Barbara Potthast (University of Cologne, Germany), and Dr. Raanan Rein (Tel Aviv University, Israel). Each was asked to assess the intellectual and political history of Latin American Studies within the context of their national academy in order to analyze the epistemologies emerging from a de-centered geopolitical approach to Latin American Studies.

These short pieces represent the emergence of a complex framework for the study of Latin America. In each case, it is exactly the non-Americas center which influences scholars to consider non-hegemonic populations within the region and in Diasporas. From these perspectives we see how new approaches are created out of different national lenses and how important it is for scholars in the center (i.e. the Americas) to engage with colleagues in Asia, Europe and the Middle East, among other places. This engagement will help to

challenge some of the least discussed assumptions of Latin American studies. It will help to expand the populations considered worthy of study, the nature of imperialism in academic exchanges, and the transnational role of human rights in broader political and social movements in Latin America.

### **Ambivalent Academia: Latin and Anglo-Saxon Influences in Latin American Studies in Europe**

by MICHEL BAUD

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I never thought of myself or my colleagues in the Netherlands, or even Europe, as belonging to the—or ‘a’—periphery. In Latin America Europeans are traditionally considered representatives of the rich, industrialized western world; of the centre, so to speak. And that is how we see ourselves, as well. We are, however, working in a different academic and political environment than our colleagues in the United States. Thus it is interesting to ask ourselves to what extent European (and Dutch) Latin American Studies differ from those in the hegemonic center. What does it mean for the themes of our research, our methodology, our relations with Latin American colleagues, and perhaps most importantly, our conclusions?

It would be a mistake to present Latin American studies in Europe as a homogeneous field. This became clear to me when we organized the CEISAL-2002 conference in Amsterdam and CEDLA published a special issue on “Major Trends and Topics in Latin American Studies in Europe.” See [http://www.cedla.uva.nl/60\\_publications/european\\_reviewIndex.html#72](http://www.cedla.uva.nl/60_publications/european_reviewIndex.html#72).

What the conference and publication made clear was what I call the Latin/Anglo-Saxon divide. In the past twenty years the Dutch and the Scandinavian countries have allied themselves with Latin American Studies in the United Kingdom and, indirectly, with academia in the United States. More recently, some German colleagues seem to have joined this trend. On the other hand, we see a Latin world in Europe that is dominated by France and Spain and includes many Eastern European countries. For this group the English language is hardly used in academic conversations and it is even looked upon with a certain suspicion. When Spanish or Portuguese do not suffice, French is the ‘international’ language.

The differences are not only linguistic but methodological as well. “Anglo-Saxon” scholars tend to conform to U.S. conventions such as explicit methodology, being theoretically informed but strong on empirical research, using large bibliographies and extensive notes, and using short sentences, a sharp style, and ‘standard’ composition. “Anglo-Saxon” scholars have a strong critical tradition which can be seen in the large review sections in major journals. “Latin” scholars, on the other hand, use a more interpretative and essayistic approach, often with smaller and more select bibliographies. Their history writing tends to remain very close to the sources without much comparative or theoretical references.

These internal differences, however, do not mean there are not similarities, especially when we contrast European Latin American Studies with Latin American Studies in the United States and the broader Americas. The proximity to Latin America and the political relevance and urgency of what is happening there is one important difference. This means the numbers of scholars engaged in Latin American Studies throughout the Americas is large and this LASA Congress

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is a perfect example! The size and power of U.S. academia has made English the hegemonic language. Thus it is more difficult for non-English speaking Latin Americanists to be published in dominant journals and this has made the political question of language (English in contrast to Spanish and Portuguese, let alone to indigenous languages) more poignant. The positioning in Latin Americanism itself means U.S.-based Latin Americanists are more linked to imperial power politics.

There is no doubt that the dissimilarity in geopolitical positioning is the most important difference between “European” and “American” Latin Americanists. In his analysis of Area Studies in the United States, Ravi Arvind Palat recently observed that “its constitution as a field of study was directly related to the rise of the United States to a hegemonic position in the capitalist world economy in the aftermath of the Second World War.” (See Palat’s “Fragmented Visions. Excavating the Future of Area Studies in a Post-American World” in Neil L. Waters (ed.), *Beyond the Area Studies Wars. Toward a New International Studies* (Hanover and London: Middlebury College Press, 2000), 64-106, citation on p. 65.) For Palat, Area (and thus Latin American) Studies research “is thoroughly impregnated with the geopolitical conditions of its conception.” To this I would add that there is no doubt that most production of knowledge (in terms of quantity) about Latin America outside of Latin America originates in the United States. This may generate feelings of inferiority or rejection among some European scholars, especially those from the ‘Latin tradition’ who are often ignored by their U.S.-based counterparts.

Being on the periphery, however, has advantages. European scholars sometimes enjoy easier relations with Latin American colleagues since they are no longer burdened by the problems of Empire. European scholars also note that U.S.-based scholars run the risk of becoming provincial. This is particularly noticeable in an extreme interest in scholarly ‘fashions’ that might be provocatively called the ‘incestuous’ nature of U.S.-centered citational behavior. Scholarly production from the United States tends to have an extreme bias towards itself. For that reason U.S. scholars are sometimes accused (including by their own U.S. colleagues) of using Latin American colleagues as informants and not taking them seriously as colleagues. Finally, there is no doubt that U.S. scholars tend to be self-reflexive (often extremely so) and for the outsider it sometimes seems that the position of the United States (and academia there) are the exclusive point of reference.

There is no doubt that Latin American Studies in the United States continues to be an important point of reference for the scholarly community in Europe. Yet from our ‘peripheral’ vantage point, we also see some of the dangers. Farther away from political interests, Latin American Studies in Europe is less burdened with the problems of Empire. That may lead to less urgency and (therefore) less funding but it may leave more room for reflexivity and intellectual openness. ■

CENTERING THE PERIPHERY  
NON-LATIN LATIN AMERICANISMS  
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### Waiting for a Second Humboldt Latin American Studies in Germany

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Like my colleague from the Netherlands, I was somewhat surprised and amused by the idea that I worked in the periphery, since Germany normally is not considered a peripheral country within the global community. I do feel marginal, however, since many of my colleagues in Germany regard my subject as something peripheral to their research. This is the case in many other European countries as well, especially in the more eastern part of Europe and to a lesser degree in Italy or France.

Germany (and the Eastern European countries) has even less of an overseas “imperial” tradition than the Netherlands, and their relationship with Latin America is easier and less politicized in many ways. Yet the greater distance—geographically as well as politically—is one of the reasons for the marginalization of Latin America within our academic world. In Germany, national history is so important because of its problems, and until very recently it has been the main focus of historical research and teaching in most universities. Historical production in Germany since the 19th century has centered on the Nation. If there was a regional focus in historical research other than on Germany, it was on the neighboring countries, England, France, and Italy, on the one hand, and Poland and Russia on the other.

For the study of Latin American history and society this means that after WWII the first—and for a long time the only—full professor for Latin American history was Richard Konezke, a well known expert on Colonial Latin America. He remained the

only one until the early seventies when two different political currents merged and helped to introduce Latin America into the fields of history and social sciences in Germany. Political events in Latin America created interest just as the German university system expanded dramatically. New positions were created and many of them were held by specialists on Latin America. Now, thirty years later, we see the opposite taking place. The political and economic interest is shifting towards Islamic countries and Asia, and with the crisis of the welfare systems in Europe, public universities (there is no tradition of private universities in continental Europe) are in an economic crisis. Many of the positions of the seventies are disappearing or are being redirected towards other areas, just as a generational shift means that those holding Latin America chairs are now retiring.

The situation of Latin American Studies in Germany is currently ambivalent. The interest in non-European history and society has increased for political and economic reasons. But Latin America is a rather marginal area in terms of economic and political importance. As universities create new positions which focus on non-European or global processes, Latin Americanists compete with scholars who work on Africa, Asia or even the United States. Due to economic constraints, these new positions are usually lower ranking positions.

Let me not only complain but also point out how this situation can be fruitful for Latin Americanists. Due to a different educational system, scholars in the northern and eastern European countries usually have a broader knowledge of languages—and therefore of the scholarly output in these languages—than their Anglo- or Latin American-counterparts. They also have stronger contacts with colleagues working on areas other than the Americas or Great Britain,

and this is fruitful in many respects. The hegemonic discourse and theoretical or methodological approach which is dominated by the English-speaking academia is enriched by other approaches, both theoretical and topical. It might make sense to compare Early Modern Latin America with Early Modern Poland, and theoretical concepts developed for Central Europe might be helpful in order to understand colonial Latin America. This enriching perspective can be seen not only in the case of theories or historical concepts but also in the comparative approach. In order to pursue a university career, German scholars are required to produce in-depth investigation on a topic and/or area or time period different from their doctoral dissertation. It is a requirement that is interpreted rigorously for non-Europeanists who are often the only persons teaching in their respective area in the department. As a result, this has produced scholars who compare different Latin American countries, and recently some younger colleagues have conducted interesting comparative studies on Europe and Latin America.

Questions about methodology and theory bring me to the problem of Area Studies, which in Germany is a product of the development of new careers and institutions in the seventies. In continental Europe, these studies are not burdened by political hegemony, and for that reason are less problematic than in the United States. On the other hand, there is a strong and sometimes polemical discussion about the usefulness of Area Studies in Germany. Germany is the home of Alexander von Humboldt, who is praised for his interdisciplinary approach to Latin America. The German university system, however, is the work of his brother, Wilhelm von Humboldt who relied on the European classics and believed in the importance of methodology and in the “unity of research

and teaching.” In contemporary research, interdisciplinarity in the tradition of Alexander von Humboldt has become more and more important, and even a necessity for funding. In teaching, however, such an approach is seen with mistrust. People fear that students get no comprehensive knowledge and training in theory and methods. In a situation where the curricula in the European Union are being transformed towards the Anglo-American model of the BA and MA, this discussion becomes crucial to less traditional careers such as Area Studies, and the new system puts so-called “small disciplines” with only two or three professors in danger since they cannot provide enough classes for a BA or MA program. On the other hand, this pressure has led to closer communication with colleagues who work on other continents and here I see a chance to open up the field.

In conclusion, Latin American Studies in Germany, and in some other European countries, is in a much more difficult position than in the United States because of its peripheral position. This situation, however, impedes narrowness and can lead to the incorporation of valuable concepts developed in other regional contexts. This is a counterbalance against hegemonic discourses and fashions and therefore is useful for the study of Latin America, be it in Europe or in North and South America.

CENTERING THE PERIPHERY  
NON-LATIN LATIN AMERICANISMS  
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**The Antipodal Passion**

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After four days of attending a LASA Congress for the first time, I feel myself exotic rather than peripheral. Many Japanese Latin Americanists may be asked “why do you study Latin America?” The subtext of this curiosity is a sort of naturalized research motivation among Latin Americanists from the Americas: it is an interest in “my” country/culture or “my” neighboring countries, “my” quest for roots. The biological, geographical, national, and ethnic identities thus legitimize the research. But research interests can come from elsewhere. Books, travel, music, friends and other personal experiences can trigger intellectual excitement. This curiosity, the interest in the things “elsewhere” and “over there” is very close to exoticism and I feel myself exotic precisely because Latin American Studies in Japan is often motivated by exoticism in a large sense.

What Japanese Latin Americanists are doing is little known to LASA because of their language of publication. Why do the scholars publish in Japanese, a “minority” language in Latin American Studies, instead of Spanish, Portuguese or English? Japanese academia is large enough to maintain its integrity with Japanese publications and language education in Japan traditionally places reading over writing and speaking. In other words, Japanese scholars can engage with materials written in Spanish, Portuguese or English but they can rarely produce in those languages. They hear the foreign voices but they cannot reach outside the language boundaries. They can use the resources in English, Spanish and Portuguese

yet the majority of LASA members cannot use their ideas. The relationship is absolutely unilateral.

Over the four days of the LASA Congress I have sensed the subtle difference in the interaction between the speaker and the audience when talks are delivered in English, in Spanish or in Portuguese. I do not know if my intuition comes from academic code-switching that may occur concomitantly with linguistic code-switching, or from the dissimilar degrees of my (restricted) understanding of those languages (here the “academic code” includes the technique of argumentation and persuasion, the tone of address and the engagement in interpersonal response as much as the gestures, facial expressions and other modes of communication). It seems to me that each paper presenter needs to consider the nature of the target audience. Certainly, choosing a language is a privilege of a non-monolingual speaker and writer. The linguistic conduct is basic to (mis-)recognize “the other’s” cultures. Here I have learned about Latin American Studies as much as I have about Latin America.

More than post-something concepts, the post-Babel, or the question of translation, is crucial for understanding the globalized yet asymmetrical relationship in Latin American Studies. While I will not demand that you study Japanese or that my compatriots publish in international languages, it is my intention to make you aware of the existence of rich yet unexploited literature on the exotic fringe of Latin American Studies. As many LASA members know, every translation needs footnotes to accommodate itself with an audience that may have different knowledge. I have come here to footnote to the worldwide (read multi-lingual) Latin American Studies. ■

**Re-Discovering the “Hidden” History of Latin American Jews**

by RAANAN REIN

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Latin American Studies in Israel has undergone a transformation in recent years. This is the result of two major trends. On the one hand, the traditional study of Jews in the region, with its ideological and Zionist bias, is experiencing a crisis. On the other hand, general Latin American Studies in Israeli universities is growing rapidly and this provides a new impetus to the study of Latin American Jews as well. These trends in Israel are a particular refraction of a more global academic trend that relates to scholarly tensions between the national and the transnational, the emphasis on the unique and particular versus comparative approaches, and the role played by Latin Americans who live outside the continent in the development of Latin American Studies in various countries.

One key issue has to do with language, and in this respect Israel is like Japan. Few people are fluent in the language of the Bible, and since Israel is a very small country the market for scholarly monographs in Hebrew on Latin American topics is tiny. Yet unlike in Japan, most Israeli Latin Americanists publish their work either in English or in Spanish. While this makes us less visible in Israeli public-intellectual circles, we are often better integrated in the international community of Latin Americanists than our colleagues in some European or Asian countries, who enjoy more attractive publication venues at home and consequently publish less in English or Spanish. In Israel, publications in English and in Spanish are *sine qua non* for tenure and promotion, whereas academic publications in Hebrew on Latin America

are regarded as manifestations of a scholar's cultural debt to his/her research location or as a means to provide material for undergraduate students.

Israel's geographic and political positions are as important in defining our Latin American studies profile. We have tried to serve as a bridge between the Latin American academic community, the North American one, and European scholars. While Israelis in general (including university professors) are often criticized for the continued occupation of Palestinian territories, in some respects Israel might be considered an "ideologically neutral territory" for those studying Latin America. Israel thus provides a setting conducive to fruitful dialogue among academics from various parts of the world. As far as Latin America is concerned, Israel has never harbored imperialist ambitions in this area—unless one believes the Argentine version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, according to which Jews aspire to control Patagonia—so in this sense we are different from the United States and a number of European countries. Cuban scholars, for example, sometimes prefer to publish articles in the Israeli journal of Latin American Studies instead of in North American publications even though Cuba and Israel lack diplomatic relations.

One area of real difference is that Latin Americanists in Israel often take advantage of the Jewish Diaspora in order to boost their programs, both academically and financially. Many Latin Americanists in Israel are of Latin American origin, the founders of all the Latin American programs were Israelis born in Latin America, and many graduate students have a Latin American background. External funds come mainly from Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Important research is being conducted in the study of Latin American Jews and a handful of members of AMILAT (Asociación Israelí de Investigadores del Judaísmo Latinoamericano) tirelessly invest time and effort in organizing events and publishing works on the topic. The World Congress of Jewish Studies always has sessions devoted to Latin America's Jewish communities and a selection of these papers are published in AMILAT's *Judaica Latinoamericana* series. Even so, the momentum in Israel is toward general Latin American Studies. When Professors Haim Avni and Yoram Shapira published their article on teaching and research on Latin America in Israel in the *Latin American Research Review* a quarter of a century ago, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was the major center and most research focused on Jews. Nowadays Tel Aviv University has taken a leading role and academic production has shifted to Latin American Studies in the broadest sense.

This new dynamism is reflected in various ways. The internationally recognized journal *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe (EIAL)* is already in its seventeenth year and the electronic edition, which includes the full text of all 34 issues published to date, enjoys tremendous success. The decision to have open and free access to *EIAL* was an ideological one. It allows Latin American scholars and students, whose university libraries often cannot subscribe to international journals, to consult innovative research while establishing an academic bridge between various communities of Latin Americanists. Tel Aviv University also publishes a series of books in Hebrew on Latin American topics and organizes a large number of conferences, international colloquia and similar academic events.

The situation, however, is far from perfect. Since many scholars who study Latin America focus on the Jewish Diaspora, their work is categorized as part of "Jewish Studies," considered in Israel a different discipline than, for example, "General History." In Jewish History Departments, Latin America is simply not important. That said, there has been a relative decline in the attraction of Jewish Studies in Israel. Many Israeli youngsters are tired of lessons in Jewish history which in high school often focuses on catastrophes that supposedly confirm the necessity of Zionism.

The specific nature of Israeli society and higher education is precisely why the expansion of *general* Latin American Studies holds promise for the regeneration of Latin American Jewish studies as well. The growth of academic events and publications on Latin America in Israel has created new fora for the publication of research on Latin America Jewry. Such is the case of *EIAL*, which is *not* devoted to Jewish topics but does include Jewish themes, thus reversing the traditional tendency of "relegating Jews to a space in which they were not real Latin Americans." When the study of Latin American Jews is presented alongside general Latin American Studies it creates a richer dialogue among scholars. This encourages the academic treatment of Jews as an integral part of the societies in which they live. Latin American Studies today is encouraging interest in Jewish topics and thus ensuring the resurgence of Latin American Jewish and non-Jewish Studies in the Jewish State. ■

## Some of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Programmes in Canada

by ROSARIO GOMEZ | University of Guelph | rogomez@uoguelph.ca

### LAS at the University of Toronto

A new programme in Latin American Studies has been recently launched at the University of Toronto. Although concentration on Spanish and Portuguese literatures and the development of fluency in languages remains important, the new LAS@UofT is envisioned as a truly multi-disciplinary unit reaching out to a wider constituency of students, faculty and visitors.

LAS@UofT exists to inspire deeper knowledge and experience of Latin America across the University's three-campus community, in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and beyond. Affiliated faculties encourage students to situate their special interests in fields such as Anthropology, Political Science, Spanish and Portuguese Literatures, Geography, History or Sociology within a broader multi-disciplinary framework.

The new programme's deepening and widening is occurring in five ways. First, through course offerings that enhance students' understanding and experience of the region. Browsing the new programme's website and clicking on "courses" reveals what Latin Americanists are currently teaching across the Humanities and Social Science departments and the three campuses at the University of Toronto. A number of the courses are available to students as part of a complementary programme for the first time. In addition, LAS@UofT currently sponsors an introductory undergraduate course on Latin American History, Civilisations and Cultures taught by Victor Rivas, and three specialised seminars for students in the third and fourth years of study. Lorena Gajardo's seminar on "Latino/a Identity in Canada" will explore how Latina/o diasporas have been constructed through the experiences of exile, migration, immigration, and the ways in

which a *Latinidad* emerges both within Latina/o communities and in relation to the Canadian nation and transnational realities. Victor Rivas offers a course on "The Postcolonial Imaginary in Latin America." Current social movements, political events and films in Latin America will be studied in relation to notable expressions of resistance originating in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Finally, visiting anthropologist Susanna Rosenbaum will teach a seminar on "Gender, Migration and Globalization." Here, she will put her own research about Guatemalan and Mexican domestic workers and their employers in Los Angeles, California, into conversation with other experiences and settings in the Americas, including Toronto.

Second, LAS@UofT hosts a variety of regular talks, panels and cultural events that feature visitors from Latin America and around the world. The extra-curricular programming stretches across the disciplines and features both the work going on within our community of scholars and regular injections of energy and ideas from scholars outside. The popular LAS Luncheon Series, held on Wednesdays over the past academic year, has seen discussions of such topics as the neo-Inca rebellion in colonial Andes, the cultural history of the Dominican Republic, the political reforms in modern Colombia and the political mobilizations that have led to Evo Morales's election in Bolivia.

Third, the programme aims to foster equitable engagements and exchanges of knowledge and pedagogy with scholars and students in Latin America. In this central sense, LAS@UofT looks to seize upon the tremendous opportunity and responsibility proffered by its location, its library and other resources to share with others and to lead by example. Fourth, the new unit in Toronto seeks meaningful and sustained engagement with Latin American

communities in the GTA and across Canada—an engagement that will be signaled by its teaching, its efforts at outreach, and in the range of extracurricular programming.

Fifth and finally, Latin American Studies at the University of Toronto looks to be a connective unit, seeking collaborations and intersections with other units at the UofT, across Canada, in Latin America and further abroad. The programme's cooperation has already been various, from a collaboration with geographers and economists from the Universidad de Guadalajara and the University of Toronto at Mississauga on the subject of water shortages in Mexico to film screenings and discussions on Colombia, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Most notable have been Latin Americanists' efforts over the past eighteen months to engage with colleagues, students and visitors from around the world about a centre for the study of the Americas.

The emergence of a reinvigorated Latin Americanist community, innovative curricula and some steadily broadening collaborative horizons are now part of the landscape at the UofT. Latin American Studies at the University of Toronto seeks to become a new blueprint for what an integral, area-based initiative can be. All interested persons are invited to learn more, to participate in its upcoming activities, to share their ideas for improvement and to show support in any way possible. For more information, visit <[www.utoronto.ca/las](http://www.utoronto.ca/las)>, and send your ideas to Ms. Camille Harrison at [camille.harrison@utoronto.ca](mailto:camille.harrison@utoronto.ca). Tel. 416-946-8972.

### **Indigenous Studies Minor Program at the University of Victoria**

The Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences jointly offer an Interdisciplinary program in Indigenous Studies intended to provide both indigenous and non-indigenous students with a core program incorporating indigenous world views and ways of knowing. This is a general program (with focus on the Americas) leading to the BA degree. Students may obtain a Minor by completing the requirements for the General Program together with a Major of Honours program, or other degree program, in another department.

The core program will prepare any student intending to enter a vocation jointly serving indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. It will further prepare indigenous students who are planning to serve in indigenous communities and are enrolled in professional programs at the University of Victoria.

The Indigenous Minor Program is open to all registered students at the University of Victoria.

For further information, please contact Dr. Lidio M. Valdez, acting Director of the program. Telephone 250-472-5094; e-mail: [lvaldez@uwic.ca](mailto:lvaldez@uwic.ca).

### **Simon Fraser University's Latin American Studies Program**

Simon Fraser University has a long tradition of being a strong centre for Latin American Studies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and recently the program has been enhanced by new initiatives by faculty to renovate the program. Within the last couple of years, new faculty have been hired in history (Alec Dawson—emphasis on

ethnicity and nationalism, Mexico); Political Science / Economics (Andy Hira—industrial and innovation policy, Southern Cone); Archeology (Ross Jamison—colonial period, Andean Region); Sociology (Hanna Wittman—MTS and rural agricultural movements, Brazil); and Sociology (Fernando de Maio—Health and inequality, Argentina). In addition, faculty members with related interests (Yildiz Atasoy, Sociology, and Habiba Zaman, Women's studies, both specialists in gender and development) have been added.

The new faculty members are working together with the Director, Gerardo Otero, on restructuring SFU LAS into a new Centre for LA development Studies (CLAS). The new program will allow students to choose from a wide range of courses with Latin American content across the university, with gateway interdisciplinary courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. In their senior year, students will complete a capstone project of original research under the direct supervision of an LAS faculty member in their area of interest. The graduate program will ensure that students have strong and secure funding and teaching opportunities in their home department and a solid disciplinary background. LAS will provide additional funding and guidance to promote their field research and supervision.

The end result should be to widen MA course offerings; ease the financial burden on students; and create larger cohort groups. Graduates will have the advantages of both discipline and area specialization and field research.

Recently SFU has been experimenting with a new collaborative MA program called the Master's in Policy and Practice with Capillano College, which prepares students for management positions in the private, non-profit, and public sectors in Latin

America and East Asia, and includes paid work experience in overseas positions. SFU has also started a graduate Development Studies Certificate that offers students a wide array of courses including a seminar specifically geared towards that topic.

Please direct any inquiries to Andy Hira at [ahira@sfu.ca](mailto:ahira@sfu.ca).

### **Latin America at the University of Saskatchewan**

Faculty members at the University of Saskatchewan focus on Latin America in the Colleges of Arts and Science, Agriculture and Medicine, and have initiated new opportunities for students. Research from our faculty members across these colleges and departments spans diverse thematic and geographic topics: from traditional healing techniques among the Maya in Belize to religious conversion in Northern Mexico and the environmental consequences of cotton cultivation in Brazil. Of popular interest to students are the various opportunities for focused study on Latin America. The College of Arts and Science has a LAS stream within the International Studies Program. As well, a significant number of the students in the large Development Studies stream of the same program focus their attention on Latin America. Students in all the colleges in the University have access to a number of study abroad opportunities in Latin America. The largest is the winter term in Guatemala, held in collaboration with the University of Guelph. There is a summer long International Health term in Nicaragua and a shorter summer study term in Cuba. The College of Agriculture has opportunities for study in Mexico and Brazil, as does the College of Commerce. The University also has exchange programs with universities in Mexico.

## DEBATES

## For and Against Chávez The Debate Continues

GOMEZ continued...

Graduate study on Latin American topics at the University of Saskatchewan can be pursued in a variety of different areas. Among the most active are Community Health and Epidemiology where students do work on numerous issues to do with public health options. They are joined by faculty in other departments to create a particular strength in health research in Latin America. The University also has a special focus on indigenous concerns, including work on indigenous issues in Latin America that spans numerous colleges and departments. Each year, a number of graduate students in the Department of History work on Masters and PhD degrees focusing on environmental, indigenous, and peasant topics in Latin America. Opportunities for graduate study also exist in Political Studies, Sociology, Psychology, and in such thematic centres as the Centre for the Study of Cooperatives (which has recently received a large grant to work on cooperatives and globalization) and the Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Law, and the Environment. Relatively generous graduate funding (especially when compared to the cost of living in Saskatoon—called the “Paris of the Prairies” by the Tragically Hip) is available for well qualified graduate students.

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### Countervailing Powers

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Incompetence, corruption, and authoritarianism: on these three pillars, opponents of Hugo Chávez build their case. A comparative defense can be made against any one of these charges in relation to past Venezuelan governments, or, for that matter, to other reformers, from FDR, to Jacobo Arbenz, or Salvador Allende. Indeed, the latter's commitment to proceduralism is often used to bash Chávez, although Allende strengthened the executive branch to advance Chile's economic policies. But comparison to past progressive governments for one that claims to represent a new form of democracy is not enough, so let's take them one by one.

Incompetence is the most difficult charge to make stick. His coalition enjoys not just electoral success, but economic indicators that are the envy of every Latin American country save perhaps Argentina: strong growth, particularly in the non-oil sector of the economy; decreasing unemployment and poverty; rising tax revenue; high currency reserves; and increased savings and consumer power, especially among the poorest fifth. Critics say Caracas has the luck of expensive oil. But Chile's heralded social neoliberalism is equally dependent on the high cost of copper. And the relationship between high oil and Chavismo's accomplishments is not unidirectional: one of Chávez's first initiatives was to end Venezuela's habit of pumping more oil than was allowed under OPEC quotas, helping to prompt a steady increase in world prices.

The success of Chavismo's social *misiones* (described by an Inter-American Development Bank official as striking at the “heart of exclusion” at a “reasonable, sustainable cost”) is confirmed by the opposition's acceptance, however tactically, of the terms of a new social contract. In last month's election, Chávez's challenger, Manuel Rosales, promised to “distribute land to the peasants,” expand the *misiones*, and dole out oil profits directly to the people.

There is a chaotic energy to Chavismo, driven as it is by a lack of ideological rigidity that has generated innovative social experiments. Some work, some don't. Chávez's role as a broker, mediating between contentious constituencies within a broad coalition, adds to the government's try-as-it-goes style. Detractors use this apparent incoherence as cover to distort his administration's record, seeing failure where there is significant improvement. This is most common when commentators cherry-pick outdated statistics to assert that poverty has either remained the same or increased during Chávez's tenure, when it has in fact declined from 41.6 to 33.9 percent between 2000 and 2006.<sup>1</sup> There are shortcomings: an urban housing shortage, crime, capital flight, and not-fast-enough job creation are some areas where there has not been enough progress.

Corruption is a major problem. Nevertheless, prior to 1998, crime flourished in the very institutions that supposedly serve as controls on the executive: in the legislature, courts, and the two-party system. This suggests that it is not Chavismo's unchecked power, but its limited reach that is responsible for the persistence of institutional venality. As a political movement that came to power through the ballot (as opposed to a protracted insurgency that could count on ideologically focused

and technically capable cadre to fill the vacuum of power left by the outgoing political establishment), Chavismo's ambitions greatly outstrip its abilities. Because it is not truly hegemonic at the institutional level in the way the Cuban or Nicaraguan Revolutions were in their early years, it has had to make significant compromises with existing power blocs in the military, political class, and civil and educational bureaucracy. All of them are loath to give up their illicit pleasures, and have even seized on the openness of the moment to extend them.

In terms of authoritarianism, there are three related elements to this charge: that Chávez rules by polarizing the nation, governing on behalf of his majority supporters and demonizing his minority opposition; that he may have been elected democratically but he does not rule democratically; and that he is a populist, and populism is not compatible with democracy.

The first ignores the economic polarization that existed prior to Chávez's election in 1998. In 1995, more than 60 percent of Venezuelans lived in poverty, and any attempt to change the structures of this inequality, to confront the rapacious impunity not just of domestic elites but of multinational corporations, would unavoidably transmute social division into political conflict. Can anyone seriously argue that someone like Rosales would have promised to distribute land, and spend oil money on the poor, if it were not for the kind of mobilization and confrontation that has occurred over the last seven years?

The second holds up specific instances of this conflict—fights over the judicial system, legislation to regulate the media,<sup>2</sup> the infamous Tascon list, etc.—as evidence of governing undemocratically. Yet if one accepts the premise that Chavismo

represents a transition from a decomposing political order, held to be illegitimate by a majority of Venezuelans, to a new governing coalition with a mandate to restructure economic relations in a more equitable fashion, then Chavismo is notably democratic. Save perhaps for Chile's Popular Unity government (which never received as much electoral support as the Bolivarian process has), I can think of no other instance where similar attempts to reorder political and social relations have been ratified at the ballot on an ongoing basis. In 1998, 3,673,685 Venezuelans voted for Chávez. Last month, almost seven million did so—an extraordinary achievement since transfers of power that involve economic restructuring tend to generate crises that drain away popular support.<sup>3</sup> This also means that conflicts which in traditional insurgencies or revolutions would have been resolved early on are prolonged across time through the electoral and legislative system, as competing political factions fight among themselves to define the limits of the new order.

Take for instance the government's 2004 expansion of the Supreme Court from 20 to 32 members, an action condemned by international monitoring groups like Human Rights Watch as a betrayal of Venezuelan democracy. The motive behind this expansion was certainly every bit as comprehensible, and perhaps even more justifiable, as that which moved FDR, Arbenz, and Allende to infringe on judicial autonomy: not only did the Court absolve the military officers who were involved in the April 2002 failed coup, but many of its judges were picked by, and apparently allied with, Luis Miquilena, a former advisor to Chávez who broke with him over opposition to a series of measures taken in late 2001, including the land reform and the hydrocarbon laws. These measures were essential to fulfilling the government's

mandate to promote social-democratic policies; yet they were bitterly fought by Miquilena's congressional and judicial agents, along with the domestic and multinational elites they represented, generating two years of acute polarization, from the 2002 coup (which Miquilena supported) to the 2004 recall vote.

But even this defense concedes too much, since the legislation provided a number of mechanisms for the minority to drag out debate before going to a majority vote (as an effort to end nomination gridlock it was no worse than the Republican threat to abolish the filibuster in the U.S. Senate). But rather than testing this new system, the opposition boycotted the process, letting Chavistas empanel their judges without a fight and allowing critics to take their charge of court packing to international watchdogs, who duly reported that this was so.

The question of the relationship of populism to democracy is too complex to be addressed here. But a few points are worth considering. There is more than a whiff of condescension when critics describe populism as mystification, as if the poor are not fit to assess the social missions by themselves. Much of this condescension is voiced by traditional Venezuelan leftists, who, long on the margins of *puntofijismo*, expected a place at the new governing table, preferably at its head, only to see a provincial military officer win the allegiance of the people. It was Teodoro Petkoff, one such aspirant, who, even as he was slamming Chávez's "cheap populism," apparently came up with Rosales's signature campaign pledge to give three million poor Venezuelans a black credit card, *Mi negra*, from which they could charge roughly \$450 a month from the national treasury (it would add up to over \$16 billion dollars a year; call it Robin-Hood neoliberalism: give to the poor to bankrupt the state). *Mi negra* alone

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should once and for all end accusations that Chávez is an irresponsible populist. That this scheme was rejected should, likewise, end the notion that the majority gives their support to Chávez because of the baubles he dangles in front of them, rather than their ability to critically judge, as much as any of us can, the world in which they find themselves.

A recent survey of activists in poor neighborhoods conducted by an economist and a political scientist from Brigham Young University did raise concerns that too much organizing was dependent on a charismatic identification with Chávez, which, they felt, could undermine democratic institutionalization.<sup>4</sup> Yet they also found a significant degree of both financial and political independence from national level organizations. A large majority of their sample was committed to “liberal conceptions of democracy and held pluralistic norms,” believed in peaceful methods of conflict resolution, and worked to ensure that their organizations functioned with high levels of “horizontal or non-hierarchical” democracy. There is, it seems, a good deal of competitive pluralism among grassroots organizations, many of which long predate the arrival of Chávez on the political scene. It is common to find committed Chavistas who not only are not members of the *Movimiento Quinta República*, but are openly hostile to it, which, at least in principle, helps keep it responsive. Contrast this with Nicaragua in the 1980s, where it would have been impossible for someone to oppose the Sandinista Party and still consider him or herself a revolutionary.

At the minimum, critics of Venezuela’s “protagonist democracy” should be required to account for what is going on in the barrios, cooperatives, and rural communities—for the real extension of

power and freedom to those long denied such privileges—rather than just assert their charges of either authoritarian patronage or subaltern enthrallment. As one *23 de enero* activist said the day before the recent election, “there is more liberty now in Venezuela than in all its history.”

The key to understanding Chavismo can be found in the writings of an author Chávez mentioned during his last visit to New York. Not Noam Chomsky, but John Kenneth Galbraith. His 1952 *American Capitalism: The Concept of Countervailing Power* argued that the success of the U.S. economy was largely due to the New Deal’s extension of labor rights, which balanced the power of monopoly capitalism to set wages and prices. A similar vision of development held great sway in Latin America in the years after WWII, as a wide array of reformers believed that the best way to weaken the oligarchy and stimulate domestic manufacturing was to empower society’s most marginal. In many ways, Chavismo represents a fusion of this older, state-directed vision of development and wealth redistribution with a “bottom-up” civil society model of social change that has been evolving throughout Latin America over the last two decades. The return of Venezuela’s regulatory state even has had some success in nurturing what used to be called a “progressive bourgeoisie.”<sup>5</sup>

Ultimately, the Chávez administration is being judged through the prism of competing lessons drawn from the Cold War. Some look at that history, see the enormity of U.S. power allied with the viciousness of domestic elites, and conclude that any fulfillment of democracy’s promise requires conflict. Others draw a different conclusion: that the intractability of society demands the hollowing out of democracy to its institutional shell, emptied of its egalitarian and participatory impulse. “Political

democracy,” as Samuel Huntington put it in one transitology handbook, “is clearly compatible with inequality in both wealth and income,” and “may be dependent upon such inequality.”<sup>6</sup> It is too much to ask the Venezuelan government to bear the weight of this history. It should be judged on its own merits. Chavismo has its shortcomings, but its achievements have been impressive.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Jorge Castañeda, “Hugo Chávez’s Moment of Truth,” *Newsweek International*, December 4, 2006. Castañeda also misrepresents Chávez’s electoral record, writing, falsely, that he “has obtained smaller percentages of the vote with each successive election and, most importantly, turnout has been shrinking steadily; in the 2004 plebiscite, many estimated it at less than 30 percent.” Chávez won 56 percent of the vote in 1998; 60 percent in 2000; and 59 percent in the 2004 recall. The total number of Venezuelans who voted for Chávez has increased over these three elections. Regarding the recall, Castañeda transposes his numbers: it had a high turnout, with 70 percent voting. In the recent election, reports indicate that turnout was equally high, with Chávez winning almost twice as many voters as he did in 2000. For past manipulation of poverty statistics, see Franklin Foer, “The Talented Mr. Chávez” *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 2006. See the retraction printed by the *New York Times* on August 8, 2006, for using outdated poverty figures.

<sup>2</sup> For a sober discussion of these laws see Chesa Boudin, Gabriel González, Wilmer Rumbos, *The Venezuelan Revolution: 100 Questions; 100 Answers*, Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> That all reputable polls accurately called the recent election to within a few points gives the lie to opposition claims that Venezuelans are too intimidated to tell pollsters how they will vote: they voted exactly how they said they would.

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<sup>4</sup> Kirk A. Hawkins and David R. Hansen, "Dependent Civil Society: The Círculos Bolivarianos in Venezuela," *Latin American Research Review*, 41:1 2006: 102-132.

<sup>5</sup> Juan Forero, "With Chávez, Some Venezuelan Entrepreneurs See Opportunity," *Washington Post*, December 3, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Modest Meaning of Democracy," in Robert A. Pastor, *Democracy in the Americas: Stopping the Pendulum*, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989, pp. 12-13. ■

**A View from the Barrios  
Hugo Chávez as an Expression of  
Urban Popular Movements**

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The radical trajectory of president Hugo Chávez in Venezuela has been a highly controversial topic among Latin Americanists, democratization experts, policy makers, and activists. Some lament what they see as Chávez's disregard for the rule of law and the breakdown of the party system. They compare him to other neopopulist leaders who bypassed traditional institutions and created direct linkages with the masses. Others defend his greater concern with addressing historic problems of poverty and entrenched inequalities than with maintaining the order of traditional institutions.

Following the debt crisis of the 1980s, and subsequent waves of privatization and neoliberal restructuring in Venezuela, poverty increased dramatically. The percentage of the population living below the poverty line went from 36 percent in 1984 to 66 percent in 1995 (Roberts 2004:59). Given these stark disparities, a radical approach like that of Chávez could be justified to increase social spending and redistribute wealth.

Yet Chávez's supporters, like his detractors, seem to place a high degree of agency in the hands of Chávez himself as the sole figure responsible for crafting policy, designing programs, and providing orientation to an otherwise incoherent mass. Neither side addresses the role of popular social sectors in shaping the agenda of the Venezuelan Revolution. My own defense of Chávez comes not from an endorsement of his pro-poor policies and programs, but from my

belief that he represents a certain territory fought for and won by popular consciousness.

During the eight months between 2004 and 2006 that I lived in a popular barrio of Caracas while carrying out field research, I witnessed the flourishing of grassroots social movements, from community radio collectives to Afro-Venezuelan *cofradías* organizing local fiestas, health committees, and mural collectives. While academics lumped together these diverse groupings as "Chavistas," or the "Chavista movement," many community organizations and popular leaders in the barrios did not identify as Chavistas. Rather, they have alternative sources of identity that come from their barrio or parish (Barrio Sucre, Barrio Marín, 23 de Enero, San Agustín, Petare), and which form the basis of alternative social and community networks (Coordinadora Simón Bolívar, Cayapo, Radio Negro Primero, Ciudadela de Catia). These popular movements claim distinct genealogies that predate Chávez, including the clandestine movements against the 1950s military regime, the post-transition era of guerrilla struggle in the 1960s, movements against urban displacement and hunger strikes led by Jesuit worker priests in the 1970s, and cultural activism and urban committees of the 1980s and 1990s. At the same time, urban movements have participated in shifting clientelist relationships with the state, fostered by three decades of the redistributive welfare model, that was refashioned under Chávez. The approach of contemporary urban sectors towards the government contains these elements of autonomy as grounded in histories of local struggle and mutual dependency that have evolved over time.

The relationship between society and the state is reciprocal: just as the strong figure of Chávez has given impetus and unity to

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popular organizing, so the creative movements fashioned in the barrios help determine the form and content of official politics. To see Chávez as an independent figure pontificating from above, or popular movements as originating in autonomous spaces from below would be to deny the interdependencies that have made possible Chávez's emergence and sustained access to power. At the same time, popular sectors have realized the need to chart an independent trajectory from the Chávez government, or "*oficialismo*," as it is referred to, in order to defend the interests of their community and sustain their projects.

In my research on Venezuela and earlier on Cuba, I have sought to develop a framework for theorizing citizen-state interaction in contemporary societies, particularly as social movements across Latin America began to lay claims to state power. As compared to social movements that emerged in the 1990s such as the Zapatistas, who have defined their opposition to a repressive state apparatus in Mexico, social movements flourishing under moderate and radical leftist governments in the new millennium encounter a new state-society dynamic. Addressing the emergence of critical social actors within movements of hip hop culture, public art, and film discussion groups in contemporary Cuba, I observed that social forces engaged in dialogue with the state, rather than adopting a stance of opposition to it (Fernandes 2006). In contrast to looking at conventional social science approaches, which have tended to focus on state and society as distinct and bounded entities, I propose that we examine the interconnections, alliances, and points of collaboration between critical movements and the state.

At the same time, I note that critical social movements seek to build spaces of autonomy for themselves, especially in

contexts of developing social revolutions. During earlier periods of the Cuban revolution, or the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, the threat or reality of U.S. intervention, combined with a more Leninist model of the vanguard party, reduced the autonomy available to grassroots movements. By contrast, social movements in contemporary Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Bolivia have managed to negotiate greater independence in relation to the state. They engage in decision making in unaffiliated local popular assemblies based in the neighborhood, they carry out protests to register their disapproval of certain policy tactics, and they have their own forms of popular media produced by the community and for the community.

Community groups in the barrios have worked closely with Chávez since the beginning, but the movement for independent organization became most apparent in 2004 during the recall referendum. In November 2003, following a series of efforts by the opposition to oust Chávez from power, including a two-month general strike and a coup attempt, the opposition collected signatures as required by the 1999 constitution for a referendum to determine whether Chávez should be recalled from office. The required amount of signatures for a recall referendum was 20 percent of the population or 2.4 million people. The opposition presented three million signatures, but after a lengthy review the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) ruled that only 1.9 million of these signatures were valid. The opposition was given five days in May to validate the signatures that had been excluded, to see if they could come up with the required signatures. Chávez appointed a body of militants from his party, the Movimiento Quinta República, in a committee called Comando Ayacucho, in order to oversee the recall signature petition.

During these days, I heard about numerous cases of fraud from friends and people in the barrios. They said that the opposition had illegally used names of people who were dead or did not support the recall referendum, and in the case of the latter, some people went to dispute the use of their name. But for the most part the Comando Ayacucho failed to mobilize people from the barrios to contest cases of fraud, and they made frequent announcements saying that the opposition would not reach the target of 2.4 million signatures. So when the CNE actually announced in early June that the opposition did reach their target and the referendum would be scheduled for August 2004, people in the barrios felt shocked and betrayed by the Comando Ayacucho. On the morning of June 3, I was carrying out interviews in the parish of 23 de Enero. Some activists wondered if perhaps Chávez had brokered a deal with the opposition. Others said that the Comando Ayacucho was simply incompetent. In a series of local assemblies in La Vega, 23 de Enero, and other barrios, community leaders emphasized the need for self-organization, saying that barrio residents could not rely on the government and officially appointed committees to organize "on their behalf."

In the lead-up to the referendum, local networks and activists were key in organizing popular sectors in support of the "No" campaign to keep Chávez in office. Chávez replaced the Comando Ayacucho with the Comando Maisanta, and a vertically-organized structure of local units known as Unidades de Batallas Electorales (UBEs). Community groups cooperated with the UBEs and at times even incorporated into them, but for the most part these were tactical and temporary groupings to win the referendum. The driving force behind the "No" campaign came from organized community activists, who launched an aggressive campaign to register and mobilize

voters to vote in the referendum. Community organizers set up Voter Registration Centers in all the parishes, and these were staffed around the clock by teams of local activists. Barrio-based radio and television stations and newspapers devoted space to explaining the importance of the referendum and encouraging people to vote for Chávez. As the day of the referendum grew closer, several centrally located radio stations, such as Radio Negro Primero, became News Centers, which gathered information and passed it on to other radio stations. Rather than Chávez's charisma, his subsidized social programs, or the ineptitude of the opposition, the decisive factor in Chávez's ultimate victory was the mobilizing role played by local barrio organizations.

Following Chávez's success in the August 2004 referendum, social movements sought to assert themselves more openly. Urban activists have taken the initiative to organize street protests in the capital against aspects of government policy in solidarity with rural and indigenous groups. In March 2005 and January 2006, ANMCLA activists came together with indigenous groups to protest the Chávez government's plan to increase the extraction of coal in the oil-rich state of Zulia. The protesters pointed out that the plans would increase water contamination and health risks for the mostly indigenous population of the region, dependent on scarce water supplies. The protesters took on the language and symbols of the Chávez government itself to challenge its plans for coal mining. On their "No to Coal" placards, protesters utilized the "No" symbol of the pro-Chávez campaigners during the recall referendum, as a way of signaling the ways they have supported Chávez, who must now listen to their concerns. The signs referred to Chávez as "*compañero*," but at the same time, the protesters were highly critical of a model of development that exploits scarce natural resources.

Urban social movements have long been engaged in struggles against environmental contamination, halting harmful industrial projects such as the cement factory in La Vega in 1981, and during the coal protests in 2005-2006, urban activists expressed their solidarity with indigenous groups. As a result of the protests, the Chávez administration ordered commissions that confirmed the contaminating impact of the mining and they postponed plans to increase coal mining to 30,000 tons, although they did not meet protester's demands to reduce it to zero.

An engagement with the experiences of popular classes in the Chávez era reveals a reality that differs from dominant assessments being made outside of the country. The U.S. State Department and some academics have attempted to demonize the Chávez government, labeling it an authoritarian regime and a security risk to the region. Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld compared Chávez to Adolf Hitler, referring to the Chávez government as an elected dictatorship. Yet the opposition in Venezuela retains an extraordinary degree of monopoly over the mass media, and all sectors have the rights to protest in the streets and to criticize the government.

Moreover, the active organization and involvement of formerly disenfranchized and marginalized sectors of the society makes contemporary Venezuela more participatory and inclusive than countries often touted as successful democracies. It is an ongoing, sometimes contested, and always negotiated synergy between state and society that lies at the base of the historic presidency of Hugo Chávez.

*N.B. I would like to thank David Smilde, Alejandro Velasco, and Greg Grandin for their helpful critical feedback on this piece. Any remaining errors are my own and I take all responsibility for the views expressed here.*

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FOR AND AGAINST CHÁVEZ  
THE DEBATE CONTINUES  
continued...

**Social Spending and Democracy  
The Case of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela**

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In “Hugo Boss” (*Foreign Policy*, January/February 2006), Javier Corrales argued that Hugo Chávez has undermined democracy in Venezuela by deliberately pursuing confrontation with organized civil society. The article generated considerable debate, especially on the question of social policies. Critics contended that the article downplayed Chávez’s social spending, seen by many as pro-poor, and therefore, a sign of democratic gain. We agree that the connection between social spending and regime type deserves more attention. But we disagree that social spending alone constitutes prima facie evidence of democratic progress. Instead, we prefer to think of social spending—whether it is pro-poor or otherwise—as being determined by democratic variables, rather than the other way around. Specifically, whether an administration chooses to bolster social spending in a pro-poor manner depends on whether two democratic conditions are in place: political competition and institutions of accountability. Under Chávez, political competition has increased, but institutions of accountability have weakened. This mix helps explain how Chávez has chosen to spend Venezuela’s spectacular oil bonanza.

For the sake of discussion, we propose that there are four possible types of social spending: 1) underfunding; 2) cronyism; 3) clientelism; and 4) pro-poor. Underfunding refers to situations in which governments fail

to provide sufficient funds for social programs. Cronyism consists of social spending that in reality is mere camouflage for direct subsidies to elites, mostly “friends and family” of incumbents. Clientelism refers to spending that, unlike cronyism, is directed toward non-elites, but is nonetheless offered conditionally: the state expects some kind of political favor back from the grantee. Finally, pro-poor spending occurs when aid is offered unconditionally based on true need.

All democracies in developing countries engage in all four types of spending, but proportions vary. When a new administration is inaugurated, the key question is which direction, or proportion, in spending will prevail? The answer depends on whether two democratic conditions exist: 1) degree of political competition; and 2) the strength of institutions of checks and balances.

**Competition and Accountability**

Political competition refers to the distance between the incumbent and the opposition in terms of *political force* (see Corrales 2006). If the opposition is small in terms of votes, has reduced access to state office, or has no immediate opportunity to challenge the government electorally, then we can say that the opposition is weak relative to incumbents. This condition of high power asymmetry, or alternatively, low political competition, means that there is no effective pressure on the government to spend outside its circle of friends. Only when power asymmetries are reduced, will incumbents feel the heat of political competition and possibly increase spending, if for no other reason than to obtain more votes.

The other democratic variable is institutional accountability. Clientelistic spending depends

on differences in the rules that regulate the incumbents’ access to public funds, which are mostly set by the relationship between the executive and legislature (Penfold 2006a). When presidents face constraints from the legislative branch, i.e. divided government or high legislative prerogatives over budgets, the opposition is better able to oversee the administration, target social funds, and contain the incumbent’s temptation to use social policy self-servingly. All this favors “pro-poor” spending. By contrast, when institutional constraints are absent, presidents are better able to violate budgetary rules, deviate resources and reduce transparency. This favors “vote-buying” social spending.

Democratically elected administrations can exhibit, therefore, different values on these two democratic conditions, with different results in terms of social spending tendency (see Table). The worse situation, for the poor at least, is low political competition. If incumbents don’t feel any political pressure because the opposition is weak, incumbents have no incentive to cultivate the vote and thus expand spending. Social spending will remain sparse, or easily divertible to cronyism, if accountability is weak. If there is heightened competition, on the other hand, states have an incentive to cultivate the vote and thus spend among a larger group of potential voters. This is still no guarantee that spending will be pro-poor rather than clientelistic. The best safeguard against clientelism comes therefore from the other key variable: checks on the arbitrariness of state officials.

	Constrained by Institutions	Not Constrained by Institutions
High Competition	Pro-poor spending	Clientelism
Low Competition	Underfunding	Cronyism (friends and family)

This proposition helps to explain social policy under Hugo Chávez, which evolved from underfunding (1999-2000) to cronyism (2001-2002) to clientelistic expansion (2003-present).

### Political Changes under Chávez

The first political change under Chávez was a move from high accountability—Chávez had minority presence in Congress when he came to office in 1999—to low accountability, following the approval of the new constitution and the so-called “megaelections” of 2000. The new constitution expanded the powers of the Executive Branch far more than previous constitutions in Venezuela and contemporary Latin America. In addition, in the 2000 megaelections the incumbents obtained overwhelming majorities in the votes for president, legislators, and governors.

The second change was to move from a situation of low political competition (1999-2001) to heightened political competition (2003-2004). The organized opposition during the first two years was healing from the wounds of the 1998 and 2000 electoral defeats, and there were no electoral contests in the horizon. By late 2001 the opposition had gained strength, but it still did not pose an electoral challenge to the government. Instead, the opposition focused on promoting national protests, galvanized by the President’s increasing accumulation of powers. The protests included a two-day civil stoppage in December 2001, a series of coups in April 2002, and an oil strike in December 2002. With the support of the armed forces, the government managed to survive.

Political competition truly resurfaced in late 2003 when the opposition began to focus on electoral competition (the recall referendum)

rather than merely street protests. The constitution mandates recall referenda if proponents collect valid signatures from 20 per cent of registered voters, a feat that the opposition easily accomplished on two occasions. For the first time since 1999, the government faced a serious electoral challenge.

### Mission Possible

Chávez’s social policies responded to these different political contexts. Prior to the April 2002 coups, Chávez actually dismantled the existing social programs. Some critics even argued that the administration during this period was merely continuing the neoliberalism of his predecessors. Chávez’s fiscal adjustments occurred for two reasons: he faced hard fiscal constraints, with the price of oil below \$10 per barrel, and low political competition; social policies in 1999-2001 thus fitted the “underfunding” quadrant. Insofar as there was any social policy during this period, it fell under the cronyism variant. Chávez created the “Unified Social Fund,” administered by the Armed Forces, which according to the government itself, proved to be corrupt and inefficient.

When true electoral pressures returned in late 2003, Chávez launched the so-called “missions to save the people,” taking advantage of the new oil windfall. These missions are the cornerstone of Chávez’s social policies today. *Misión Barrio Adentro* uses Cuban doctors to provide health care in poor areas, particularly urban shantytowns. Other missions focus on expanding education: literacy in rural and urban areas (*Misión Robinson*), opportunities to finish secondary school for low-income adults (*Misión Ribas*), and access to college (*Misión Sucre*). *Misión Identidad* provided citizens with identification cards, which became

mandatory to receive cash transfers. *Misión Mercal* distributes subsidized food through discount stores across the country. *Misión Vuelvan Caras* aims at creating jobs through the promotion of cooperatives. In terms of resources allocated, these missions account for 3.5 percent of GDP, probably the largest social fund program in the recent history of Latin America.

Undoubtedly, these missions are very popular. However, critics claim that the state exploits the missions for political advantage. Recent empirical evidence confirms this (Ortega and Penfold 2006; Penfold 2006). Chávez has distributed resources following different political criteria for each program. While some programs are influenced by poverty considerations (*Ribas*), other programs are also used to “buy votes” at the municipal level. This portfolio-diversification strategy means that clientelism and poverty interact closely. In fact, when distributing cash transfers, the Chávez government has been able to simultaneously “buy votes” while distributing oil income to the very poor. By contrast, other programs (*Barrio Adentro* and *Mercal*) have been influenced by demographic considerations and the political criteria of whether the governor or mayor is pro-government. In these missions, poverty variables had no influence in explaining the distribution of resources at the state and municipal levels.

These studies (and those cited by Rodríguez in this *Forum*) suggest that Chávez’s social policies are not predominantly pro-poor, but rather, vintage clientelism and cronyism. Only *Ribas* shows that poverty rates influenced the targeting of funds, and even this program has been shaped by political considerations. Even those programs that the government flaunts as successful (*Robinson*) seem to have been ineffective and unnecessarily expensive.

CORRALES / PENFOLD continued...

However, judged in terms of political return (rather than poverty alleviation), the “missions” have proven fruitful. They have allowed President Chávez to overcome his lowest level of popularity since arriving to office (around 45 per cent in mid 2003) and win the August 2004 recall referendum and the 2006 presidential elections with more than 59 percent and 61 percent of the vote, respectively.

The reasons that Chávez has been able to treat social spending at will is that Congress provided no constraints. His dominance over legislative affairs allows him to finance spending opaquely and off-budget, namely by transferring oil revenues directly from the state-owned oil enterprise (PDVSA) to a special fund named FONDESPA and FONDEN. Essentially, social spending is occurring by bypassing legislative procedures to approve the budget. In 2004, *chavista* legislators, who controlled the majority in the National Assembly, consented to this form of executive bypassing, while the opposition had no recourse to force the president to go through the legislature. After the December 2005 legislative elections, which the opposition boycotted, the opposition has had no seats in Congress, further diminishing legislative oversight of social spending.

### Conclusion

In short, Chávez’s increase in social spending since 2003 is the result of rising electoral competition, a democratic feature reborn in Venezuela since then. But the predominantly clientelistic and crony features of this social spending are the result of declining accountability, a democratic deficit afflicting Venezuela since 1999. The direction of social spending is thus determined by democratic variables.

However, once spending begins to move in a particular direction, the arrow of causality changes direction as well: state spending can begin to have an impact on democratic variables. The state’s heavy reliance on clientelism and cronyism has given the Venezuelan government a huge advantage in competing for votes. The state competes with words and money; the opposition, with words only. This creates an uneven playing field. The government has created an electoral majority that is dependent on both high oil prices and low levels of institutional checks, and thus has no interest in seeing either condition change. Social spending that starts in the context of deficient democratic institutions ends up entrenching rather than alleviating these institutions.

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THE DEBATE CONTINUES  
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### Sharing the Oil Wealth? Appraising the Effects of Venezuela’s Social Programs

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It has become commonplace to assume that the administration of Hugo Chávez has significantly reoriented the priorities of Venezuelan public policies towards the country’s most disadvantaged groups. Favourable appraisals of Venezuela’s efforts to curb poverty are commonly accompanied by references to recent changes in Venezuelan social policies, in particular to the *Misiones* (literally, “missions”)—the label used by the government to refer to a group of social programs initiated in 2003 with emphases ranging from adult education to worker retraining.

Rigorous analytical studies of the impact of the *Misiones* are indispensable if we want to understand whether the Bolivarian revolution has really favored the Venezuelan poor. Existing studies tend to concentrate on the evolution of poverty rates.<sup>1</sup> Most of these studies conclude that poverty has decreased during the Chávez administration, but that most if not all of that decrease can be explained as a result of higher economic growth—in itself fueled by higher oil prices—and not necessarily as a result of improving income distribution.

It is unclear, however, that poverty rates based on money income will be very informative about the effectiveness of the Venezuelan government’s social initiatives. To the extent that most Venezuelan social programs provide non-cash benefits, these will not be reflected in the income data used to construct poverty indicators, but will nevertheless significantly affect the welfare of the poor. A rigorous evaluation of the

administration's social programs is required for an understanding of the evolution of well-being among the poorest sectors of Venezuelan society.

Attempts at evaluating the *Misiones*, however, are hampered by lack of availability of comparable data on non-income dimensions of well-being. The few highly aggregate series that are available may be inadequate for capturing the impact of health, education and nutritional programs whose effects may operate with long and variable lags and have only recently been initiated. Nevertheless, many of them do not show dramatic signs of improvement during the Chávez administration, while some actually show substantial deteriorations. Infant mortality and newborn mortality rates have decreased since the beginning of the Chávez administration in early 1999, though the decrease does not appear to be substantially different from that which had been achieved during the 1990-1998 period; indeed, this series has been steadily decreasing since the 1940s. The percentage of low birth weight babies has actually *increased* from 8.4 percent in 1998 to 8.8 percent in 2004, as has the percentage of children in the 2-6 and 7-14 age subgroups who are either underweight or under height—though the same indicator has continued decreasing for the 0-2 age subgroup.

These trends may not capture the complete effect of the government's social policies, as the variables may respond with a significant time lag to social interventions and may be heavily influenced by general economic conditions such as the deep 2002-03 recession that is broadly associated with the national strike. The government's social programs may have improved other, harder to measure, health indicators. These statistics are thus far from conclusive as to the effect of the Venezuelan *Misiones*.

There is, however, one key program for which available data allows a more conclusive evaluation. This is the Simón Rodríguez Extraordinary Literacy Program, better known as *Misión Robinson*.

According to official announcements, 1.5 million people were taught how to read and write using the Cuban-designed *Yo Sí Puedo* ("Yes, I Can") program. Studying the effects of this program can give important insights as to the extent of the progress made by the Chávez administration in the fight against poverty.

There are several reasons why it makes sense to devote particular attention to *Robinson*. The first one is size. By any standard, the mobilization of economic and human resources reported by the government in *Misión Robinson* is simply massive. Official statistics claim that between one and two percent of the national labour force was employed by the government as trainers in the literacy campaign, and that 1.5 million adults were taught how to read and write. Given the magnitude of these efforts, one should be able to pick up the effects of this program in the national data even with aggregate national-level data. The second reason is that the government's claim of almost complete eradication of illiteracy gives us a natural benchmark for evaluation. A comparison of our estimates with official figures can serve as an indicator of the reliability of other official announcements regarding the achievements of social policy. The third reason is data availability. The Venezuelan Household Survey, collected every semester since the late 60s by the National Institute of Statistics, includes information on the self-reported literacy of respondents, enabling us to readily evaluate the program's success at the national and state level. In the survey, which is available through the second half of 2005, interviewers ask respondents the following question: "Does this family member know

how to read and write?" The question is asked to the person or persons present at the moment of the interview about all household members.

In recent joint research with Daniel Ortega and Edward Miguel<sup>2</sup>, we have used the raw data files of the Household Surveys to estimate literacy rates in Venezuela from 1975 to 2005, allowing us to study the evolution of illiteracy over the implementation of the *Robinson* program. Our results show no evidence of the dramatic reduction in illiteracy claimed by the Venezuelan government. According to our estimates, in the second semester of 2005—the first period after the government declaration of the eradication of illiteracy—there were still 1,014,441 illiterate Venezuelans over age 15, only slightly less than the estimate for the first semester of 2003 (before *Robinson* began) of 1,107,793 persons. Because of population growth, this small reduction in the absolute number of illiterate Venezuelans coincides with a moderate drop in the illiteracy rate from 6.5 percent to 5.6 percent of the over-15 population.

Closer inspection of the data reveals that this increase in literacy rates during the period of program implementation is pretty much what one would expect based on the long-run evolution of this variable. Between the first semester of 2003 and the second semester of 2005, literacy increased at a yearly rate of 0.38 percentage points—hardly a stellar achievement given that during the Caldera administration (1994-1998) it had increased at a yearly rate of 0.48 percentage points. Statistical analysis failed to uncover any systematic effect of *Misión Robinson* on Venezuelan literacy. Even after taking into account possible nonlinearities in time trends, national cohort effects and inter-state variability in the intensity of the program, the bulk of the

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estimates derived from the analysis of the data provide small, statistically insignificant effects. In other words, the evidence suggests that most of the decline in the absolute literacy numbers—93,352 persons according to our best estimate—is due to the changing age structure (particularly the deaths of older, previously illiterate persons and their replacement by younger literate ones) than to any effect of the government’s literacy program.

Not only was the program a failure; it was an expensive one. According to official Ministry of Finance data, the Venezuelan government invested \$50 million in *Robinson*<sup>3</sup>. Even if we were to attribute the whole of the decline in absolute illiteracy to the program—probably a gross overestimate of program effectiveness—the estimated cost would be \$536 per pupil who learned to read. In contrast, a recent UNESCO study of literacy programmes found that the average cost in Latin America per successful learner was \$61.<sup>4</sup>

The data, in other words, paint a picture of a stunning failure of one of the government’s flagship social programs. These results should not surprise those familiar with the literature on large-scale literacy programmes. Previous research shows that such programs tend to be plagued by low initial enrolments, high dropout rates, and rapid loss of acquired skills, with the percentage of students passing exams being generally less than 50 and as low as eight percent (Abadzi, 1994).

The results are also not surprising when one examines more closely the details of the Venezuelan government’s claims. The inconsistencies that arise from even a cursory look at official statements about *Misión Robinson* are enough to raise considerable scepticism about the possible effects of the program. For starters, there is the fact that

the government claims to have taught 1.5 million Venezuelans how to read and write, despite the fact that the 2001 census, carried out just two years before the start of *Robinson*, reported only 1.08 million illiterate Venezuelans of age 15 and greater. Indeed, official census data shows that the absolute number of Venezuelans who do not know how to read and write has never exceeded 1.5 million adults since 1936, the year of the nation’s first census.

Closer analysis reveals even deeper inconsistencies. The Ministry of Education claims that, 210,353 trainers were involved in the program (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes, 2005, p. 913), while the Ministry of Planning and Development reports a more conservative 110,703 trainers. Even the smaller figure amounts to a mobilization of 0.9 percent of the nation’s labor force. There is no evidence either in the employment data or in the official budget statistics that this number of people were effectively hired by the Venezuelan government. Among other facts, paying them the official government remuneration for trainers would have cost at least \$265 million—more than five times the total government budget of \$50 million allocated to *Misión Robinson*<sup>5</sup>.

In sum, there is little evidence that the administration of Hugo Chávez has made significant efforts to redirect expenditures towards the country’s poor. It is not even clear that the Chávez administration is *trying* to help the poor: the average share of social spending net of social security has actually decreased during the Chávez administration (29.3 percent for 99-04, in contrast to 31.5 percent for 90-08).<sup>6</sup>

How, then, do we explain the continued electoral success of the Bolivarian revolution? It is probable that the main explanation lies in the simple fact that the

economy is in the midst of a strong economic expansion fueled by a five-fold increase in oil prices. GDP growth is forecast to be close to nine percent for 2006. It is simply very hard for governments to lose elections under these conditions. Chávez has also been able to shape a clientelistic state and party system in which rewards are strongly conditioned on open expressions of political support, and dissent can be very harshly punished. Social scientists should look at these factors—rather than the nonexistent progress in social development—if they want to gain a clear understanding of recent developments in Venezuelan politics

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See Moreno and Rodríguez (2006) for a discussion of this debate.
- <sup>2</sup> Ortega, Rodríguez and Miguel (2006).
- <sup>3</sup> Ministerio de Finanzas (2006).
- <sup>4</sup> UNESCO, 2006, p. 235.
- <sup>5</sup> Ministerio de Finanzas, 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo (2006a).

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**Venezuela After the 2006 Elections**

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Hugo Chávez's massive victory, with 62 percent of the vote against 37 percent for his opponent in the Venezuelan presidential elections on December 3, 2006, confirms his mandate for another six years. It also raises questions about his role in the hemisphere, and which of the popular conceptions of the iconoclast are justified. Will he replace Fidel Castro as the leader of the anti-imperialist Latin American Left? Is he the champion of the marginalized and excluded in Venezuela and in the region, bringing a new perspective to the meaning of democracy? Or is he simply a populist autocrat who loves power and masterfully uses oil-financed patronage to maintain his popularity in time-worn Latin American fashion? All of these images may contain some truth, but none alone sufficiently captures this complex man or country.

In this year of elections, the so-called Rise of the Left in Latin America is more complex than the popular media imply. The slightly more sophisticated analyses dividing the region into the "pragmatic Leftists" of Lula, Bachelet, Kirchner, Vázquez, and now García (though some have moved him to center-Right); and the "radical Leftists" of Chávez, Morales, Ortega, and Correa, have yet to be proven, and fail to recognize more nuanced variations and commonalities among them.

We should first recognize that the traditional Latin American Left is mostly gone. Alan García, Tabaré Vázquez, Daniel Ortega and the Chilean Socialists (and Lula, if he ever really had them) have abandoned old, idealistic notions of socialism and embraced the market. García and Ortega have accepted free trade agreements with the

United States. García of course defeated the nationalist, pro-Chávez candidate Ollanta Humala. Daniel Ortega, who was vigorously opposed by the United States and helped by Venezuela in another of the competitions between those two countries, has already met with the IMF, World Bank and U.S. government in the weeks after his November 4 victory to reassure his own private sector and international financiers of his goals. He aims, in fact, to build a grand coalition to fight poverty in Nicaragua, after a decade of little progress under conservative governments. Ortega will most likely strive to balance a relationship with the United States on whom Nicaragua is economically dependent, and with Venezuela, who can provide the energy help it desperately needs.

In Venezuela, where 1960s-era Marxist intellectuals are sprinkled throughout the government, Chávez has recognized that socialism is no longer viable; he has invented instead a new model, which he calls "21<sup>st</sup> century socialism." His promises to deepen the revolution must be played out before we can fully evaluate this vaguely-defined concept or his economic goals. Thus far, 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism has included using oil revenues to redistribute resources to the poor through government subsidies, cash transfers, and welfare programs—not a new thing in Venezuela. It has included some rural and urban land reform, and the revival of state-owned enterprises in certain sectors competing with the private sector. But it has not been much more radical than that.

In this year of elections, we are also witnessing a continent with countries that are seriously divided, demonstrated in the close elections in Costa Rica and Mexico, and run-offs in Brazil, Peru and Ecuador. This reflects a growing demand and frustration at the inability of governments to ease the pain of poverty and income inequality, and a divide in the vision of how

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to move forward—through a market-based model with free trade agreements, or a slightly more statist model to combat poverty. Polarization especially marks countries like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Mexico, where even geographic divides can be identified and deep political conflict sporadically threatens to erupt into ingovernability and violence.

Much of Latin America also shares a nationalism and abhorrence of U.S. unilateralism and “bullying,” from the Iraq War to the Mexican border wall. Does this mean that Chávez will become a regional leader with his renewed mandate? Certainly he is influential due to Venezuela’s oil wealth and Chávez’s personal mission to combat U.S. global and regional dominance. The U.S. single-minded focus on Iraq and the Middle East since 2001 opened a vacuum in Latin America that Chávez was happy to fill. His criticism of the United States, though personalized and crude, resonates with people unhappy with U.S. arrogance and attempts to force Latin Americans to choose between Venezuela and the United States. Yet, Chávez may have recognized that he can overstep his boundaries as well. The defeat of candidates associated with him, whether fairly or unfairly, in Peru and Mexico, and Venezuela’s loss in the UN Security Council vote, may serve as warnings. Public opinion polls indicating some distress of Venezuelans at distributing oil revenues abroad may also begin to take their toll domestically, though certainly did not harm him in the recent elections.

The Bolivarian Revolution as a model, however, is not easily replicated or exported. Based on extraordinary oil revenues, personal charisma, and a willingness to concentrate power, the conditions giving rise to and sustaining the Bolivarian Revolution are not all present in any other country. These conditions include a near tripling of

the poverty rate from the 1970s to the 1990s with its accompanying sense of exclusion and rage; a complete deinstitutionalization of a strong party system over the course of the 1990s; and a seven-fold increase in the price of the major commodity from the beginning of the Chávez administration in 1999 to 2006.

The populist aspect of the Bolivarian Revolution was replicated in the campaign of opposition candidate Manuel Rosales. Competing with the government’s social missions which distribute economic resources through subsidized food markets, adult education programs, health clinics, and job training programs, Rosales offered the *Mi Negra* debit card to provide cash transfers to the poor. Venezuela’s oil booms have historically fueled a paternalistic state, and the criticism of Chávez’s programs as unsustainable populist giveaways have been directed to past governments as well. Nevertheless, no serious international assessment of the social missions has been conducted to be able to measure the effectiveness of these anti-poverty programs, in contrast to the studied (and lauded) cash transfer programs in Brazil and Mexico.

The characterization of Chávez as an electoral autocrat also merits deeper assessment. Certainly procedural democracy is eroded, with checks and balances disappearing and political dissent curbed in a revised Penal Code that criminalizes insults and protests of government officials. This is disturbing. Yet, Chávez has consistently won between 56 percent and 62 percent of the popular vote in every election since 1998. Satisfaction with democracy in Venezuela is the second highest in Latin America, after Uruguay, according to the 2005 LatinoBarometro report. In fact, despite defining democracy primarily in terms of liberty, Venezuelans gave a higher ranking of the “democraticness” to their

country than did the citizens of any other country in the region.<sup>1</sup> The perceptions of social inclusion, political representation and personal empowerment and hope provided by Hugo Chávez to the majority impoverished citizens are a powerful factor often ignored in external evaluations of Venezuelan democracy.

The political opposition in Venezuela began to recognize this fact during the campaign of Manuel Rosales. His messages to compete for the “hearts and minds” of Venezuelans, and the more coordinated opposition efforts, indicate the possibility for a more coherent and constructive opposition bloc in the future. Even more importantly, the rapid concession speech by Rosales reflects a political maturation and a stark contrast to the rejection of the 2004 recall referendum results and the boycott of the 2005 National Assembly elections by opposition leaders. With Rosales’ recognition of Chávez’s victory, the government no longer has a reason not to engage with a legitimate opposition.

The real question has to do with the competing visions on how to accomplish change in Venezuela. The willingness of so many citizens to accept some authoritarian traits in exchange for the empowerment they feel from Chávez simply recognizing them and giving them visibility, as well as the material benefits they are receiving, illustrates the deep desire for political change over the last decade. The problem lies in Chávez’s view that change is possible only through confrontation and displacing the traditional elite, while the traditional elite came to believe that coexistence with Chávez would not be possible. These views extended to society, creating a deep-seated polarization and fear on both sides. With some justification, those who oppose the government fear recrimination, as reported by some signers of the recall petitions.

Likewise, *chavistas* fear retribution if they were to leave power, based on the arrests and persecution during the short-lived Carmona government in April 2002.

The Venezuelan case raises a more theoretical question applicable to much of Latin America: can a democratic framework manage a renegotiation of the social contract as citizens demand fuller inclusion and expanded citizenship in all of its dimensions—civil, political and social? As I have suggested elsewhere, the answer may depend on the degree of perceived exclusion, the occurrence of breakdown or fragmentation of traditional party systems, and the absence or failure of social democratic party alternatives.<sup>2</sup> When all three of these factors are present, the more difficult it is to peacefully reformulate the social contract with its concomitant redistribution of economic and political resources to meet expanded citizenship demands—and the more likely that a neopopulist or charismatic outsider variant of either electoral democracy or electoral authoritarianism will arise.

The Chávez administration has accepted elections as a mechanism for citizen participation and choice (holding nine votes since 1999). Elections will continue to provide the opportunity for pluralistic representation at local, regional and national levels. The implosion of the traditional parties after 1998, and the discouragement of opposition voters to participate in electoral processes in 2004 and 2005 in response to opposition leaders' allegations of fraud, led to the dominance of all elected positions by the government coalition and its ability to control other major institutions. The shift in balance of power within the opposition for the 2006 elections, bringing the participationist faction to the forefront over the abstentionist faction, may open the door for increased pluralism.

Electoral conditions improved during the 2006 elections primarily through the mutual agreement of certain rules and policies in August, before the campaign began. In other words, the candidates could register knowing the basic electoral conditions under which they would be competing. The agreement to audit 54 percent of the voting machines immediately following the vote, the increased access of political parties to the pre-election audits, the decision to forego the use of electronic voter registries, all contributed to increased confidence in the system and greater voter participation. Nevertheless, the lack of regulations for the use of state resources during reelection, and the difficulty for the National Election Council to regulate access to the media, continues to be an issue for Venezuela. Pressure from government ministers on public workers to vote for the president, and the partial use of the thumbprint identification machines over the objections of opposition candidates, may have contributed to some level of fear or intimidation of voters that is very difficult to measure.

Continued focus on improving electoral conditions can provide more options to voters while enhancing the legitimacy of the victorious candidates. It will be up to opposition parties to take advantage of electoral opportunities to convince voters that they have a compelling alternative message. And it will be up to the government to take advantage of its current mandate to meet citizen demands for expanded citizenship not only in the realm of politics (electoral choice), but also civil (equal access to impartial justice) and social (housing, jobs, personal security) realms.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Latinobarometro Report 2005* reports that the three primary meanings of democracy for Latin Americans are liberty, elections, and an economic system that provides a dignified income, though the relative weight of each of these factors varies by country. For example, in Brazil, a dignified income ranks the highest, while in Venezuela liberty ranks the highest, followed by elections. See <[www.latinobarometro.org](http://www.latinobarometro.org)>.

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer McCoy, "Transnational Responses to Democratic Crises in the Americas, 1990-2005," in Thomas Legler, Sharon Lean, and Dexter Boniface, editors, *Democracy Promotion in the Americas* (Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming 2007). ■

## The Peruvian Truth Commission's *Centro de Información para la Memoria Colectiva y los Derechos Humanos*

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The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report in August 2003 to acclaim and controversy. The nine-volume *informe*, disseminated on the Internet, CDs, and in different published versions, castigated just about all political organizations and major institutions in Peru for the horrific violence that scarred the country from 1980 to 2000. In contrast to other truth commissions such as those of Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, and South Africa, which found governmental forces guilty of the vast majority of the bloodshed, the report held Shining Path responsible for approximately sixty percent of the nearly 70,000 people killed. It documented the group's wanton use of violence and their leaders' indifference to the human cost of their efforts. The report highlighted as well the violence prompted by the Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru (MRTA). Yet it also brought to light the brutality of the Peruvian Armed Forces and police, pointing out that most of the state-sanctioned violence occurred during the democratic regimes of Fernando Belaúnde and Alan García. It debunked the myth that Alberto Fujimori had "defeated" terrorism, and chronicled in grim detail his creation of a corrupt, authoritarian regime. The report did not stop there. It criticized the Church, the left, and others for abetting human rights abuses or overlooking the danger represented by the Shining Path. It also underlined the socio-economic and racial nature of the violence. Seventy-nine percent of victims lived in the countryside and 75 percent had Quechua or another indigenous language as their native language. The 1993 census indicates that these groups make up respectively 29 and 16 percent of the population.

While experts laud the quality and rigor of the report, written in the wake of the secretive Fujimori regime, most political organizations in Peru received it with

hostility or strategic indifference. The fact that its criticism had been so broad meant that most parties found reasons to dislike it. Rarely had a truth commission reflected so negatively on groups at the center of a democracy. Bowing to pressure, President Alejandro Toledo received the report with seeming apathy. To many commentators, this confirmed his unfortunate transition from a leader of the democratic anti-Fujimori campaign, to a mediocre politician beholden to the powers that be. Paradoxically, the quality of the Peruvian Truth and Conciliation Committee's final report meant that it was received with trepidation and resentment by leading political groups.

As its name indicates, the Commission sought to elucidate the causes of violence and facilitate future reconciliation. Yet there is another, perhaps less lofty benefit of its work: the Commission produced rich material for the study of Peru in the final decades of the twentieth century. As a key member of the Commission, Iván Hinojosa, noted, they had to "write the history of Peru from 1980 to 2000." In doing so, they collected 16,917 testimonies, 13,696 audiocassettes, 1,109 videos, 104 compact discs, and 13,139 photographs. All of this material is available to researchers at the Defensoría del Pueblo's "Centro de Información," housed in downtown Lima. The documentation includes testimonies about the violence, forensic reports about mass graves, and interviews with leaders of the Shining Path, MRTA, and political parties. It can be used to understand the policies of the Belaúnde, García, and Fujimori governments, to examine a particular massacre or assassination, or to search for a disappeared loved one. It contains detailed information about some of the surprising and grisly findings of the Commission: the escalating number of dead, which most initially calculated at around

30,000 but has risen to nearly 70,000; the brutal genocide and uprooting of the Asháninka people of the Amazon; and the tactics and internal organization of the Shining Path. Researchers can use the database to search for material as well as the small library focused on human rights and violence. The photo collection, a selection of which has been exhibited throughout Peru and in Europe, has an astounding breadth, moving from the elite to the undocumented victims and from Lima to Peru's most marginal corners.

The Centro confronts many challenges, unusual in other historical archives. The testimonies contain confidential information and accusations and thus their use has to be screened. According to Ruth Borja Santa Cruz, Director of the Center, users must clarify their objectives and a committee must approve requests for particularly controversial material. Those accused of violence or human rights abuses must have a court order to review the material. Researchers or relatives of victims, however, face few hurdles and have surprisingly open access to the rich material. Approximately 10 to 15 people a day arrive at Jirón Miró Quesada to be attended by the Centro's small but efficient staff. To date, the majority of the Centro's users are people who seek information about the fate of their loved ones. Many request a *constancia de desaparición forzosa* in order to clarify the situation of a *desaparecido* and perhaps to request reparations. The Commission recommended that some form of individual or collective compensation be offered, in part to force the state to recognize the victims of the violence. Congress is currently considering the possibility of reparations.

The Centro's fate beyond 2006 is uncertain. The documentation could be turned over to the Archivo General de la Nación in 2007. This archive has little available space and

## Report from the Program Chairs

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has had difficulty in recent decades making new material accessible to researchers. Everyone who supports the efforts of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Committee expressed their hope that the Centro would find a secure, permanent home.

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### Truth Commission

<www.cverdad.org.pe>  
(This open access document is available on other webpages, which can be easier to download.)

### Two key summaries of its findings:

*Un pasado de Violencia; Qayna akariyninchik* (Spanish-Quechua, 2003)

*Hatun Willakuy: Versión abreviada del Informe final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación del Perú* (2004) ■

En estos últimos meses se ha estado trabajando en el envío a las directoras de circuito las propuestas de mesas para el congreso. A finales de noviembre los dictámenes de las ponencias y sesiones del Congreso de LASA en Montréal se enviaron al Secretariado de LASA con las evaluaciones de los circuitos, así como las propuestas de los apoyos para viajes. Nosotros estamos en el proceso de evaluar dichos apoyos y enviar nuestro dictamen a LASA. La tercera semana de enero, estaremos armando el programa en Pittsburgh y de ahí nos trasladaremos a Montreal a la reunión del Comité Ejecutivo. En esa reunión, presentaremos el programa armado y listo para su circulación.

Entre tanto, les enviamos un saludo de nuevo año.

### **The Latin American, Caribbean & Iberian Studies Program (LACIS) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will offer an Intensive Portuguese Institute in Summer 2007.**

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# Letter to the Editor

In the recent *LASA Forum* (Summer 2006, issue #3) I detect a welcome engagement with the membership concerning the direction of LASA. It is in this spirit that I wish to respond to President Charles Hale's valuable report. The crux of the message was the decision, unanimously approved at the March 2006 business meeting and supported by 80 percent of the membership in a mailed referendum, to hold the next International Congress in Montreal rather than Boston to accommodate our Cuban colleagues as well as other Latin Americans and to protest U.S. policy which prohibits their attendance.

The focus of much of Charles Hale's message is based on the concern that the Montreal decision may have alienated the 20 percent who voted against the move. This is an understandable reaction of a newly elected president who does not want to see this Congress move result in a painful division within the membership. His ecumenical attempts to represent not only the proponents but the opponents of the move to Montreal left me with a problematic reflection. I don't support the view that the divide among us is between "those who seek spaces of activist and public scholarship, and for those who defend more conventional notions of scholarship as objective, value-free and strictly disengaged from the political conditions that surround us."

I suggest that many of the arguments against the move reflect a conservative cast of mind and should not be seen as representing a neutral, objective defense of an academic association. President Hale's summary of these arguments, which reflect economic, legalistic, dilatory approaches to the role of an academic association, are as value-laden and ideologically driven as the views of the 80

percent who appear to be committed to a more consistently activist and progressive association. I contend that an academic organization always comprises values both collectively as a scholarly association and individually in a member's research, methodology and writing. It is questionable that scholarship avoids taking positions that involve normative judgments. The argument that an academic association should be represented by ostensibly objective, value-free and disengaged research reflects a particular value prism and an ideological persuasion. It should not be given a deeper imprimatur.

Hale writes of receiving 25 pages of text from those opposing the move. He writes "They [their comments] are respectful, well-reasoned and clearly have the best interests of the Association in mind." The summary of the comments that we read center on the extra costs, the faulty planning, the efficacy of the move, Canada as a dubious alternative site and the politicization of the association. Examples of the arguments offered are that Montreal is too expensive, the move should be postponed to 2009 to avoid canceling a contract, the move will have no impact on the Bush administration, not enough members are francophone and "LASA urgently needs to stop its increasing politicization. We are a scholarly organization!"

The move to Montreal, as Charles Hale defends well, is an action that explicitly accepts that an academic association does not live in isolation, but takes stands not only as scholars but also as a collectivity of teachers, students and writers.

Peter Ranis, *professor emeritus*  
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The Department of History at the University of North Carolina Wilmington invites applications and nominations for the 2007 Virginia and Derrick Sherman Emerging Scholar Lecture. This year's topic will be: **The New Latin American Left in Historical Perspective: Reform or Revolt?**

Proposals may address, but are not limited to, the recent electoral success of leftist parties in Latin America, their rejection of the Washington Consensus, the performance of their policies, the new relationships that the Latin American left has established with the United States, and the roles of new political spaces, actors and organizations in that left's rising regional power.

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Applicants should provide a title and brief description of the lecture they propose to deliver. Please send a letter of interest, current c.v., the names and email addresses of three references and a recent scholarly publication to Dr. Taylor Fain, Dept. of History, UNCW, 601 S. College Rd., Wilmington, NC 28403-5957. We also welcome nominations that are accompanied by contact information. Deadline for submissions is March 31, 2007. Finalists must be available for telephone interviews before May 31, 2007. UNCW is an EEO/AA Institution.

**The Latin American Studies Association (LASA)** is the largest professional association in the world for individuals and institutions engaged in the study of Latin America. With over 5,000 members, twenty-five percent of whom reside outside the United States, LASA is the one association that brings together experts on Latin America from all disciplines and diverse occupational endeavors, across the globe.

LASA's mission is to foster intellectual discussion, research, and teaching on Latin America, the Caribbean, and its people throughout the Americas, promote the interests of its diverse membership, and encourage civic engagement through network building and public debate.



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