



Illusions of liberalism, influxes of imperialism and a socialist alternative

Ilusões do liberalismo, influxos do imperialismo e alternativa socialista

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Abstract: This article highlights elements hidden by liberalism to justify bourgeois sociability, and the limits that the free-market premise imposes on Latin American countries with dependent capitalism. Marxist analysis is used to explain: the genesis of capitalism and the primitive accumulation of capital; the colonization process and the current phase of imperialist domination; a bibliography that dispels illusions of liberal political and economic concepts. Finally, it discusses the Latin American model of capitalist development, showing that a socialist alternative is the only way to overcome dependence and backwardness, in a simultaneous movement of struggles *within* and *against* the order.

Keywords: Liberalism. Imperialism. Dependent capitalism. Socialist alternative.

Resumo: Este artigo objetiva evidenciar elementos, que são ocultados pelo liberalismo para justificar a sociabilidade burguesa, assim como os limites que as premissas do livre mercado impõem aos países de capitalismo dependente latino-americanos. Para tal tarefa, utilizam-se análises marxistas que explicitam: a gênese do capitalismo e a acumulação primitiva de capitais; o processo de colonização e atual fase da dominação imperialista; uma bibliografia que desvanece ilusões das concepções liberais no plano político e econômico. Por fim, discute-se acerca do modelo de desenvolvimento capitalista na América Latina, evidenciando que a alternativa socialista seria a única possível para a superação da dependência e do atraso, em um movimento simultâneo de lutas dentro e contra a ordem.


Palavras-chave: Liberalismo. Imperialismo. Capitalismo dependente. Alternativa socialista.

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1 Introduction

In the field of theoretical-policy works, Brazilian Social Work has advanced considerably in its analysis of the development of the profession under monopoly capitalism. The deepening of contradictions within the process of capitalist accumulation, the reactionary offensive of capital over the last 40 years, and the limits on professional actions for a break

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with the mode of production under which the so-called “social issue”¹ emerged, are some of the themes confronting research in the field of Social Work.

On this last point, any action challenging the concrete reality is faced with a lack of organizational and political strength within the working class. The analysis also expresses the organization of users and professional teams from different institutional spaces, and this alters the correlation of forces and promotes actions that facilitate access to social rights and that question the current order.

Given the pressure of institutional requirements, there are other determinants that make this process of separation difficult, such as: the heteronomous bonds of wage-earning, a lack of knowledge of the main determinants of the process of capitalist accumulation, contradictions within the class struggle, the particularity of Latin American social formation, and the limits of the tactics employed within this order. The relative adherence of many researchers, workers, service users, and social workers to the ideologies of liberal democracy and economic liberalism, further limits the political organization of the working class in developing and presenting a definitive resolution for the aforementioned “social issue”.

Political-professional Social Work project is guided by the principles and guidelines of a societal project for the transformation of the social order (TEIXEIRA; BRAZ, 2009). A professional project which advocates, under Principle IV, the “[...] defense of the deepening of democracy, while socializing political participation and socially produced wealth [...]” (CONSELHO FEDERAL DE SERVIÇO SOCIAL, 2012, p. 23), cannot passively adjust to the bourgeois ideology of liberalism, with free competition and the naturalization of social inequality as the main underpinnings for regulating economic, social, and political life.

This text revisits, albeit succinctly, the main limitations and manipulations that the ideology of liberal democracy defends at the political level. Firstly, it seeks to demonstrate that the accumulation of capital, both primitive and modern, can only have occurred with violence, oppression, the seizure of rural people, the colonization of other populations and territories, the use of slavery in the colonies, the expansion of the slave trade and the intensive exploitation of the proletariat.

Secondly, we revisit and probe two fundamental categories to understand the particularity of Latin American social formation: *imperialism* and *dependent capitalism*. Intervention in, and harassment of, sovereign societal projects was the rule throughout the 20th century, and it they are still felt today in political and cultural pressure from the West, with their practices of military intervention and economic embargoes.

Finally, we identify a socialist alternative as the only route to the autonomous development of Latin American peoples (an alternative that could also be extended to Asian and African countries on the European periphery). In this socialist transition process, we identify popular

¹ This is a category that demands quotation marks and is grounded within the general law of capitalist accumulation. It produces the concentration and centralization of capital on the one hand and poverty on the other. The expressions of the “social issue” are subject of state interventions, whose social policies and Social Service were created to manage the assisted reproduction of the workforce at the service of the process of capital appreciation. See Netto (2011).

insurrections that promote institutional breakdown and the development of the class struggle itself, including resistance by native peoples; the constitution of the proletariat as a class in and for itself; and the experiences of governments and popular actions within and against the order.

2 Liberal ideology: bourgeois regulations as a screen for exploitation

Lukács (2013) states that every ideology represents a set of ideas and values that make individuals situate themselves within the complex of class struggle, more specifically the “[...] human, conscious and capable of acting [...]” (LUKÁCS, 2013, p. 465), in the sense of universalizing their interests and “[...] settling social conflicts” (LUKÁCS, 2013, p. 520).

The classics of liberalism evidence the ideological script, that is, they normalize the relations of production under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, most notably in: private property; the market; and the bourgeois sociability that surrounds it. The presupposition for the regulation of social life is the *social contract*, which seeks to legitimize modern private ownership and business. In this way, they permit the production and free movement of goods.

In addition to the market, the bourgeois State is constituted from elements that allow the division of powers - with conciliatory elements aimed at the nobility and decaying monarchies - and promotes the idea of suffrage as being responsible for the decisions of the collective will of the people. At its genesis, the choice of government was restricted to individuals who had the conditions and financial resources to make the selection. They excluded the dispossessed and women.

The principal interpreters of classical political economy, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo were forerunners in analyses identifying the free market as the regulator of its main determinant: work. For them, the freedom of movement of goods was the main pillar of the new world, it paved the way for all individuals, regardless of class, to be free to buy and sell goods. Furthermore, within this concept, the relations of production are hidden, or more specifically the exploitation of the workforce and the violence toward them is hidden, which was (and still is) exercised on the individual who sells his work and makes his merchandise, his work, available for an entire day.

Marx (2013) makes an example of this: Ricardo, “the last great representative” of classical political economy, “[...] inverts in the end, consciously, the antithesis between class interests, between wages and profit, between profit and land rent as the starting point of their investigations, naively conceiving this antithesis as a natural law of society” (MARX, 2013, p. 85).

Meanwhile, the assumptions of the labor theory of value and the determinant moment of production in capitalism are essential for the dissolving the illusion that the mere fact of the relationship of equality between individuals, in the circulation of goods, denotes an ideal model of sociability. In other words, it is argued that the legal equality of sellers and buyers of goods – including the workforce –denotes an environment of economic equality, which would form the basis for this supposed political equality. With this the way for limited political emancipation is open.

As Marx (2009) points out, the human right to freedom, won through the dissolution of the estrangement of the religious State, took place through “[...] the isolation of man from man [...]” (MARX, 2009, p. 64), with the main obstacle being the “practical application” of the “[...] human right to private property” (MARX, 2009, 64). In this sense, Marx highlights what the foundation of human emancipation would be:

Only when the individual man takes the abstract citizen back into himself and, as an individual man – in his empirical life, in his individual work, in his individual relationships – has he become a generic being; only when man has recognized and organized his forces *propres* [his own forces] as social forces, and therefore no longer separates social force from himself in the political figure – [it is] only then [that] human emancipation is accomplished (MARX, 2009, p. 71-72).

So, it is necessary to break the isolation caused by modern production relationships, as they are limited by the abstraction established in civil society, as well as circumventing the pseudo-naturalness of modern private property. It is, therefore, important to focus on the predominant moment of this production of life and identify obstacles to the organization of “men’s own forces.”

Firstly, we must highlight the central element of workforce exploitation, which has for too long, been hidden by those who seek to justify capitalist sociability. It was not only Marx who confronted those who justified the defense of a fair wage and criticized strike action, in that it harmed the businesses of the owners of the means of production; and how even today, exploitation is justified within the parameters of supply and demand, competition and merit. In other words, it is not obvious at which point in the relations of production that profits arise. They, therefore, ignore the surplus labor time that the use of the labor force produces beyond subsistence, and which goes unpaid, that is, the *surplus value*.

Second, outstanding capitalists are promoted to the rank of winners in the competitive race. However, the mitigation of excesses – the concentration of wealth or poverty – are only possible through redistributive social policies. In this way, the *primitive accumulation of capital* is hidden, especially the violent actions of oligarchies and/or nascent bourgeoisies.

Marx (2013) and Engels (2010) present syntheses of the process of the constitution of industrial cities and the English proletariat. The seizure of peasants was the initial phase, followed by state and private actions to regulate the wage regime. Other, subsequent, episodes also highlight the process, such as: the birth of the colonial system, the public debt system, the modern tax system, and the protectionist system. In all these far from idyllic moments, the “most brutal violence” towards peasants, workers, and subjugated peoples took place. This is the way that “economic power” engenders the new society (MARX, 2013, p. 821).

Regarding *primitive accumulation*, these processes are present in the development of capitalism dependent Latin American countries, among other subordinate regions. Throughout the colonization process ², it is evident that liberalism within the region has

² At its genesis, “[...] the discovery of gold and argentiferous lands in America, the extermination, enslavement, and burial of the native population in mines, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the transformation of Africa into a reserve for commercial hunting of Black people characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic processes constitute fundamental moments of primitive accumulation” (MARX, 2013, p. 821).

always been an ideology that sought to justify the interests of the metropolises, and that, today, justify the interests of the imperialism of the central countries capitalism and of the main monopoly companies.

Regarding the role that colonization furthered in the world, Domenico Losurdo (2006) explains the hypocrisy, the roots, and the conservative direction with which liberals launched their ideo-political attacks. Genocide, theft, enslavement, subjugation, segregation, and the self-justifications of the “chosen peoples” were, and still are, the main political and practical instruments that cities and imperialist countries use to subjugate other nations. The birth of the commercial development of slavery is seen, by Losurdo, as connected to ideology, when he identifies that “[...] the rise of liberalism and the spread of the slave-commodity on a racial basis are the product of a twin birth” (LOSURDO, 2006, p. 55).

In addition to the relationships of economic subordination, which are justified as natural and equitable, there are also the mechanisms by which these peoples are politically dominated, this even though *liberal bourgeois democracy* is currently in place in most central and dependent capitalist countries, and there are divisions of powers, periodic elections with universal suffrage and freedom of press ownership. Despite some progress in the formation and functioning of some institutions, it is necessary to consider that the mystified neutrality of the State regarding class, and/or its functioning being oriented towards fulfilling the full potential of all individuals, does not predominate.

Supported by the legal complex, imposed by sociability and positive law, the clear orientation of society is based on economic drivers³ (LUKÁCS, 2013) and demonstrates that such a social contract does not exist, other than to support the relations of production predominant within this sociability. Furthermore, laws that may address the needs of the working class are partial or totally ignored at moments when they may harm the interests of the owners of the means of production. It is worth noting, as an example, the formal existence of the social function of *property* within the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, which is, in practice, ridiculed by the existence of large unproductive estates and abandoned properties⁴.

Democracy is also viewed as an instrument by which the conditions for anyone to hold legislative and executive posts, and attain political power, are equalized. The norms and democratic institutions of the bourgeois regime are mystified in a context driven by the interests of the ruling classes and guaranteed by institutional violence. Even to the extent that the economic power of campaign financing and/or the intervention of the market and imperialism in electoral processes that they do not wish to recognize, are disregarded, as we will go on to demonstrate below.

³ Identified by Lukács (2013) as the new fetishization, when compared to the genesis of law in the regulation of everyday life. This manipulation is demonstrable, in the sense that “[...] it becomes a sphere of social life in which the consequences of the acts, the chances of success, the risks of suffering harm are calculated in a similar way that done in the economic world itself.” (LUKÁCS, 2013, p. 236).

⁴ It is not without reason that social movements such as the Landless Workers Movement (MST) and the Homeless Workers Movement (MTST), among others, denounce the recurrent failure to comply with the law, in the sense of the expropriation of those who do not fulfill their social function. See *Occupy...* (2012).

3 Imperialism and dependency: the restrictiveness of capitalist underdevelopment

The relationship between the European industrial revolution and the colonization of the Americas, drove the impulse for the generalization of capitalist relations. There is no doubt that the social formation of the Americas was determined by the intensive exploitation of natural and mineral resources, monoculture, and the trafficking of enslaved workers.

This process did not occur only with expropriation, but also through the intensive exploitation of an enslaved labor force. Through the totality of this process, and the central categories of the labor theory of value, productive forces developed considerably in a European industrial context in which relative surplus value was heavily extracted, by the development of machinery or by the reduction in the value of the means of subsistence provided by producing under a slave-mercantile regime, as implemented in Latin America.

The British empire benefited significantly from these relationships, through direct colonial rule and indirect neocolonial rule. According to Fernandes (2005), the event that marks Brazil's entry into the competitive social order was the 'opening of ports' in 1808; while the country's formal independence was recognized in 1822.

Despite this so-called independence, there was, in fact, a subordination to the interests, forms and rhythms of production established from outside the country. This subordination oriented the confrontations that the young nation assumed – in this regard, the *Paraguayan War* stands out – loans, channels of communication, and even the predominant work regime – including the maintenance of slavery until 1888 and the later advent of a free labor regime.

In summary, until the end of the 19th century and into the first two decades of the 20th century, Brazil, and other young Latin American nations, could only enter industrial production relations and establish their systems of State control if they were guided by the interests of the British empire and its principal companies.

A set of determinations is evidenced, that led a few Latin American nations to industrialize at the beginning of the 20th century⁵, establishing an internal market and the use of foreign exchange from the primary export sector for the first industries in the region. Other countries were only able to raise this status after the Second World War⁶. In this scenario, there was also a latent profusion of capital investments, which produced a subordination of nascent industries to multinational conglomerates from central capitalist countries. There is another group of countries that had barely achieved conditions for industrialization by the 21st century⁷, which remain underdeveloped, under oligarchic domination and have no proletariat (BAMBIRRA, 2013).

⁵ According to Bambirra (2013), countries with old beginnings of industrialization (type A): Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Colombia.

⁶ Countries whose industrialization was the product of monopoly integration (type B): Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Bolivia, El Salvador, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and Cuba (BAMBIRRA, 2013).

⁷ Countries with an agricultural-export structure without industrial diversification [type C]: Paraguay, Haiti, and Panama (BAMBIRRA, 2013).

At the end of the 19th century and into the beginning of the 20th century, the apex phase of capitalism emerged, *imperialism*. With it, the international division of labor was reconfigured, and the expansionist project of capital began. Alongside this, there were inter-imperialist conflicts, and the advancement of the proletariat and socialism.

Lenin (2012) identified typical characteristics of the time: the intensification of capitalist competition between companies and nations; the constitution of monopolies; the dispute and division of the world; the unification of capital flows, as “financial capital”. In the author's words:

[...] 1) from 1860 to 1870, the higher degree, the apex of the development of free competition. Monopolies are just barely perceptible germs; 2) after the 1873 crisis, a long period of development of the cartels, which are still only an exception, and still not solid, representing only a passing phenomenon; 3) heyday of the late 19th century and crisis from 1900 to 1903: cartels became one of the bases of economic life. Capitalism turned into imperialism (LENIN, 2012, p. 44).

The gathering of capital, in gigantic conglomerates, led to the export of capital as an essential practice which could not be sustained without state, military, economic and logistical support. Regarding means of communications, at the beginning of the century the development of railways stands out. They facilitated the dissemination of production centers and the distribution of goods, essential traits for the process of capitalist appreciation.

Throughout, capital sought to produce the socialization of production. For this, it used international banking networks and large conglomerates. In this way, it reconfigured the international market for the labor force commodity and promoted the intensified exploitation of this labor force in countries of *dependent capitalism*⁸.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the British hegemony and global imperialism had still not achieved the full integration of financial monopolies and industrial production chains that we see today. Following WWII, imperialism reconfigured its power with a new hegemony arising in the USA, and a powerful linking of international monopolies with local industrial and agricultural production.

The intensification of dependence was demonstrated by Marini (2005), Bamberra (2013) and Fernandes (1975; 2005). So-called “total imperialism”, a term coined by Fernandes (1975), represents the symptomatic relationship of domination, embedded in the export of capital, in the diffusion of the ideology of security with development, and in educational, financial, military, cultural orientations, that is, in a transformation that “[...] organizes external domination from within and at all levels of the social order” (FERNANDES, 1975, p. 18-19).

⁸ When Lenin authored his book, the main relationships were between owners of colony and colonies themselves. However, the embryo of a theory of dependent capitalism was already being developed by identifying the transitory forms of State dependence, as was the case in Argentina: “For this period, not only the two fundamental groups of countries are typical – those that possess colonies and the colonies - but also the various forms of dependent countries that, from a formal point of view, are politically independent, but which in reality are entangled in the meshes of financial and diplomatic dependence” (LENIN, 2012, p. 119).

In the context of the economic centrality of the process of submission of the presented forms, rhythms and patterns of production and reproduction of the capital of dependent capitalism, it is important to highlight the element of unequal exchanges. In dependent countries, the emphasis on the primary-export sector is a characteristic observed from the beginning of the capitalist competitive social order to the present day.

These nations are employed in the role of food producer and, consequently, *wage goods* for workers in central capitalist countries, extracting minerals and other components of constant global capital, which produce the most complex machinery. In other words, this process guarantees increased exploitation of the workforce in countries of central capitalism, from a reduction of the value of the means of subsistence and raw materials, and a compensation realized in *dependent capitalism* countries with a dual extraction of the surplus – internal and external (FERNANDES, 2005) – and the super-exploitation of the workforce (MARINI, 2005). The struggle for the liberation of these dependent countries includes mobilizations in terms of both *national revolution* and *democratic revolution*. The suppression of all of them, through economic embargoes and military interventions, through policies of security and the control of institutions, linked to the bourgeoisie and local military commands, is evidenced by the military coups across Latin America.

In the Brazilian case, Fernandes (2005) emphasizes the change to the concretization of bourgeois domination as a model for *autocratic* transformation, which he describes as follows: “[...] at the periphery this transition becomes much more savage than in the hegemonic and central nations, preventing any concrete conciliation, in the short and long term, between democracy, capitalism and self-determination” (FERNANDES, 2005, p. 298).

The projects of national and bourgeois-democratic revolution have all been wrecked⁹ by the dynamics of unequal and combined development, as they lacked internal revolutionary dynamics and national interest. The misfortune of Mauá, a Brazilian municipality, as evidenced by Fernandes (2005), shows that industrial, commercial, and financial entrepreneurship was stifled because the oligarchy, at the time of its transformation into a bourgeoisie, did not have the political and financial conditions to break with overseas domination. So, in the 20th century, it risked itself in conjunctural disputes for the industrialization and autonomy of the nation. By the 21st century, the national bourgeoisie understood that interdependence is a natural condition of the nation, and that its role would be to take advantage of any gaps in this process.

Finally, faced with the demanding situation of having to overcome internal underdevelopment and external dependence, many have stated that the ideal, of a national development project led by the bourgeoisie, is unfeasible in Latin America. Recent progressive governments in Latin America, through the first decade of 2000s and into the mid-2010s, have highlighted the limits of liberal ideology, with the exhaustion of the liberal economy - even though part of the revenue arising from economic growth is used for the financing of compensatory and anti-poverty policies – and of bourgeois democracy itself. There have been military, parliamentary, media, and legal coups, which have overthrown elected governments,

⁹ It was considered, at this point, to be the exception of the American bourgeois revolutionary process, which brought its project of national revolution to the forefront, earlier, even, than the French Revolution.

impeached candidates who had the potential for victory and made democratic mechanisms provided for in local laws unworkable (BORON, 2020).

4 The autonomous driving of the destiny of the working class: the road to socialism

Human emancipation is a term widely used in the Brazilian Social Service to identify a society in which producers obtain control of the productive and reproductive process of society without the exploitation and oppressions present in modern society, that is, a higher stage requiring a period of socialist transition. In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin (1987) emphasizes the need for the withering away of capitalist society and the parasitic State, demonstrating that overcoming these alienating elements cannot take place through any kind of decree and/or a single insurrectionary event.

To understand the particularity of Latin American social formation, and especially that of Brazil, it is necessary to acknowledge that, throughout the entire 20th century, a national-developmental ideology was an imperative for those who wanted to break with colonialism and dependence. For many, the alliance of the proletariat, and other segments of the lower classes, with a desired national revolutionary bourgeoisie, was the step required to overcome underdevelopment, political, cultural, and technological backwardness and for the realization of typically capitalist production relationships.

An understanding of feudal remnants and structural dualism are the foundations of these theories, isolating the structural determinations of the unequal and combined development undertaken by the apex stage of capitalism, *imperialism*. We must consider the topicality of Bambirra (2013) when he states that “[...] the utopia of autonomous national capitalist development projects is only preserved by the petty bourgeoisie [...]” (BAMBIRRA, 2013, p. 150), and is incompatible with the aspirations of the proletariat, the peasants, and other sections of the working class.

To this end, theorists of the socialist revolution in Latin America have already set out the particularities of this social formation and the only viable exit for developing national and democratic revolutions. To explain this analysis, this article highlights Florestan Fernandes’ formulations regarding this dynamic, in which only a socialist revolution would enable civilizing and inclusive changes for large parts of the working class.

The dual movement of a *revolution within the order* and *revolution against the order* is the main analytical key asserted here¹⁰. The national and democratic tasks - including those not carried out by the native bourgeoisies, such as agrarian, urban, and university reforms - are the burning demands that those from lower classes wish to see satisfied, with a radically

¹⁰ In the various works of Fernandes cited in this article, a dual relationship appears, principally when he evidences the movements into which the working classes place themselves in different revolutionary experiments. In *What is Revolution* (FERNANDES, 1981a), the author summarizes this movement: “While civil war is latent, revolutionary transformation is equated *within the order*, as a process of the enlargement and improvement of bourgeois society through the collective action of the proletariat; when civil war becomes open, revolutionary transformation is equated *against the order*, involving first the winning of power and, later, the disintegration of the old society and the formation of a classless society, devoid of the domination of man by man and of a political element (therefore, of an order without civil society and without a State)” (FERNANDES, 1981a, p. 26, author’s italics).

democratic proposal for the reorganization of the production and reproduction of sociability, under the principles of a socialist society, with centralized planning by Popular power and a permanent shrinking of the main determining categories of contemporary estrangement and alienation - private ownership of the means of production, division into social classes, the State, capital and wage labor.

This understanding does not permit an analysis that restricts human emancipation, but one that is idealized and without contradictions and conflicts. Within the scope of this analysis, the *revolution within the order* is confronted with the interests of the national bourgeoisies – which were built based on local oligarchies – whether industrial, financial, agrarian or rentier. The democratic method is idealized as a sociability of rotation of powers and free organization of the press and/or intervention of imperialist countries in these nations. This prescription, practiced in various Latin American countries, required several interventions, including military and/or civilian coups, among other artifices, which sought to stifle autonomous capitalist development projects.

Fernandes (1981b), when analyzing the weight of preventive counterrevolution to maintain political order and decolonization, under the control of the native bourgeoisie, predicted that:

What should we draw from this conclusion: the peaceful path leads to nothing, in the short term, and promises very little, in the long term. [...] In short: counterrevolution demonstrated, by its language and its actions, that there is no such thing as a 'bourgeois nationalism' as a liberating social force. For this to occur, national liberation must become anti-bourgeois, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist. The alternative to minority violence lies in revolutionary counter-violence, in a revolutionary socialism 'made in Latin America' (FERNANDES, 1981b, p. 54-55).

The experiments of bourgeois governments, who accepted the struggle for a national revolution and invested in the production chains and industrialization of their countries, and in public investment in education and other policies, were suffocated and/or overthrown. They were often replaced by military governments, with large scale civil technocracies at the forefront to implement the necessary changes from the financial monopoly stage, required after the 1950s and 1960s. To achieve this, these governments often resorted to violent repression and the persecution of leaders and popular movements.

Getúlio Vargas and João Goulart in Brazil, and Juan Domingo Peron in Argentina, among others, demonstrate the limits of such proposals for development with national sovereignty. Proposals that were abandoned by the local bourgeoisies, who were well financed and organized by US imperialism - evidence of these interventions is abundant, for example, in the almost countless Military coups since the 1960s¹¹.

The Cuban Revolution amply demonstrates how space is limited for development strictly within the order of bourgeois democracy and economic liberalism. Undertaken, initially, by

¹¹ Among examples of this continental intervention and domination by imperialism, we highlight the socialist alternative, adopted within the framework of democracy and bourgeois legality, undertaken in Chile by Salvador Allende and the Popular Unity party. In response, the 1973 coup was violent, and thousands of people were executed, the welfare state was decimated, and this created a laboratory for capital's most regressive and offensive policies. Pequena Grenada, with a population of 80,000, was invaded by 8,000 soldiers in 1983. Nicaragua and El Salvador also suffered from the free electoral choice of their peoples and were the target of clashes between the US military and guerrilla groups, leaving no possibility for respecting the autonomous will of its people.

forces that principally desired a national and democratic revolution, once they had gained political power they needed to move as quickly as possible to a *revolution against the order*, carrying out agrarian reform, socializing the means of production, controlling the internal market and instituting a socialist State that “[...] would have to be born from the consciousness acquired by the egalitarian compulsion in the mass of the people and by the corresponding universalization of the revolutionary consciousness” (FERNANDES, 2007, p. 265). Socialism was the chosen path, preceded by a fierce struggle against imperialism, which has sought to stifle the process through an economic embargo that has been in effect for over 60 years.

The period in which offensive capital undertook to restructure production worldwide, a period of State level political and ideological regression, of increased flexibility of employment contracts and the overexploitation of the Latin American workforce, and of the intensive exploitation of Latin America’s natural wealth and finances, all acted to consolidate the impoverishment of considerable portions of the working class and enrich a tiny class of propertied individuals.

So, the dynamics of the class struggle throughout the 21st century in Latin America, has been one of intense dispute for transformations *within the order*, confronting the local oligarchies and bourgeoisies who are so strongly associated with imperialism, mainly from monopolistic multinational companies and the USA. Governments that have associated themselves with and maintained this relationship with the interests of US security policy, such as Colombia, seized the role and have become a laboratory, a territory totally determined by imperialist interests and control, witnessing violent persecution of Workers’ movements and paramilitary involvement in the region.

Conversely, with the weakening of the US in the region over the last 20 years, some countries have managed to break the stranglehold by electing progressive governments and rejecting projects aimed at greater economic and political subordination, such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)¹². In 1998, the electoral victory of Hugo Chavez, in Venezuela, marked the creation of a network of new governments with agendas for defending national sovereignty, who followed this up with further confrontational experiments, of differing degrees, fighting for transformations within and against the order, such as in Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, and with a more conciliatory posture in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay.

The end of this cycle of popular governments arrived in the mid-2010s, with military and legislative coups, the funding of internal groups, the practice of legal *lawfare* and, in the case of governments that remained in power who maintained a stance in defense of their sovereignty, such as Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, violent economic embargoes¹³.

Cuban resistance to the economic embargo imposed on it, attempts occupy it, attacks on its leaders and anti-communist propaganda is well recorded. The novelty of recent years is

¹² This is a proposal to create an economic bloc containing thirty-four countries of the Americas, minus Cuba, in which free trade, with suppressed customs tariffs, would favor the largest economies in the region, notably the USA. Boron (2020, p. 133) states that the “[...] rejection of the FTAA was a very hard defeat for the empire”.

¹³ In a recent article, José Fernando Siqueira da Silva (2021) identifies this overlapping of colonial genesis and the current pattern of capitalist accumulation in the region, he refers to the “[...] authoritarian resurgence in Latin America [...]” (SILVA, 2021, p. 15) over the last 10 years in almost all countries in South, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Venezuelan and Bolivian resistance, regarding gaining independent governments and political power. In the case of Venezuela, a media campaign and support for the coup-led opposition have been the keynotes of the last 20 years. The process intensified, however, in the second half of the 2010s, with the country's isolation within Latin America and the swaying progressive governments towards projects more closely aligned to the objectives of imperialism and the US.

During this process, in addition to media campaigns, provocation by Colombian paramilitaries, and the recognition, by some countries, of a self-proclaimed president, Juan Guaidó, the economic embargo went hand in hand with the theft of gold reserves and of US oil companies' assets within Venezuela by countries such as the United Kingdom and Colombia¹⁴.

In Bolivia, a military did not recognize the victory of Evo Morales for a third term in 2019 and a coup took place. Persecution followed, with forceful repression of the Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS) party, the deposed president, workers, and peasants. The coup government was, however, defeated with the electoral victory of the MAS at the following election, with President Luis Arce leading the process¹⁵.

These campaigns and actions demonstrate how imperialism continues to harass any proposed sovereign control over these countries' destinies, as the valuable mineral wealth and the internal markets of these nations are at stake, which must be subordinated to the interests of great business monopolies from around the world and, especially, in the United States. When recording some of the attacks on Latin American countries, Atilio Boron (2020) emphasizes:

From the above, it appears that Washington will oppose any genuinely democratizing process that is developed in our countries. Any political force forming a government that tries to produce a popular sovereignty based on economic and political sovereignty in a world of powerful, imperialist, and colonialist nations, on the one hand, and weak and subject countries, on the other, will be fiercely opposed by the empire (BORON, 2020, p. 130).

The more traditional characteristics of the process of colonization and imperialism are evident in this process, from the dividing and controlling of internal markets, natural resources, and the overexploited workforce in the region, to the binding of national destinies to dominant financial capital, most notably to international multinational monopolies.

5 Conclusion

It appears from the analysis that the limits in place are based on capitalist production relations, which are profoundly unequal, tend to be counter to the maintenance of individual freedoms, and are centered on private property. The market, deceptively claiming to provide

¹⁴ Since the self-proclamation of President Juan Guaidó, in January 2019, has been recognized by a few countries, but not by its people, the process of the overseas theft of Venezuelan heritage has intensified, with an emphasis on the theft of gold by the United Kingdom and by oil companies based in the USA and Colombia. See in *Opera Mundi (DECISÃO...)*, 2020) and Mello (2021).

¹⁵ The democratic return allied with popular resistance, made the government installed by the coup and the election of its representatives untenable in less than a year. One of the principal objectives of imperialism was the control of lithium reserves, an essential input for producing batteries and electric cars. See in *Evo...* (2020).

equality for individuals in the process of reproduction, is the screen behind which the exploitation of labor power and the expropriation of surplus labor are hidden.

Regarding Latin America, the direction of development favors the interests of monopoly business conglomerates and central capitalist countries. Imperialism is the final stage and remains present in the international division of labor. Countries that insist on freeing themselves from the concrete determination of this process have no realistic possibility of gaining autonomy for the development of their populations, as coups, economic, military, and cultural interventions, and the interventions that guide these governments give rise to economic and political dependence.

Finally, the socialist alternative is the path to the socialization of political participation and socially constructed wealth. This principle must not be distorted by compensatory propositions aimed at individuals and tiny fractions of the working classes. Liberal ideology drives propositions of different forms, by denying the estrangements in the work process, in which ownership and control are determined by external objectives, for assuring capitalist accumulation. Even if some individuals achieve social mobility and access to managed consumption, the tendency of the general law of capitalist accumulation is to increase the impoverishment of the vast proportion of the working class and to insidiously concentrate and centralize wealth in the remainder¹⁶.

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¹⁶ The Oxfam Brazil study (2017) is categorical regarding those who deny the class struggle and the structurally unequal character of capitalism. In the 2017 report, “*The distance that unites us*”, Oxfam presented the scandalous reality that there are 6 Brazilians who have the income of 100 million Brazilians.

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