

## A look back

So much the public international opinion as the national one and the social analysts of the VENEZUELA case accept the hypothesis that the current "hurricane phenomenon" called Chávez sinks his roots and it has its origins in the 40 years of the call "puntofijismo" (fixed Point) or not well classified "Fourth Republic" that preceded it. The almighty oil and the pattern of economic, social and political development that it sustained, as well as the governance crisis they are a unavoidable antecedent of what comes happening from 1998 in Venezuela. Hence, we will approach first in substantial form, this reality of previous Fourth Republic. Then, in the Third Part , we will approach current Fifth Republic.

The present study looks for to be a "reflexive phenomenology". And all phenomenology, according to French Gaston Berger, it is a theory of the vision. Its interest is to "see" and to "show." But we move away from Husserl and Sartre in the form as them they conceive the "phenomenon." For them the "phenomenon" has importance as soon as it enters in the conscience and there it finds its value and its sense. Their phenomenology spreads to be a description of the phenomena of conscience or of processes of the spirit. It marries, because, with the psychology and the logic. The phenomenology that we bustle here comes closer more to the teilhardian (Teilhard de Chardin) phenomenology.

We look for to offer a "scientific first reflection" whose study object will "*only be the phenomenon, but also the whole phenomenon.*" We are not satisfied with a simple enumeration or description of the phenomena, but rather we want to offer a reflection. Reflection that is not ahead in the properly philosophical land, but rather it remains in the land of the same science. It doesn't look for it is made in philosophy (the principles and the being's last causes), but the nexus among the phenomena, just as it appears at level of the science. A level where what is about discovering and of making appear it is "*a coherent order among antecedents and consequent.*" The difference of our methodology with that of Teilhard is (besides

his enormous authority and intellectual flight recognized worldwide) in that his scientific reflection makes it him from the paleontological and anthropological science; while we attempt it from the political science .

The study that we attempt refers to a historical joint that has ended in the last years in a first crisis, with characteristic and very typical elements, difficultly verifiable in other countries of the area. Which has generated, in turn, a second and more complex crisis, with characteristics that their political agents have classified as "revolution."

Let us specify of entrance what we understand for "joint." It is the intersection in a historical moment of social processes that they have the capacity to alter structural elements of the society in that they are given. And we understand for "crisis" an increased joint, a process of structural change.

## **A review**

Venezuela has come facing a series of transitions, so its recent joint conjugates simultaneous, painful and difficult several processes of conjugating successfully:

1. It has passed of being a poor country, of agricultural limited wealth, to be a country of oil gigantic wealth.

2. In only 50 years, it has moved, with an unusual speed, among an agrarian and very traditional country (80%) to other urban and modern in big sectors (80%), with advanced science and top technology.

3. It should have achieved the convergence between a democratic process and a transformation in the pattern of economic development. (a common process to more than 30 countries in the world, according to Huntington)

4. In economy it has been entangled in a financier of State and in politics in a model that was sustained by the parties and is now transforming into hegemonic central power..

We won't insist in a retrospective view of what could call you "*antecedents of the crisis*" that has already produced authorized studies in social sciences, and a learned material, with luxury of historical and statistical details. Simply we pick up, in tight synthesis, this period, allowing us underline some landmarks that will serve us as conductive threads for a guessed right ulterior reflection on the current phenomenon of the Bolivarian Republic. In no way we want to suggest that Venezuela is a country without memory. The important thing is to face the present joint: to examine where we are and to think to where we can really arrive from the current situation.

Venezuela, after Juan Vicente Gómez's long-lived dictatorship, begins to reconstruct his republican institutions in 1936, with the governments of transition of general López Contreras and Medina. They were organized new political parties: DEMOCRATIC ACTION 1941, PCV 1945, URD 1945, COPEI 1946, and later it arises as lucid division of Communist Party current MAS, 1971. After the overthrow of Pérez Jiménez's military dictatorship (23 January 1958), begins his march a young democracy, sure of itself, very laid the foundation by a growing entrance of petrodollars, and that with fair reasons you could exhibit as a model in Latin America where there is plenty of authoritarian governments or democratic but impoverished governments.

In the last 5 governments (1974-1999), it is calculated that Venezuela has had an entrance of US \$ 250.000 million dollars, the triple of US overcomes \$ 80.000 (to the current value) that it required the reconstruction of Europe with the application of the Plan Marshall. As consequence, two generations of Venezuelans, at least, got used to the easy money, achieved without a lot of effort neither of work. And the population adapted easily to an opulent State and paternal, almost omnipotent that has been the one in charge of providing with all the necessities and problems. "Of those powders, these muds", it could be said when reviewing today the economic indicators and how so much wealth it was managed. If the petroleum was sowed -like Pérez Alfonzo and Uslar Pietri had already recommended with clairvoyance in the decade of the years 30, it was not in the due form that assured to the country a self-sustained development, and that it had allowed him to begin the new millennium like Switzerland of Latin America.

The historian Salcedo Bastardo, when describing the fifth and last stage of this political process that begins in 1936, defines it for the following elements: it influences of the petroleum, emergence of the concepts of the national dignity and statement of the freedom; régime of representative respectful democracy of the public freedoms (to exception of the period 1948-1958); Caracas executive headquarters of the power; administrative régime of republican integral type; Bodies representative Deliberative elects directly in a partisan climate; institutional organized armed forces and professional; autonomous and organized system of administration of justice; manifestations of violence in subversion attempts and underworld.

The fundamental game rules of this sociopolitical classification that had been proposed by the middle of the years 40, were recaptured starting from the 58 and they channeled the democratic of Venezuela up to 1998.

"The resulting order privileged the consent, the reconciliation interelites, the prevention of the conflict and the pragmatic approach to the political decisions. It was attributed to the State a central paper in the structuring of the main coordinates of the nation. To the private sector it was assigned a secondary role in the activation of the economic life. The full validity of the political electoral game was guaranteed and a crucial role was attributed to the political parties like aggregation channels and articulation of interests, and they were privileged agents of mediation between the State and the society. The economy had as dynamic factor the oil rent, it was imposed the state interventionism progressively, through mechanisms like the regulation, protection and the widespread subsidies (Miriam Kornblith, *Venezuela in the 90s*)."

Well J.C. Rey (1989, *The future of the Democracy in Venezuela*) defined, in his moment, this particular way like *populist system of reconciliation of elites*, based on the recognition of the existence of a plurality of social, economic and political interests. Three fundamental elements conformed it: 1) the relative abundance of

economic resources, with those that the State could satisfy demands of groups and heterogeneous sectors; 2) a relatively low and not very sophisticated level of such demands that allowed to satisfy them with such resources; and 3) the capacity of the political organizations and of its leadership to add, to channel and to represent those demands, assuring the trust of those represented.

The two main marks of action of this model were the Pact of Punto Fijo in 1958 (of there the puntofixist denomination to this period) and the Constitution of 1961.

\* **The Pact of Punto Fijo** that "the true treaty of regularization of the political national life" as was denominated, it was directed "to maintain the democratic order and to frustrate all pushing intent". It determined the main actors of our political system up to 1999, and it pointed out the rules that should frame their relationships. In direct or indirect form, it involved as main parties to AD and COPEI, as main union to CTV, as managerial main organization to FEDECAMARAS, and the everything was guarded by the Armed forces and blessed by the Catholic Church.

Observes D.B. Urbaneja (*The Venezuelan Case*) that, this way,

"it was defined an occupation or capture relationship between the State and the parties, and between the parties and the rest of the society and its organizations, this last envelope the pattern of the relationships between AD and CTV. This way, the parties 'do they capture' or do they control to the State and do they mobilize, do they organize and they regulate the operation of the 'civil society', that is to say the rest of the society and its organizations. You could say, without simplifying arbitrarily, that the history of the political Venezuelan system [in these 40 years] it is the history of the variations that they are given inside these relationships and in the tensions that this variations take place."

In the same sense, Kornblith accepts that

"the parties transformed into the main linking channels between the State and the Society. They acquired a mood of center and a really unique importance in comparison with other political systems".

That was hence propitiated a 'partidocracy'. By means of the Pact, the participants committed to avoid the partisan conflicts, to respect the electoral result anyone that it was, to form a government of national unit in which are represented all the political forces with independence of the electoral results, and to subscribe a Declaration of Principles and Government's (signed December 6 1958), a Minimum Program that owed all to start and to support anyone that was the winning party of the elections.

\* The **Constitution of 1961**, up to December 15 1999 configured the formal structure of the Venezuelan State. It established a rule of relationships among the public powers that well can be qualified of presidential and centralist. And it fixed a group of limits and resources inside which the parties, the groups of pressure and all should move those entities that sought to occupy the positions of the State and to influence in their decisions, under the umbrella that was open of a representative and pluralistic democracy.

### **A previous scenario**

The Venezuelan scenario became very complex, with multiple factors that made scarce the atmosphere. An entire crisis joint was configured with many ingredients. In a national Symposium in Sartenejas (1998), I listened of authorized voices the fleshed accusation of present several indicators that they pointed out the serious and critical situation in which the country was as result of products and waste of previous years:

"The results are very well-known: eighty percent of poverty, unemployment, deterioration of the social security, of the health, of the

education, of the personal security, of the system of justice, our penitentiary system is a national shame. It is the failure of the project of the Constitution of 1961 of building a Social State of Right."

(M.G. Vanderdijs)

The healthy purpose was demonstrating that "as well as the Constitution of 1961 established the political will of the elites that they wanted to structure a model different to that of the dictatorship, the Constitution of the 99 will sit down the bases to structure a more modern country, where the participation should be enlarged to incorporate to the displaced sectors and to reestablish the genuineness and in consequence, the lost governance."

When trying now to point out some main indicators of the crisis of the democratic pattern that it governed in Venezuela from 1958 up to 1998, in no way we want to ignore his obtained many and positive results. The community expressed -through surveys during the electoral process of 1998 and 1999- that quick and drastic changes were wanted to improve the democratic system of interests and to make it more efficient and more modern, but it never expressed that they wanted it to abandon. More and better democracy was wanted. More participatory democracy was wanted, but not hence, to abandon the representative democracy that was in the foundations of the whole republican history of Venezuela since 1811 and 1830.

Well Kornblith summarizes the main achievements of this democratic and pluralistic model in three key points: 1) the political stability, 2) the consent interelites and 3) the population's trust.

The system was able to guarantee to the powerful sectors (as the Armed forces, Church, managerial groups, labor organized groups, union associations) that their interests would not be threatened by the application of the rule of most in the taking of government decisions. The taking of decisions that it affected the interests of those sectors was based on the application of the rule of the unanimity and in the creation of a participation system and representation semi corporate, in which these

special interests could be assisted without having to traffic for the bureaucratic regular controls. On the other hand, it made sure the population's trust in the mechanisms of the representative democracy by means of the respect to the selection of the government authorities, guaranteeing the regularity and the respect to the elections.

But the deficiencies of the pattern were significant and they explain the strong will of change that was imposed. They were them: the excessive centralism, the socioeconomic inequality, the excess influence of parties on institutions and decisions, the administrative corruption. The <miserias> of the populism, of the rentism, of the statism, of the partidism, of the clientelism, were strongly criticized.

The basic variables of the pattern were:

- the oil rent (in the economic thing),
- the big societal expectations (in the social thing),
- the democratic representation for the parties and the organizations (in the political thing),
- the national values of equality and freedom (in the ethical thing).

You could preview that when they were ended up giving negative simultaneous modifications in the four factors, the sociopolitical system would arrive to a situation limit, and it would enter in crisis. And what happened in the last decade of the century was -with enough indicators- a verifiable reality.