

The *political* thing

In the pattern that Venezuela had adopted from the pact of 'Punto Fijo', a narrow correspondence had settled down between political democracy and socioeconomic development. The fiscal abundant resources that it was thought would stay such which or they would go in increase, they offered an objective base to assure that the democratic régime would guarantee greater levels of well-being to the population (efficiency), and for the same thing, they would assure their support and trust in the democratic (genuineness). The correct operation of the populist "system of reconciliation of elites" was guaranteed by the existence of a relatively small number of reliable organizations (parties, unions), with capacity to add, to channel and to represent the interests of the population's diverse sectors, as well as the presence of a political skilled, representative and able leadership of generating agreements among them. The product of that coordinated activity of organizations was that of an "organized and elitist democracy" (J.C. Rey)

It happens that with the accented deterioration of the pattern of financier economy and the smallest acting of the social pattern to the one that a State of well-being could no longer assist sufficiently, they leave giving all the elements of a political severe crisis. Their main indicators (not all) are: the breaks of the 'partidocracy', the breaks of the leadership, and the breaks of the governance.

1. 'Partidocracy'.

It was, in the practice, the control of the State and of their wealth for the political parties and the control of these for their heads. From 1958, as much AD as COPEI were able to exclude to third forces of the political effective game, and they fomented a partisan strict discipline as base for the maintenance of the system. A foreign and impartial observer designates this situation like "an extreme case of parties suffocating the democracy, a syndrome in the one which the

channels of civic representation are blocked so much inside as outside of the parties, in which the non elect leaders (domes) exercise an undue influence on the legislators, and the Congress spreads to be debated between the extreme lists of approval stamp or crossbar stone" (M. Coppedge 1993)

The Venezuelan parties have been able to penetrate and to obtain the control of almost all the private other organizations, until an unusual grade in the democratic societies. All the groupings, amen of the commercial associations, the Church and the Armed forces, they are battle fields for the partisan control.

Ramos Jiménez suggests some periods in the evolution of this partidocracy. A first stage (1958-1973), corresponds to the process of composition of two main parties sustained in the high level of political and administrative centralization impelled from the State. A second stage (1973-1988), in which the bipartisanship is guided toward the setting-up of a close régime of parties, with capacity to neutralize eventual effects internal or external harmful to the system. It is prolonged until Carlos Andrés Pérez s' second government, when this does not pay attention to his party (AD) and he opts for the conformation of a government team of technocratic court and the adoption of economic political new liberals. The third stage (1988-1998) is that of disintegration of the partidocracy and of the whole previous system of parties.

Some numbers illustrate what was the consolidation and the crumbling of the parties in this scenario of the call "model call rentist populist of reconciliation of elites."

In 1978, the two main parties counted with almost 70% of voters. In 1985, AD announced that it had a total of 2.253.887 militants (26% of the Venezuelan electorate, since there were 8.650.000 inscribed voters). COPEI, Democratic Christian party, had 800.000 militants. In 1988 elections, AD and COPEI they had 92% of voters (although the figure owed itself partly to the mechanics of economy of the vote in this moment).

In 1993, it begins to be perceived the descent of the one until then bipartisanship hegemony. In the presidential elections, when with Convergence it is winning Caldera (30.5%), AD with Fermín counts 24% and COPEI with Alvarez Paz 22.8%.

In 1998 elections for collegiate bodies (8 November) is evidenced a decline of AD (24% of votes) and COPEI (12% of votes), while it enters in scene with a lot of haulage MVR (Movement Fifth Republic) with 20% of voters. And in the presidential elections (6 December), the phenomenon Chávez (Patriotic Pole) is imposed loosely (56% its favor) on candidate of the Democratic Pole, Salas Römer (39.7% of votes) who at the last moment united all the factors anti-Chávez.

And in 1999, the crisis of the parties of the system plays bottom. In the popular election to choose the members that would represent the sovereign in the National Constituent Assembly, the "chavism" with their several slopes razes completely. Through the national and regional district, it puts 94% of the 128 eligible constituents, hardly leaving a representation survivor of the old parties in the heads of Fermín (AD), Franceschi (Democratic Pole), Olavarría, and Brewer.Carías. After 40 years, the "old" thing leaves their place to something "new."

2. Shortage of leadership

It was accentuated in the last years. The combination of two factors, like they are the abundance of resources -that enjoyed the country in half a century-, and the aversion to the conflict, according to two eminent analysts (M. Naim and R. Piñango, *The Case opinion Venezuela*), it has taken place -among other effects- the shortage of relief leaders.

The lack of the leaders of the main parties came being denounced by lucid analysts of the same parties (A. Stempel Paris, *Venezuela, a sick democracy*, 1981). They were not able to transform into the vanguard of the reformatations that they were required. With few exceptions, the parties and Venezuelan unions fell in kind of a

gerontocracy that didn't allow the advance of new leaders to the front of the institutions. And the old drivers retained, beyond the reasonable thing, the controls. The electoral recent catastrophe of the parties of the system is illustrative.

3. Non governance

It left to it floats in Venezuela, with characteristic worrying. It is one of the manifestations of the crisis.

They left making more and more visible the syndromes of representation of the political institutions (branches of the State and parties), of participation (elections and taking of decisions), of genuineness (popular support to the governments and directive domes of parties and organizations) and of effectiveness of the system (public services and implementation of the centralized politicians or 'stadal' and municipal). In spite of the well guided efforts of administrative decentralization (mainly in health and education) and of the direct election of the governors and mayors, the Venezuelan State came being excessively centralized, and what is worse revolving around the parties. As we already see, the parties in Venezuela monopolized all the to happen of the country; they were not always in the way of the popular representation; they distorted the collective will; they were more attentive to their electoral interests than to those of the people; they were too jealous of their privileges, too much maneuvers and accomplices in extracting the maximum quota of power and of wealth coming from the treasury, fed by the enormous entrance oil tanker.

The non governance of the system or inability of conduction of the State ship, are expressed in growing lack of genuineness (that it took to Carlos' fall Andrés Pérez), in lack of effectiveness (periods of Herrera Campins, of Lusinchi, second government of Pérez and last of Caldera), in lack of popular support to their rulers, parties and union organizations.

Partial conclusion

The people, in consequence, began to look toward a "necessary gendarme" to leave the economic, social and political wrongs. And it supported through elections in gradual and growing form, the Fifth Republic Movement, headed by Hugo Chávez Frías. It granted to the Patriotic Pole a moderate participation in the collegiate bodies, Mayor's offices and governments (November 8 1998); it took to the Presidency of the Republic, with wide advantage, to commanding Chávez (December 6 1998); and it granted him the hegemony of the National Constituent Assembly, giving him a control from 94% when locating 123 of their directing members and collaborators through the electoral mechanism for regional and national districts (July 25 1999).