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Molding Human Clay from the 1929 Crack to the Yalta Conference Accords

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> Manly peoples must follow their aspirations rather than remain immobile and muzzled by a decaying structure. It is necessary to understand the new era and remove everything that is stale in old ideas and sterile ideals (Vargas 1940: 331-332).

Speech of continental repercussions and impact to achieve its purpose: to get the attention and support of the American regime.

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Molding Human Clay from the 1929 Crack to the Yalta Conference Accords

Dr. Luis Rodríguez Castillo[1]

I. Introite

On June 11, 1940, Getulio Vargas who was president of Brazil between 1930 and 1945, aboard the battleship "Minas Gerais" put forward the following ideas:

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Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, general of the salvadoran army, anticipated this affirmation of unwavering will a decade and made it the seal of his government; but he arrived three years late to the proclamation of delivery to the homeland of the Mexican and also General Álvaro Obregón, I quote "When you feel the support of a virile people, an honest people, a conscious people, you do not hesitate"(1973); assassinated as president-elect, which gave way to the period known as the "maximato"[2]. And almost simultaneously with that of Jorge Ubico, who at the inauguration as president of Guatemala, affirmed «the first words that I pronounce with my great endowment, are to instill hope in the final success, that the heroic faith always promises to the bravest fighters» (Ubico, 1931: 6).

Each and every one recognized, in their time and place, as "savior of the our country", "safeguard of peace and stability", "guardian of order", "guarantor of the basic institutions of society." This breviary is only to "open your mouth" and point out that Monterrosa's work is not a history of the martinato or Martinez, it is a political history of authoritarianism in El Salvador; a period that keeps myths, legends, bronze stories, anecdotes about an emblematic figure to the construction of the nation.

II. Structure and Content of the Book

The shadows of the martinato. Authoritarianism and Oppositional Struggle in El Salvador, 1931-1945 is a book composed of 335 pp and divided into eleven chapters. Three parts logically ordered following the political process: the configuration of the regime, the failed transition and the martinato without Martínez, preceded by a prologue and introduction and, ends with a chapter of final reflections.

The introduction has the virtue of presenting in a diaphanous way the passage from personal concerns to dissatisfaction with established knowledge and, from there to the establishment of a relevant scientific research problem. For its part, *chapter one* is a combination of a brief "state of the art" of the studies on martinato and the theoretical instruments for the study of authoritarianism. In the historiographic it denotes the passage from a testimonial and anecdotal history, to that of an exhaustive review of the archive; among which we can locate Monterrosa's own work. On the theoretical issue, he accepts the "ideal type" proposed by Morlino about a "civil-military regime" rather than the pure authoritarianism that would be "totalitarianism."

He proposes a teleological vision of his work "to know what was sacrificed to forge a political regime of free competition for power [;] provides elements to enhance the perfectible aspects of the system"(pp 23), affirms as a good historian. Although it is worth clarifying that this is just a bullfighting passes "chicuelina" to face the true onslaught and deliver the "thrust" that the author wishes to finish; without "punctures" because those were given by many and makes it evident in his presentation; which are to explain authoritarian continuity.

In chapter two, he addresses the prolegomena of the martinato in the Meléndez-Quiñonez dynasty (1913-1927) and the presidency of Arturo Araujo. It affirms that the structural and institutional problems that were not attended during these period and were aggravated by the crisis of '29, are the context that explains the barracks assault of December 1931 and the rise of Martínez until the consolidation of the post-massacre regime of '32. Monterrosa debates two aspects and documents the contrary to the well-known truth and to the memory of certain events that are built

[1] I am deeply grateful with Orquídea Lilí Moreno Muñoz for her support in reviewing and translating the English version of this work.

[2] Term that includes the following presidential periods in Mexico: Emilio Portes Gil (substitute 1928-1930), Pascual Ortiz Rubio (elected, 1930-1932) and Abelardo L. Rodríguez (substitute, 1932-1934) under the guidance of the «Chief Maximum of the Revolution", Plutarco Elías Calles, until his expulsion on April 10, 1936 during the presidency of General Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (elected, 1934-1940).

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from the present: 1. An active diplomacy that sought and managed to rethink the Peace and Friendship Agreement of 1923, the recognition of the regime among the nations of the isthmus and the United States. 2. The support not only of the coffee bourgeoisie, but also social to the extermination of the communist danger.

In the third chapter he delves into the opposition. Although there had already been signs that political elites, such as the deposed Araujo, were finding a welcome in Guatemala or Costa Rica, where they even had allies who put the Salvadoran regime in difficulties, Monterrosa applies the principle of "opposition demobilization" to explain internal political procedures. It was not a binary option between persuasion and repression, but rather "territorial control and the dominant [anti-communist] ideology, as well as the incorporation of [municipal] clientelist networks and coordination at the national level to weave alliances" (pp 86), as well as union organizations and unions loyal to the regime. This chapter shows an opposition from Mexico, a country that officially followed its policy of non-intervention (Estrada's Doctrine) although it gaves political asylum to the opposition of authoritarian regimes in the region.

In the fourth chapter, it shows how, unlike the decade of the 20s, in the convulsed context of the rise of nazism and fascism, as well as the Second World War; the reelection of the strong men who consolidated themselves in power during the struggle against communism were the best option to maintain stability in Central America. Thus, Martínez, after a Constituent Assembly that gave him power in 1935 could be reelected. However the difference for 1944 was that in this period social protests multiplied. Here the author takes a turn of attention, in the previous chapters he maintained a more "materialistic" vision focused on actions to structure the regime, now the ideology took the central role and states: "The democratic ideology gave it an old and contradictory to the salvadoran regime "(pp113). The result was that the opposition saw "democracy as a critical and concrete aspiration" (pp 117). With the aggravation that "the martinato was stripped of its foundational enemy" (pp 125). That is to say, the ideology becomes a catapult of actions such as the uprising that generated greater repression without the possibility of political legitimation until the demission of the general in May 1944. And speaking of ideas, Enrique Leitzelar, an opponent from Mexico asserted "the president did not he succumbed to the acclaim communism, but because of "the virile sentiment of a crowd that came together to defend their rights" (pp127).

From that resignation, the "shadows of martinato", an expression that the author takes from Roberto Turcios, spreads over salvadoran political life. What happens between the fall of an enlightened despot and the establishment of democracy? This is the historiographic goal that is intended to be corrected from the fifth chapter. However, it should be noted that in this section he returns to the conceptual discussion and presents the characteristics of four known models: liberal, republican, communitarian and radical autonomic. After all, democracy was an ideal for salvadoran society and the elites who were able to participate in the debate requested four of seven characteristics of the polyarchy proposed by Dahl. Of greater relevance is that the author states that, if Martínez left, there is a negative response to the questioning about a crisis that put the regime at risk, when it is transferred to the transition category.

In the sixth chapter, it encompasses the triumphalist overflow to political chaos. On the one hand, with the departure of Martínez and his replacement negotiated, the rest of the political actors simply aligned themselves with the new situation. On the other hand, what he defines as a "return stage" (pp 149) of those who were political exiles from the martinato, was the seed of various political projects "x"; while the transitional government was substituting opponents in government portfolios, Martínez's practice of appointing municipalities was revalidated, generating local conflicts. Meanwhile, in the case of political governments, the quarry continued in the hands of the army. However, the greatest conflict was expressed in the constitutional sphere. While some advocated for a new constitution immediately, others did so for a plebiscite and others for swearing in the 1886 one.

The seventh chapter is dedicated to the situation in Central America between May and October 1944, which "oscillated between the continuity of authoritarianism and the democratic transition" (pp 181); while "El Salvador became the cradle of regional freedom" that was not absent of tensions and mobilization of troops with its immediate neighbors; while foreign policy was maintained - like that of the United States - without obstructing the opposition working from El Salvador and maintaining cordial diplomatic relations. In the meantime, the project of the great Central American homeland was reborn, which was overshadowed by political instability.

The eighth chapter talk us a gap in the historiography of the time: what happened to the opposition during the campaigns and the election. The details that the author shows a wide factional struggle; although he does not use this term and prefers division and the thaw theory that he commented two chapters ago in the different opposition political groups. Meanwhile, the militia that supported the continuity and maintained control of the police and some city halls systematically sabotaged the proselytizing activities. Strategy that paid off and the most popular candidate, Romero, left El Salvador in the middle of the electoral process.

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From the ninth chapter he deepens on the return to the authoritarian path in order to fill avoid in historiography that goes from the "resignation" of General Menéndez to the rise of General Osmín Aguirre. Previously, he makes a diagnosis of the interruption of the process of political change and through Przeworski and Morlino categories, specifically the authoritarian transition. It also reviews the events in the region, particularly the parallels with Guatemala, an obligatory matter, since on the day that Ubico's resignation was celebrated in El Salvador, the "H day and zero hour" were specified for the deputies to They will meet in the casino of the Zapote barracks, Menéndez will sign his demission and the presidential sash will be imposed on Aguirre, with which the inheritance of the martinato returned in political practices.

Chapter ten delves into these authoritarian practices and the responses of opponents. Observe the complicity of the legislative and judicial powers, which are no longer counterweights, for the executive to undertake the repression of opponents. Even with the promise of elections and relief, "It was in the face of this climate of impunity and debauchery that the romeristas became belligerent" (pp 243), while the clergy and representatives of the oligarchy allied themselves with the castanedista party, the official candidate. Being Aguirre of military extraction and after passing through the national direction of the police, the resignation of magistrates and the replacement by their relatives; the military institution had control of the situation. However, it denies the superficial visions that make the army a monolith and documents that there were also soldiers who supported the opposition and orchestrated or were part of new coup attempts.

In the eleventh chapter, he reveals that the civil guards established in Martínez's period were useful for Aguirre with the innovation that they were no longer directly linked to the oligarchy but to the army. It also takes the perspective of the regional situation. Although Carías Andino and Somoza managed to stay in power, it seems that in all the republics of the isthmian waist of the continent, the opposition found the use of violence as the only way out of military authoritarianism. Even so, in El Salvador the election was held in January 1945 with "remnants of the martinato: the one-party system and the ratification of the official candidate" (pp 289).

The final reflections begin with the story of Martínez's "tragic epilogue" on his Honduran hacienda in May 1966. The general died at a time when "militant anti-communism was reactivated and the military continued to lead civilian gangs of coercion and espionage» (pp 299), to resume his steps through the exposed narrative of the political process and present the answer to the question that guided his investigation, which is... No, I better not expose it and invite you a careful reading of this work.

III. A Critical Look

"Every archive ceases to be 'dead' when a scrutinizing gaze investigates them and searches for some recognizable trace in the present" (Schmucler 2019: 365). Of course the author marks the path from his memory to clarify to the readers why he is looking for the trace of authoritarianism; but to whom this subscribes does not cease to surprise in this present to the SARS COVID 19, to find a president who without scrutinizing the files, is heading down the known path and only of threat for the moment, he says he will act outside the democratically instituted powers, while playing the judge with those of the 'shadow state' (Gledhill 2002). Affirmation that it is only my support to say that Monterrosa makes a historiographic cut, although pertinent, the procedural evidences central to his reflection (continuity / discontinuity) make him come into check.

The book, divided into three parts, also has three theoretical approaches and each one in itself is sufficient. The first part has a critical apparatus based on the classifying ideas of political regimes. The next two, on the functional precepts of one of them: democracy. The critical aspect is that the author does not make an adjustment or explanation about how these three categorical corpus find complementarity in their explanation. In addition to the above, in the first part, it uses a series of categories that move away from the conceptual tooling outlined as that of «social capital» and makes statements about the scaffolding that sustains the pillars of the martinato, the construction of a clientelist network from the local, on which we must make an leap of faith since it does not show documentation in this regard and -at some other moments- it simply refers to the work of Erick Ching. For the second part in which the models of democracy are discussed as an axis of reflection, it is the liberalization/ democratization differentiation and the thaw theory -two residual categories of the exposed models-, which seem to take a preponderant explanatory role.

Another aspect to consider is that, although he criticizes Przeworski in relation to the fact that the results of the political process cannot be foreseen, he does not do so when he quotes Cansino and Covarrubias, which he calls "logical moments" (crisis, collapse, transition, establishment, consolidation and deepening of democratic quality). In all cases we are facing an evolutionary vision of political change that, deep down, it accepts uncritically; since it is the theoretical framework of multilinear evolutionism that allows the affirmation that the Salvadoran process is an "authoritarian transition" (pp 218 et seq.). At times, the reader will feel that he is being directed to a theoretical "Procrustean adjustments".

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Although we have a regional perspective, the multiplication of conflicts in Central America in the early 1940s, the author does not find any other explanation than the epidemiological one reason. El Salvador was the first 'sick person' to infect the enthusiasm for adopting the principles of the Atlantic Charter (pp 112). Forty years after the "Roosevelt corollary" (1904) to the Monroe Doctrine (1823) from *ex parte principis* (the ruler's perspective), it is worth asking whether they did not adopt the Vargas strategy cited at the beginning of this review. And if the author is not repeating a common place, since *ex parte populi* (of the governed) the values demanded "Free elections, alternation in power, effectiveness of suffrage and independence of state powers" (pp 132) are adjusted more to what is stated in the so-called "discourse of the four freedoms".

Power affirms rituals and cultivates mystery. And so, in the mystery, the author leaves the definitions of some important analytical categories. Just for example, 219 times he uses "power", without defining it or at the beginning he talks about something he calls authoritarian regime, and on pp 34 cites Linz's definition and later turns to other theorists, but the reader never finds Monterrosa's conceptual synthesis. Although it is ritual to state the teleological vision of History, this does not exempt the author who leaves a mystery in his book which are the "elements to enhance the perfectible aspects of the system".

IV. Exhort to Reading

We are happy to be infront of a book of political history that could well be read like a novel, and when history has the force of literary creation it invades spaces that pure documents cannot penetrate. In that case, the historian, the one who seeks and knows, rises to the preeminent place of the maker, the poet who fights tirelessly for creation. This does not mean that it repeats the novelistic clichés about the existence of Central American "strong men" (Plutarco Elías Calles in Mexico, Jorge Ubico in Guatemala, Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in El Salvador, Tiburcio Carías in Honduras, Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua) as "puppets" of the United States, or subjects of the oligarchy or possessors of an all-encompassing power. At the same time - like Turcios in the prologue - I emphasize that it is a regional history.

Among the virtues of the work, as I have already pointed out, he performs the "paseíllo" with the overwhelming pride of someone who knows himself "in his reals" and highlights the relevance of the research he presents to us. In the first third, "El martinato: configuration and continuity 1931-1944" (chapters 1-4) masterfully captains the assembly between the categories of Political Science with its documentary evidence to show how Martínez manages to orchestrate a dominant coalition and at the "moment of rods" he managed to "ahomar" well, with the observation that the price of blood was a factor that legitimized this phase of the authoritarian regime, even among his adversaries. In the second third, "The aborted democratic transition of 1944" (chapters 5-8) strikes the multicolored "flags" without error, which, wide open, "hammer" exactly on the morrillo to show the factors that revive, in one and the other, in institutions and veto players, authoritarian anxieties. He has the burel ready to summon him to the "crutch luck." In the third "El martinato "El martinato sin Martínez" (chapters 9-11) with natural crutch passes, slow, elegant and with dragging flights, showing the "contempt pass" and without forgetting "manoletinas", "bernardinas" and "ruins", is when Silverio Pérez stands in front of the bull to describe the "trenches" of the effects of the coup d'état and the overturning against the opponents with international support, which ratifies the founding moment that gives Salvadoran politics the martinato.

In this "task" the reader will find that in each chapter the author reviews the works of other historians who have addressed the particular problem on which he wishes to draw attention and verify the extensive knowledge he has about Salvadoran historiography. Thus, a quality "run" can be anticipated by identifying that the "confinement" is constituted by the weak points, omissions or voids that have been left in order to undertake his poetic, creative work. His stubborn faith throughout the book seems to me to be not only praiseworthy but also the book seems to me to be not only praiseworthy but also exemplary in "citing the ring" what happened with the opposition to the regime, with the actors who were situated in the "front line" of the democratizing wave.

Indeed, I paraphrase Héctor «Toto» Schmucler to say that democratization «is nourished by the 'general will' and invented the Terror in the name of its founding transcendence». Democratization consecrates its reason without perceiving the religious imprint of its founding act, the name of democratization occupies the place of the sacred. Thus the "general will" and establishing the conditions of polyarchy is a beyond that emanates from everyone and "In his name everything is possible" (Schmucler 2019: 318).

Evocation and will that as transcendent forms of truth that makes a dent in the spirit of the reader, that of the voice, a Mexican who recognizes in reading, in Salvadoran and Central American political history, recognizes the History of bronze figures of his country and of Latin America. An authoritarianism that legitimates itself necessary as part of the forge that left in the crucible the purest that forged our nations, of a search for explanations of why between the crisis of '29 and the agreements of the Yalta conference, the clay Human was molded with "the virile spirit," with the stamp of authoritarianism.

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In our region, the search for herself is a historical constant:

> I entrust and command you that with great diligence you try to know if there is the narrow saying and send people who look for it and bring you a long and true relationship of what is in it because as you are, this is a very important thing at our service.

Words with which King Carlos V ordered Hernán Cortés in 1523 «to search for the "doubtful strait", the execution of such order provoked legendary disputes with other searches that had already been decreed [by the crown and carried out] from the south by Pedrarias Dávila or carried out by Gil González Dávila" (Berger 2002:18). Disputes that do not end today. This book and its "right hand" are sure to "go out on the shoulders" of the plaza, but not with "tail and ears"; Surely the "judge of the square"-you reader who is always the best judge-, can wait to increase the suspense "white handkerchiefs" are raised to award the pair of appendices.

I know well his reputation as a historian and, despite my critical gaze, I can say that Luis Gerardo Monterrosa Cubías has a good wood and well-polished about the interpretation of political theories. So, without a real mandate but if looking for answers to contemporary tensions he scrutinizes archives, novels, diaries, pamphlets, loose leaflets and other historical studies to reveal *the human clay* with which has been molded the history of the «doubtful strait», of that waist of the continent of which we are part.

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