

# Socialism and Nation

By *Fernando A. Iglesias*

**Few ideas generated more adhesion and sympathy during the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century than these of socialism and nation. And nothing else within History triggered off bigger disasters than the attempt to unify both of them to one singular political project.**

**It is easy to point out several significant congruencies between socialism in a singular country Russian-Chinese-Cuban-Vietnamese, nationalism Italian-German-Japanese, and Latin American Social Nationalism. Similarities can be found in particular in its common contempt for democracy, republic and institutions, parliaments, liberalism, individualism, economy, capitalism, modernity, reformism, gradualism, political parties, foreigners, non industrial economies, the classical culture, the occidental illuminist and illustrated tradition, the civilization, the politics based on finding of agreements, cosmopolitanism, universalism, and all kinds of economy, politics or culture which they consider to be degenerated or threatening to their national identity.**

**Even more profound and rooted was the contempt which Stalinists, Nazi Fascists and members of the National Socialism have shown towards the weak and foolish who during the time of the alliance between Socialism and Nation dared to continue believing that only from the principles which the latter hated a better world could emerge. The enumeration of the catastrophic results of the alliances between Socialism and Nationalism, which are similar in their immoderate Statism, returns even less rational the pretension of the seventies to equal the Statism towards the progressivism and the left. In this case, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Perón, Fidel Castro, Chávez and Kirchner should be considered as players of the same team. Expressed in theoretical terms; in the broad spectrum which reaches from the Statism demanded by all kinds of “Socialism and Nationalism” and the minimalist neo-liberal state, what has been missing in Argentina are the two important progressive forces of Modernity: Progressive Liberalism and Social Democracy.**

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**Fernando A. Iglesias** is Federal Representative, affiliated to *Coalición Cívica*. He is a writer and journalist, focusing on the political aspects of Globalization. Moreover, he is a founder member and Executive Secretary of Global Democracy – a Movement for the Union of South America and the Global Parliament. He forms part of the Executive Council of the World Federalist Movement, won the TEA Award in 2002 with “For all humans in the world”, and with “Why the UN should change” the PERFIL Award in 2006. He has published in various Argentine and foreign media and has led conferences in the Montreal International Forum (FIM) in 2002,



in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (2002-2003 and 2004), in the European Parliament (World Federalist Movement 2005) and in Seminars at the University of Torino (Department of Political Science, 2005). He is the author of several books, as for example: “What is the meaning of being leftist today?”, “Globalizing Democracy” and “Kirchner and I”.

As a conjunction between Socialism and Nation, I want to introduce a very well known sentence of Minogie about Nationalism: saying, it is a fairy-tale, with the beginning of the Sleeping Beauty, and with the ending of Mr. Frankenstein's Beast. But, the story of catastrophes, triggered off each time when the alchemical conjunction of Nation and Socialism has been attempted as a useful axis of a political interference in History, begins when the universal and international ideas from social democratic reformers like Bernstein, Bauer and Kautsky were denied as a central corpus of the left after the European social democrats have been limping behind nationalism (what made them vote in favor of the famous war credits) and the triumph of the Russian Revolution.

This way Marxism, which holds that the Socialistic Revolution only could be global and should have its origin in the more developed countries based on a full improvement of the capitalist powers, (that means: it was basically not only an internationalist and anti-nationalistic doctrine, but also a post-capitalist one) transformed in Leninism-Stalinism, a theory and a nationalist, as well as an anticapitalist political praxis, assuming that the Socialist Revolution could be initiated in the emerging countries (according to Leninism, the most unstable link within the capitalist chain), and that the nationalism of the emerging countries was profoundly different to the nationalism of the industrial countries (according to the Leninist theories about imperialism as a superior stage of capitalism and that of self-determination of peoples).

The theory of socialism as a destruction of capitalism and nationalism, and the emerging countries as a promoting element of the liberation of its nations had immediately its first great expression within Stalinism. The conjunction between socialism and nation lead to the "socialism of one singular country", the one of the "triumphant revolution", with the practical consequence of subjecting a revolution, initially postulated as liberating and universal, to the dictate of the Russian Nationalism and the Soviet *Nomenklatura*. The results were predictable: war and genocide. And when I say "war", I do not point to the undeniable liberating role which played the USSR during the defeat of national fascism, but to the early alliance between Stalin and Hitler which allowed the latter to start in 1939 the animosities under the protection of the German-Russian contract which was signed by Ribentrop and Molotov in Moscow in assistance of Stalin himself. There is no need to remind the fact that the agreement between the Russian affiliates of socialism in one singular country and the German national socialists would establish a precise division of Europe between both parties, that

occurred almost one month before the invasion of Poland by the Nazi *Blitzkrieg*, and was only broken when Hitler, lacking oil and being dizzy by his own success started attacking the USSR in June 1941. This incidence leads us directly to the second important period of the tragical romance between Socialism and Nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Nationalsocialism.

Names never lie, and the one elected by Hitler and its hierarchs to name his party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, what means German National Socialist Labor Party, or German National Socialist Party for the Laborers) is not the exception of the rule. Similar to Stalinism, the first fascism and consequently the nationalsocialism, built a sort of wrongly assimilated Marxism that ended up changing, corrupting and event contradicting the values of the original Marxism.

Within the issues which we deal in this essay, socialism and nation, the war of classes, conceived by Marx as a transnational and universal conflict between bourgeoisie and proletariat, was transformed by Mussolini during the war for the hegemony between the proletarian and the plutocratic nations. By then, the socialization of the producer was understood and applied in the terms of Mussolini's nationalization and statization. The industrial nations, and in particular Great Britain, to which Marx assigned a progressive role in History (he even went so far to live nearly all his life in London, the notorious capital of the British Empire) were condemned. Therefore, a new right-wing, the fascism, was created, being not yet conservative, but pseudo-revolutionary, not elitist, but populist, not rationalist, but adapted to mythologies and emotional pests, not passive, but mobilizing and representing a movement, not in favor of free-trade, but statistic, not a defender of the most powerful nations, but ready to dispute their global hegemony in a war of classes, interpreted as a national sense. The connection of nationalism and socialism which constituted their essential program triggered off the national socialism- its consequences were the usual: war and genocide.

### **MOVEMENT OF THE SEVENTIES, A SUPERIOR STAGE OF SOCIALISM + NATIONALISM**

In his masterwork "Reactionary Modernism", Jeffrey Herf identified the central values within national-socialist ideology: despise to Anglo-Saxon; Anti-Americanism; Anti-Capitalism; Anti-Liberalism; Anti-Parliamentism, affection to revolutionary processes, capable of reintroducing primacy of politics over economy; internal orientation, an incomparable industrial development, a development of a democratic revolution, the substitution of the institutions by charismatic leaders, the exaltation of national interests

which are supposed to be altruistic above individual interests, which normally are discredited as egoistic; adhesion to the nation as a redemptory unity mystical renovation of national identity; ideological alliance between socialism and nationalism, despise to the bourgeoisie civilization, acceptance and promotion of violence as a legitimate instrument of political action; militarism and militantism; nostalgia of a genuine blood community; language and traditions; projects for a construction of a new human being, enthronement of the national culture as a central national paradigm; claims in favor of the unified spiritualism of the nation against the decadence of civilization; demand in favor of “young peoples” against the decadence of western civilization; the feeling of a soon coming break down of the own nation, and as a consequence of a revolutionary action, the aiming to the salvation of the nation; protest against foreign parasites, denying reality by using forms of “*realismo mágico*”, romantic heroism; denunciation of obsolete and falsity of the universal culture; public mobilization; authoritarianism, denial of a cosmopolitan life style; feelings of national inferiority compensated by insane projects referring to the historical mission of the own nation.

This is all a chain of disasters which leads us directly to the weak version of the alliance between socialism and nation which took place in our own country: the project of National Socialism during the seventies. There are a plenty of historical traces of this ideological-political conglomerate including a very different spectrum of representatives like Abelardo Ramos and Mario Firmenich. Since then, several theoretical and practical contributions have existed that for example can be shown by names like Hernández Arregui and John William Cooke.

Nevertheless, without any doubt the decisive struck which lead to the political-military project of National Socialism has its origin in the Cuban triumph, a bearded and Caribbean version of socialism in one country. Because of its emblematic and Argentine figure, Che Guevara, and its tragical adventure in Bolivian territory, not only the project of a new conjunction between socialism and nationalism, but also the method imposing it: focalism (*foquismo guerrillero*) arrived in our country. The goal of an Argentina which would negate and despise institutional mechanisms, and complies with the idea of Democracy as a mere form, got caught between two possible tragedies: the triumph of the *Guerilla* or the defeat by blood-minded instruments. It is difficult not to see in this sequence the repetition of the historical bringing down which drawled Bolchevism towards Nazism. Without falling into German revisionism which pretended to consider it as a reason of both, cause and

consequence, how can it not be noticed that the deathly character that Nazism achieved to impress on its political action and its ability of lining up the majority of the German *Bourgeoisie* behind a criminal project was only possible within the frame set by the Bolchevique threat? Where, if not from Lenistic-Bolchevism did Nazism take the idea that a messianic, semi-secret group, led by one singular charismatic personality, being close to a nervous breakdown could, through a series of political actions, be directed to assume power in a national state and in which violence played a central role, impose a new direction in world history? Similarly to that, without equalizing the guilty of terrorists and genocides, which are very different, how is it possible not to see the deathly character with which the Argentine Dictatorship achieved to impose its action and its capacity to line up the majority of the nation behind a criminal project which was only possible within the frame of violence set by the assassinations of the *Guerilla* within the frame of a constitutional government?

To express it in terms of Aristotelian rationality, Lenin and the Argentine *Guerilla* were not the only reasons for Hitler, neither for Videla. Nevertheless they were indispensable factors without which neither Hitler nor Videla could have done what they finally did. Not necessarily the *Guerilla Montonera-Erpiana* led up to Videla (in fact, it could have been combated by the instruments of justice, like in Germany and Italy, and also the genocide and the operative extermination of the *Guerilla* could have been prevented; it was totally unnecessary to extend the violent acts up to several millions “John Doss” which were sacrificed in the prisons of the Dictatorship), but the widespread genocide during the Government of Videla would not have been possible without the climate of systematic irresponsibility of the focalism of the *Guerrilla* which was just incapable of protecting its own members.

In all these cases, it is easy to point out several significant congruencies between socialism in a singular country Russian-Chinese-Cuban-Vietnamese, the nationalism Italian-German-Japanese, and the Latin-American Social Nationalism. I want to mention in particular: its common contempt for democracy, republic Governments, institutions, parliaments, liberalism, individualism, economy, capitalism, Modernity, reformism, gradualism, political parties, foreigners, non industrial economies, the classical culture, the occidental illuminist and illustrated tradition, the bourgeois civilization, politics based on the finding of agreements, cosmopolitanism, universalism, and all kinds of economy, politics or culture which they consider to be degenerated or threatening to their national identity. Even more profound and rooted was the contempt which Stalinists,

Nazi-fascists and the members of the national socialism have shown towards the weak and foolish who during the time of the alliance between socialism and nation dared to continue believing that a better world could only emerge from the principles which the latter hated. On the other hand, despite of the enormous differences with Nazi-fascism, the project that wanted to unify socialism and nationalism result over here in a war and a genocide which had the particularity of not having leading patrons, but victims.

## STATISM, A SUPERIOR STAGE OF THE SEVENTIES

Analyzing the contributions of the alliance between socialism and nationalism to History is very important especially in these moments in which the country tries again to enthrone the national state. This occurred for example during the disaster of *Alfonsinismo* and the vertical incline of the reputation which enjoyed the state companies in Argentina that triggered off the fury of privatization during *Menenism*. The disaster, in which the neo-liberal epic of the nineties ended, triggered off the irrational pendulum which characterized the political concepts within Argentina towards its opposite extreme: the demonization of the private initiative and free market capitalism. A new wave of statism, caused ironically by the same party which had imposed the neo-liberal agenda, and which made very lucrative economic and political businesses during the nowadays dispraised *Washington Consensus*, attempts to consecrate the national state as unquestionable champion of social justice and redistribution of prosperity, defending every interference of the government into economics in general as a benefit and refusing every capitalist principle, from productivity and efficiency to allocation of recourses according to market mechanisms- as an enraged term for individualistic rapacity.

The enumeration of the catastrophic results of the alliances between socialism and nationalism, which are similar in their immoderate Statism, returns even less rational the pretension of the seventies to equal Statism towards progressivism and the left. In this case, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Perón, Fidel Castro, Chávez and Kirchner should be considered as players of the same team. Expressed in theoretical terms; in the broad spectrum which reaches from the Statism demanded by all kinds of “socialism and nationalism” and the minimalist neo-liberal state, what have been missing in Argentina are the two important progressive forces of Modernity: Progressive Liberalism and Social Democracy. Both of them were unfortunately replaced by a pseudo-liberalism for which the only liberty of importance was the liberty to make good business (and

which systematically played as a political wing of the military party), and by a supernumerary populism which even today attempts to justify sixty years of corrupt patrimonialism and “friends capitalism” during the first four years of the Government of General Perón, the only time in which a redistribution of properties and an application of social rights had been displayed, leaving aside his speeches of autobalancing.

In order to comprehend the complementive character of the neoliberal-neopopulist pendulum, it is useful to retrieve the categories of the German sociologist Ulrich Beck, for whom the departed period of national-industrial modernity was defined by the logical structure “*either this or that*”, because of this, the emerging global modernity differs by combining and fusing principles which seem to be contradictive according to logical set phrase of “*this and that*”. Considering this, the boring polemic debate between Argentine affiliates of statism and privatism is an indispensable product to apply the logic of “*either this or that*” (it may be economics and politics, or market and states, or capitalism and democracy), in the modest polemic in which the nineties were defined by the first term and the seventies by the second one. And even if one of these parties were right, if the undeniable tension between the terms of each of these binomials were unsolvable, in these cases there would be countries in which an advanced and powerful capitalist market economy would rule, but there would be a lack of republican institutions and democracy, too. On the other hand, there would exist (or would have existed) profound democratic societies with the fully guaranteed existence of individual liberties and democratic-republican institutions, in those countries in which the ruling economical system differed from capitalism.

We have only to take a look at the real world, and to verify the history that really occurred to realize that exactly the opposite happened: all countries with advanced capitalist economies conduct democratically organized political systems, while on the other hand, if a society does not conduct an economic system, based on market and private property it does not conduct a democratically organized political system neither.

From the above explained, can we conclude that the contradictions between state and market, politics and economics, capitalism and democracy, which are in a short-term evident and undeniable, will be solved in the long-term, until the moment when each of the binominal terms seems to be the necessary condition for the existence of the other. “This or that”, according to Beck’s idea which has been expressed firmly in the political frame through the existence of the big progressive forces that have always been insisting in this complementary character. I am referring to the progressive liberalism

and the democratic left or socialism; both historically confederated which put, without any doubt a different emphasize on the role of the state during an economic process and its redistributive capacity which trust more or less in every single of the binominal terms like state-market/ politics-economics/ democracy-capitalism, but which never believed that the abolition of one singular term would cause the flourishment of the others, but quite the contrary. In the first instance, the tension between state and market, politics and economics, democracy and capitalism will not be solved easily by the right-left axis, but on the contrary as a tension between two poles; one of them understands the abundant lessons, lanced by History about the complementarity of both terms, and the other one is irrational and fundamentalist which in its neoliberal variant of the nineties continues to believe that the diminishment of the state means the increase of the nation, and assumes in its populist variant of the seventies that the destruction of capitalism is the fundamental challenge of every true democratic regime. In the second instance, only if market fundamentalism and its complementary and associated face- state fundamentalism- are mastered through the creation of republican-parliamentary institutions, only then, in the ambiance of Modernity and rejection of populism and mystifications, the matter will be concentrated in the right-left axis, with a progressive liberalism which concedes primacy to the mechanisms of economy, of civil society, and of the market (but which does not attempt to deny the state, nor politics, nor democracy), and a leftist socialdemocracy which vouches for the opposite. On the other hand, the attempt to define left-wing as the statism framed by Robespierre triggers directly the reprint of the dangers linked to the effort of unifying the binomial socialism and nation.

The fact that intellectuals affiliated to kirchnerism consider themselves to be followers of the civil and ideological matrimony between Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe- the former being an accepted follower of Avelardo Ramos, the latter being a supporter from the world of the nazi-advocat Carl Schmitt- is one more confirmation of the accord between socialism in one singular country, the national socialism and the socialism nation. In these days and ages, nor socialism, understood as statism, nor nationalism, understood as a paranoid autarchy are already valid paradigms for the free and equal development of a national society. Similar to the disaster which had caused *Menemism* during the nineties and which at least displays the positive balance of having ereased all applicable forms of market fundamentalism from the Argentine political landscape, the incapacity of *Kirchnerism* to take advantage from the most extraordinary opportunity in Argentine history, maybe will cause the erasement of the seventies statism and of the autistic nationalism from the landscape of options in Argentine politics, hopefully without the necessity of living a catastrophe comparable to the one of 2001. Now, it is up to the opposition towards populist statism, and elitist neoliberalism, to establish a new liberal-centre-right power, and another socialdemocratic of the centre-left, both republican, rational and distant to the structural corruption which was defined as being similar to *privatismo menemista* and to *estatismo kirchnerista*, both equally affiliated to the PJ (*Partido Justicialista*). Perhaps, this will permit us to finish the painful 20<sup>th</sup> century in Argentina, and to appreciate the decadence of the nationalistic-industrial program which had triggered off so much unhappiness that will only be possible in the same degree in which the Argentine Republic gets finally transformed in a true Republic, and its Parliament in a true Parliament.



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The Center for Opening and Development of Latin America (CADAL), with its main office in Buenos Aires and an office in Montevideo , Uruguay , is a private, non-profit, non-partisan foundation.

It's founding members and officers who share a Liberal-Democratic vision, have had prior participation in other Civil Society Organizations and come from journalism, academic activities related to Latin American politics and activism in the international promotion of human rights.

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