Latin American Marxist History: rise, fall and resurrection by

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The aims of this paper are threefold: first, to give a brief account of the rise and fall of Latin American Marxist history in the twentieth century; second, to provide a fairly detailed analysis of two salient developments during its resurgence in the last ten years; and third, to identify the current of analysis that in all likelihood will prevail in its future development.¹

Part I. Misencounters, heretical responses and a spell of intransigence, 1920s-1990s

The Marxist paradigm was imported into Latin America from Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. Although rejected by many, it was accepted by some intellectuals interested in social change in the region. Among those who accepted it, some did so uncritically and without major modifications, while others adapted it in a manner that made it consonant with their national experiences. Whereas the former tended to seek local evidence to confirm the universal validity of the foreign paradigm, the latter attempted to modify the paradigm itself, thus contributing to the emergence of a distinctive current of Marxism, a Latin American one. It is the historical writing produced under its influence that is the focus of this paper. To identify some of its characteristics I shall describe five conjunctures when, challenged by obstacles of various kinds, Latin American historians reacted heretically, thereby reconfiguring the foreign import. Because of the conflictive character of these junctures, I shall call them misencounters.

The first misencounter took place in the late 1920s and early 1930s and it involved the lack of consonance between the Marxian paradigm and Latin American reality. The

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¹ My thanks to Peter Burke, Miguel Murmis and Felipe Soza-Larrain for their constructive criticisms of the original version of this essay.

Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui (1894-1930) suggested significant changes to make the paradigm more compatible with the local reality. First and foremost, he argued, one must make room in the Marxist model for a new historical agent: the peasantry, particularly the indigenous peoples, who, together with the other subordinated classes, were perfectly capable of launching a socialist revolution. Second, critical of the topdown behavior of political parties, he favored the construction of a broad popular coalition that would use its economic, social, political and cultural resources to set in motion a liberation movement from below. Third, he postulated a distinction between method and meta-method. Whereas the task of the former was to invent conceptual tools to analyze a concrete social formation, in this case the Peruvian one, the task of the latter was to link that analysis to general theoretical principles and the Marxist world-view. Thus, Mariátegui proposed to bring together a specifically Peruvian perspective and a universalist one. Last but certainly not least, he saw this composite framework as both a research tool and a political project. This is the first formulation of a Latin American Marxism destined to be very influential among the region's social scientists and historians. During the rest of the century other formulations would derive from it, directly or indirectly.²

The second misencounter was a clash between Latin American historians and the Communist parties, a clash that flared intermittently but most intensely during the third quarter of the twentieth century. Two episodes in particular illustrate the contribution the former made to the formation of Latin American Marxism. The first took place in the late 1950s. To be sure, some authors who belonged to the Communist parties closely adhered to the guidelines imposed by their parties. But some did not and were expelled or left of

² Mariátegui's main work is: *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad Peruana* (Lima,1928). The essays dealt with various topics of Peruvian life at the beginning of the XX century (economy, ethnicity, society, public education, religion, regionalism/centralism and literature) and were all examined from a historical perspective. The literature on Mariátegui is vast. For an introduction to the subject see: José Aricó, *Marx y América Latina*, 2nd ed., *México: 1982*; Robert Paris, "Difusión y apropriación del marxismo en América Latina". *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe*, no. 36, June, 1984, pp. 3-12; and José Aricó. ed., *Mariátegui y los orígenes del marxismo latinoamericano*. México: Siglo XXI, 1968.

their own accord as a consequence. Taking advantage of this distancing they reconsidered the canon and in due course put forward the heretical thesis that Latin America had not followed the five historical stages prescribed by orthodox Marxism. Instead, this region of the world had escaped feudalism and had been capitalist from the time of the conquest onwards. By making such an argument these historians contributed to a new way of understanding the Latin American historical experience and provided an analytical toolkit tailor-made for the region. The most distinguished works of this nature were Sergio Bagú's *Economia de la sociedad colonial* (1949), Marcelo Segall's *El desarrollo del capitalismo en Chile* (1953) and Caio Prado Jr.'s *Historia economica do Brazil* (1959).

The second episode took place in the wake of the Cuban Revolution (1959). As is well known, this revolution was won without the help—and against the wishes—of the Cuban Communist Party. Once in power, rather than paying attention to the rhetoric of its bureaucrats, Castro and Guevara proceeded to theorize their own remarkable experience. In doing so they put forward a new model of socialist revolution. There is no need, they claimed, to wait for circumstances to be ripe before launching a revolution: the circumstances could and in many cases *had* to be created. Leadership could not come from armchair politicians but from participants tested and shaped by armed struggle. Social bases had to be developed and won over, first in the countryside, then in the cities, etc., etc. Thus Castrismo and Guevarismo were born, theories of a do-it-yourself revolution that electrified Latin Americans.

Among them were a handful of left-wing historians who proceeded to write works in which, not surprisingly, the agency of popular sectors was the central focus of their analyses. Two of the most noteworthy works were Luis Vitale's *Interpretación marxista de la Historia de Chile* (1962) and Manuel Moreno Fraginals' *El Ingenio, complejo socioecónomico cubano* (1964). Like their counterparts a decade earlier, they too ran into trouble with their respective communist parties. The experience of the Cuban Manuel Moreno Fraginals illustrates well this kind of misencounter. The head of the Escuela de Historia (the Department of History) of Havana University in the 1960s was Sergio

Aguirre, a stalwart of the Cuban Communist Party since 1938. For him and other CPaligned historians, the purpose of historical writing was to reinterpret the past following the classical Marxist model, not to reconstruct it in new ways. The publication of El Ingenio, a work notable for its original research and quantitative methodology, was bound to upset them and it did. The book was badly received and its author was never allowed to teach at the University of Havana. Oddly—or perhaps naturally—it was in the philosophy department of this university where a "heretic Marxist history" was welcomed without reservations. Starting in February 1967 under the directorship of young academic Fernando Martinez Heredia, *Pensamiento Critico* (Critical Thought) began to appear on a monthly basis. Its motto was "pensar con cabeza propia" (think for oneself). It proclaimed that the Cuban experience and indeed that of the rest of the Third World could not be rendered intelligible with the Eurocentric tools supplied by Soviet Marxism. It was essential, they argued, to forge non-Eurocentric ones. To this end they wanted to build on the heresies proposed earlier on by Mariategui, Sergio Bagú, Caio Prado Jr. and Luis Vitale among others. Unfortunately, *Pensamiento Critico* was shut down in June 1971, the victim of a rapprochement between Cuba and the Soviet Union in the wake of the economic disasters suffered by Cuba at this time. As a result, academics affiliated with the Communist Party took over the University of Havana, sidelining Martinez Heredia and institutionalizing a more dogmatic, Soviet-style Marxism for decades to come.⁵ Notwithstanding this denouement, Latin American Marxist history, as a discipline, was the winner. The capitalist nature of Latin America, the recovery of agency in the historical process, and the quest for non-Eurocentric tools, were all additions that enriched the native Marxist paradigm—and this was in large part due to the confrontations described above.

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www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2001/0110/0110inm1.cfm.

³ See Oscar Zanetti Lecuona, "Historia e Nacao: Trajetoria da historiografia cubana do seculo 20," in Jurandir Malerba and Carlos Aguirre Rojas (eds.), *Historiografia Contemporanea em perspectiva crítica* (Sao Paulo, 2007) 303-304. (n.b. in Portuguese.)

⁴ Alejandro de la Fuente, "In Memoriam: Manuel Moreno Fraginals", American Historical Association,

⁵ See Nestor Kohan, "*Pensamiento Crítico* y el debate por las ciencias sociales en el seno de la revolución cubana," 28556.pdf; and Kepa Artaraz, "El Ejercicio de Pensar: The Rise and Fall of Pensamiento Crítico", *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 24, No. 3, 2005, 348-366.

The third misencounter took place in the 1970s when Marxist intellectuals were pitted against military governments. The Cuban Revolution had shown that armed struggle could be successful. Inspired by this example, rural guerrilla warfare erupted in Central America, in the Andean countries and in Brazil. Urban guerrilla wars in Argentina and Uruguay followed suit a few years later. The student movement in Mexico in 1968, the 1970 election and 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile, and the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979 capped two decades of intense social conflict in Latin America. To make matters worse for the powers that be, this state of affairs was accompanied by the spread of a new body of Marxist ideas, partly homegrown, partly imported from Europe. The former derived from dependency theory and the theology of liberation, efforts to understand and address the dependent condition of Latin American economies and the poverty of the lower classes respectively. ⁶ As for Marxist ideas from Europe, they came mainly from Italy, France and England. The first translations of Gramsci's works were published in Argentina in 1950 and disseminated in the 60s and 70s, 7 a development that was met with dread by Pinochet, the Chilean dictator: "The doctrine of Antonio Gramsci," he declared, "is Marxism in new clothes. And it is dangerous because it is penetrating the consciousness of the people, particularly that of the intellectuals". 8 The impact of French ideas is noticeable in the "Mode of production debate" that took place in Latin America in the early 1970s. Inspired by a discussion among French Marxists concerning the existence of non-European modes of production, the new generation of Latin American Marxists began to explore the possibility of inventing concepts that

⁶ For a clear and balanced discussion of Dependency theory see Joseph Love, "Economic ideas and ideologies in Latin America since 1930," in Leslie Bethell (ed.) *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America*, (Cambridge, 1996). See also Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina*, Mexico, 1971. The classic statement of the theology of liberation is to be found in Gustavo Gutierrez, *Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas*, Lima, 1971. For an early account of this movement see Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: Essential facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America- and beyond*,1987.

⁷ Juan Carlos Portantiero "Los usos de Gramsci", México, 1981. See also Raúl Burgos, Los gramscianos argentinos. Cultura y Política en la experiencia de "Pasado y Presente", Siglo XXI, 2004.

⁸ Antonino Infranca, "Los usos de Gramsci en América Latina", Herramienta, web 2, septiembre de 2009.

would help them decipher their own reality. Finally there was the English influence. Beginning in the mid-1960s, Eric Hobsbawm began to publish studies of social movements about Latin America, particularly Peru and Colombia, and to lecture throughout the region, acquiring a large following along the way. 10

Confronting this turbulent situation, Latin American governments moved quickly to control it. To this end, they institutionalized a horrific reign of terror that left hundreds of thousands of victims. The campaign savagely dismantled the armed insurrection throughout the region but did not silence leftist intellectuals, who, forced in great numbers to flee their homelands, regrouped as exiles forming a vibrant diaspora that became extremely active, mainly in Mexico, Canada and Europe. Attached for the most part to foreign universities, they found themselves deeply involved in teaching and scholarly activities, away from the pressures of political life. This had an immediate impact on their work. All Marxist history until then had been geared directly or indirectly to political action. Now, their attention turned to learning about the world in order to better be able to change it down the road. Thus Latin American Marxist "academic" history was born, complete with footnotes, bibliographies, subject indexes and other scholarly paraphernalia. A good example of this experience was the publication of *Nueva* Historia in London in 1981. Put together by three Chilean leftist doctoral students in exile—Leonardo León, Luis Ortega and Gabriel Salazar—this journal set out to reform the way in which the history of Chile was written. They argued that the work of Chilean Marxist historians such as Marcelo Segall and Luis Vitale was little more than essay writing, not historical research. In their opinion, the time had come to investigate the history of their country, paying attention to primary sources, old and new, as well as concepts and methods derived from the Annales School, British "history from below",

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⁹ For a concise account of this debate see: Joseph Love, "Economic ideas an ideologies in Latin America since 1930," in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America* (Cambridge, 1996), 262-268. See also Carlos Sempat Assadourian et al., *Modos de producción en América Latina* (México and Buenos Aires, 1973).

¹⁰ See Heraclio Bonilla, "Eric J. Hobsbawm y los Andes", *Procesos Revista Ecuatoriana de Historia*, No. 37, 1 Semestre 2013, pp. 147-150.

Latin American dependency theory and the social sciences. The journal published 17 issues and ceased publication in 1989, when the editors returned home. ¹¹

Was the "academic turn" a good thing for Latin American Marxist history? Some deplored it because it took Marxist intellectuals away from the street and into the lecture halls, libraries and archives. Others took a more favorable view, arguing that it restored research to Marxist historical writing, a dimension that had been a distinctive characteristic of the work of the founding fathers. In the end, the latter group prevailed inspired by, among other things, the publication in Spanish of the *Grundrisse der kritik der Politischen Oekonomie* in Cuba and Argentina in the early 1970s. Widely regarded as the most authoritative attempt to wrestle with the problem of historical evolution, it was also renowned as the product of ten years of rigorous and dogged scientific investigation. ¹²

The rise of Latin American academic Marxism in historical writing was not a phenomenon that emerged only in exile; it also occurred at home, principally in the 1980s. This is the setting of the fourth misencounter. This time the confrontation took place in the history departments of the region between the new Marxist professors and the older academic establishment. Whereas the latter defended the primacy of political and institutional history, the former wanted to replace it with economic and social history. In the end the Marxists carried the day because a number of factors worked in their favor. On one hand, the demand for economic and social history had been growing from the 1930s onwards thanks, among other things, to the influence of *Annales* historians. ¹³ This

¹¹ For an excellent analysis of this experience see: Felipe Soza-Larrain, "Reforming history from abroad: Chilean exiled historians in England during the 80s and their project of a new academic history", unpublished paper presented at the Ghent Historiography Conference, July, 2013.

¹² The Spanish edition of the *Grundrisse* came out in Cuba in 1970 and in Argentina between 1971-6. The former is a translation from a text in French, the latter, on the other hand, is a scholarly annotated translation from the German original.

¹³ F. Braudel and other French luminaries taught in Brazil in the early 1930s. As for Annales, it circulated widely throughout Latin America from the 1950s onwards and became a gateway to European Marxist historians such as Poland's Witold Kula and France's Pierre Vilar.

demand mushroomed after the victory of the Nicaraguan Revolution and the spread of armed struggle in Central America in the late 70s. On the other hand, the scholarly quality of the works produced by the Marxist professors who began to publish in the 1980s was so high that they earned the respect of even their fiercest adversaries. Among the most important of these works are Sempat Asadourian's *El sistema de la economía colonial* (1983), Juan Carlos Caravaglia's *El mercado interno y economía colonial* (1983), Alberto Flores Galindo's *Aristocracia y Plebe, Lima, 1780-1820*, (1984), Enrique Semo's *México, Un pueblo en la historia*, (1981–1989) and Pablo González Casanova's *La clase obrera en la historia de México, un pueblo en la historia* (1981–1989). Clearly, by the end of the 1980s, Marxist history had gained academic respectability; in some places, Marxist professors were quickly becoming the "new establishment."

Researchers, however, were not the only people responsible for the new authority of Marxist history. Methodologists also did their part. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a number of works appeared on the methodology of the economic and social history of Latin America conceived from a Marxist perspective. The Brazilian C.F.S. Cardoso and the Argentinean/Costa Rican H. Pérez-Brignoli wrote two of the most important: *Los métodos de la Historia. Iniciación a los problemas, métodos y técnicas de la historia demográfica, económica y social* (Barcelona, 1976) and *El concepto de clases sociales: bases para una discusión* (Madrid, 1977). At the same time, on his own, Cardoso published two more: *La historia como ciencia* (San José, 1975) and *Introducción al trabajo de la investigación histórica: conocimiento, método e historia* (Barcelona, 1981).

However, the ascendancy of Marxist history was very short-lived. And this brings me to its fifth and last misencounter in the twentieth century. Once again, in the 1990s as in the 1920s, a chasm developed between theory and social reality and it took place simultaneously in Europe and Latin America. On November 9, 1989 the Berlin Wall came tumbling down and with it the "real socialisms" in Eastern Europe. The cause of this will be long debated, but the lack of fit between doctrine and real life was clearly one of them. Similarly, unable to account for the new kinds of social conflict that emerged in Latin America in the 1980s, the local version of the Marxian paradigm ran into trouble.

Of these two developments, the most damaging for Latin American Marxist history was the second. Up until then labour movements had been considered the main protagonist of social protest in the region, which Marxist historians understood exclusively in terms of class struggle. The problem was that the new conflicts (ethnic, gender, regional, ecological, territorial, community, and those involving students and other movements) could not be understood in those terms. In previous misencounters, as noted above, Latin American Marxist historians found a way out of their predicament by being heretical. This time, they refused to do so, and stuck to the primacy of class in historical interpretation. For a new generation of scholars this intransigence was seen as downright ideological and they reacted to it by abandoning Marxist history in droves. Their exit was eased by the availability, even the attraction, of other perspectives, which had been knocking at the door of Latin American universities for at least a decade. These were, on the one hand, various types of postmodern history developed in Europe and the United States, and on the other, the Subaltern Studies of India and the "postcolonial" and "decolonial" approaches formulated primarily in the Third World. As the twentieth century drew to a close, many obituaries were written for Marxist history, some deploring, some celebrating its demise.

Part II. Resurrection: towards a realignment of theory and social reality, 2000-2010

The first decade of the twenty-first century in Latin America has witnessed an expansion in the social movements that had emerged in the 1980s. Conspicuous among them were those of the unemployed in urban centers and those of indigenous peoples in the countryside, both as a consequence of neoliberal governmental policies. ¹⁴ Under these

¹⁴ The literature on contemporary Latin American social movements is extensive. The following will provide an introductory survey: Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, eds., *The Making of New Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy and Democracy* (Westview Press, 1992); José Seoane, ed., *Movimientos sociales y conflicto en América Latina* (Buenos Aires, 2003); and the entire issue of *Latin American Perspectives*, 2011, 38 (1).

circumstances, it has been impossible for academics in general and historians in particular to ignore the importance of social conflict. This explains why a considerable number of them, most of them young, have rolled up their sleeves and began to dust off and renovate the abandoned theoretical and material premises of Marxist history. Part II of this paper will describe and assess two of these efforts: one in Argentina and one in Mexico. There are similar efforts in other countries in the region, but these two projects are worth examining closely because they have had influence elsewhere in the continent, are not well known beyond Latin America, and represent two different approaches to a resurrection of Marxist history.

Before this, however, we should pause for a moment to acknowledge briefly early efforts to revamp Marxist history, in the wake of the appearance of new Marxist approaches in the 1970s and 80s, a development noted earlier in this paper. Three of them were particularly influential: G. Gutierrez's theology of liberation, A. Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis", and E.P. Thompson's "cultural Marxism". They attracted the attention of a few Latin American historians because they were found useful in apprehending the originality of local experiences. ¹⁵ Thus a current began that paid more attention than hitherto to the poor *qua* poor, to politics *qua* politics and to culture *qua* culture, all of which had the effect of loosening up the economistic interpretations typical of previous Marxist authors. René Zavaleta's *Lo nacional popular en Bolivia* (1986), Alberto Flores Galindo's *Buscando un Inca: Identidad y utopía en los Andes* (1986), and his journal *Márgenes* (1987), heralded the arrival of a more open and multi-facetted Marxist history. Sadly, this innovative thrust lost momentum in the 1990s, partly because of the untimely deaths of Zavaleta and Flores Galindo in 1984 and 1989 respectively, and partly because,

¹⁵ G. Gutierrez was a follower of Mariátegui. His seminal work *Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas* was very influential in the 1970s and 80s. See Paul Sigmund, *Liberation Theology at the Crossroads: Democracy or Revolution?*, New York, 1990. For Gramsci and Thompson see Antonino Infranca, "Los usos de Gramsci en América Latina", Herramienta, web 2, septiembre de 2009, and Lucas Poy, "The making of labor history: tracing the influence of E.P.Thompson in Argentina". Conference: *The Global*

E.P. Thompson. Reflections on the Making of the English working Class after fifty years,

panel 3, Harvard University, October 3-5, 2013.

as we have seen, the intellectual conjuncture in the last decade of the twentieth century was adverse to Marxist interpretations of history. Still, the spirit of innovation did not die; it just went underground and began to sprout once again a decade later.

The CeDinCi collective, 1998-2010

In 1998, in a low-income quarter of Buenos Aires, the Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en Argentina (Center for Documentation and Research on Leftwing Cultures in Argentina), a small research institute, opened its doors to the public, under the directorship of Horacio Tarcus. ¹⁶ It had two main purposes: to increase and classify documentation pertaining to the Argentinean left, and to sponsor Marxist scholarly research and left-wing political action. To promote these goals, it organized a wide variety of activities. The next segment of this paper will focus almost exclusively on one of them — the *Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas* (Excursions into the History of the Lefts). ¹⁷ The *Jornadas* are gatherings of scholars to discuss their writings on the history of the various branches of the Latin American left from their origins to the present. So far, there have been five such gatherings: in 2000, 2002, 2006, 2007 and 2009. ¹⁸ A brief description of each shows how the collective CeDinCi is attempting to advance the cause of Marxist history in Argentina and in the entire region.

The call for papers for the *Primeras Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas* (First excursions into the history of the Lefts) was sent out in October 2000. It began by announcing that its purpose was: "to create a space for critical reflection and exchange ...

¹⁶ From now on I shall refer to this collective as CeDinCi. Horacio Tarcus is the pen name of the Argentinean historian Horacio Paglione.

¹⁷ The Spanish title refers to the left in the plural. This is an explicit effort to recognize the diversity within the left, which is something new. In this paper I shall use the term left in the singular.

¹⁸ My research on the CeDinCi collective was done in 2010. Since then, two more conferences have taken place: "José Ingenieros y sus mundos" in November 2011 and "La correspondencia en la historia política e intelectual latinoamericana" in November 2013.

recognizing the overriding need to revive the thought and action of the Left". And it ended by declaring: "Our outlook is that proposed by E.P. Thompson who urges intellectuals to create spaces where one labors not for diplomas or promotions, but for the transformation of society—where criticism, particularly self-criticism, is rigorous, but where there is also mutual help and exchange of theoretical and practical knowledge, spaces, in short, that prefigure, in some way, the society of the future." Organized in six panels, the *Primeras Jornadas* were the setting for the presentation of 25 papers written exclusively by Argentine scholars on their national past. The panels included topics on (1) Socialists and communists; (2) Versions of anarchism; (3a) The New Left (Part I); (3b) The New Left (Part II); (4) Art and politics in the 70s; and (5) The past and present of leftist thought.²¹

The conference was a success—so much so that a call for papers for a second gathering, *II Jornadas*, was issued shortly after.²² It met in Buenos Aires on December 11, 12 and 13, 2002. As in the *Primeras Jornadas*, it was solely concerned with the Argentinean experience. In six panels it tackled the following themes: (1) Intellectuals and leftist thought; (2) The Left and Culture; (3) The Left and gender movements; (4) History of the political formations of the Left; (5) The Left and social movements; and (6) The politics of memory and leftist traditions in current politics.²³

Since 2002, three more *Jornadas* have taken place. The distinctive characteristic of these conferences is that they reversed the priorities of the first two. Whereas the first two *Jornadas* dealt with a variety of topics on Argentina, the last three chose to explore a single topic relevant to the whole of Latin America. For instance, at the *III Jornadas*, which met in Buenos Aires for three days in early August 2005, the entire conference was

¹⁹ CeDinCi, *Políticas de la Memoria*, Año III, No. 3 (Buenos Aires, 2000), 28.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹CeDinCi, *Programa de las Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas*. CDR (Buenos Aires, 2000).

²² CeDinCi, *II Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas, Convocatoria*, Web-site: http://www.cedinci.org/

²³ CeDinCi, *Programa de las II Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas*, CDR (Buenos Aires, 2002)

devoted to the question of "Argentinean and Latin American political exiles." The titles of its seven panels further clarifies the theme's concerns: (1) Recent Argentinean exiles; (2) Exile and host societies (Part I); (3) Exile and host societies (Part II); (4) Recent Latin American exiles: publications, debates, institutions; (5) Representations of exile in literature and cinema; (6) Recent Latin American exiles: memories and subjectivities; and (7) Mexico and its resident Latin American exiles. The forum ended with a round table that developed an agenda to do further research on all these subjects.²⁴

The *IV Jornadas* met two years later. With the title "Political press, cultural journals, and editorial entrepreneurship", it shed light on the richness of twentieth-century Latin American Marxism expressed in the printed word. This time the conference had eleven panels. The first was devoted to the theory and methodology of serial publications, while the remaining ten, involving 70 papers, examined in detail a wide variety of journals representing a plethora of currents of left-wing thought—anarchism, socialism, communism, Trotskyism, Maoism, and anti-imperialistic nationalisms in different Latin American countries. Though the event was intended to celebrate an accomplishment, it also revealed a failure: the striking abundance of publications was an indication of the magnitude of sectarian conflicts.²⁵

The *V Jornadas* met in Buenos Aires in November 11-13, 2009. It addressed an issue of the utmost importance to Latin American intellectuals in general and the left in particular: the reception and propagation of foreign ideas. The conference attracted over 100 participants who presented and discussed 79 papers, dealing with the use and misuse of foreign "isms", particularly those connected with the left such as democracy, anarchism, Marxism, socialism, communism, and the like. Amid the multiple subtexts underlying the gathering, two general themes stood out: (a) how to respond to the wide perception that Latin Americans have lived and continue to live on borrowed ideas; and (b) how to invent

²⁴ CeDinCi, *Programa de las III Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas*, http://www.cedinci.org/

²⁵ CeDinCi, *Programa de las IV Jornadas de Historia de las Izquierdas* (Buenos Aires, 2007).

an authentically Latin American Marxism. Most papers explored these issues directly or indirectly from a variety of perspectives.

With the inclusion of examination of other countries' experiences, participation in the conference increased. Whereas the contributors to the first two conferences were overwhelmingly Argentinean, those to the last three came increasingly from Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, and Mexico. Another indicator of the growing importance of the *Jornadas* is the increase in the number of papers presented in each of them: there were 25 in 2000, 34 in 2002, 45 in 2005, 81 in 2007, and 79 in 2009. Clearly, by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, *Jornadas* had become an international forum of considerable significance throughout Latin America.

Have the *Jornadas* created a space of reflection about Latin American Marxist history? It would seem that they have. As late as the 1980s the various sectors of the left in the region were not on speaking terms. Thanks to CeDinCi this is changing and dialogue is replacing the sectarianism of old. One consequence of this has been a new kind of writing. As late as the 1980s, even non-dogmatic Latin American Marxist historians were still using the essay form: short on documentation, long on general pronouncements, cocksure in tone and largely geared to the converted. The writing in the *Jornadas* is moving in the opposite direction: massively documented with both primary and secondary sources, careful and tentative in the treatment of theory and generalizations, and eager to connect with people with different views.

A second indication that the people of the *Jornadas* are serious about a vigorous exchange of ideas is the fact that they move freely beyond the stereotypical Marxist topics. Of the 65 papers presented in the first two *Jornadas*, twenty-four dealt with "the usual suspects"—socialism, communism, anarchism, and Marxism—11 with the relationship of the left with culture, and the remaining 30 with topics which had hitherto been neglected, such as feminism, Christianity, new social movements and historical memory. The narrow concern with class is fading and participants are beginning to

explore with an open mind the analytical import of other kinds of variables: ethnic, gender, territorial and the like.

A third sign of an opening up can be detected in the adoption of the Thompsonian paradigm. From the 1920s to the 1970s the umbilical cord of Latin American Marxism had been first Italy (Labriola, Gramsci, della Volpe, Mondolfo, Coletti, etc.) and then France (Sartre, Lefebvre, Althusser, Balibar, Suret-Canale, Vilar, and others). It has only been in the last couple of decades, Hobsbawm's ubiquitous presence since the 1960s notwithstanding, that British Marxist historical writing has commanded the attention of Latin American historians in a serious way.

To fully appreciate the achievements of *Jornadas*, one must take note of another of CeDinCi's successful projects: its documentation centre. Initially based on a wealth of primary and secondary sources collected by one militant since the 1930s, Horacio Tarcus has transformed it into the best repository on the history and current state of the Latin American left in the continent. Crucially, this institution is not governed by an antiquarian mentality but by a decidedly activist one. The idea is to encourage research that is painstakingly documented, for it is only this kind of scholarship that can produce critical knowledge and, down the road, democratic social change. This high regard for evidence is palpable in *Jornadas* and in all of CeDinCi's published work, a characteristic that has gained it the respect of international Latin American organizations such as CLACSO and FLACSO, as well as that of a number of prestigious North American and European research institutions.

But what about political action? Given its pluralistic make-up, the CeDinCi does not seem to support a particular political agenda. Moreover, judging from the content of the *Jornadas* so far, what is clear is that the idea of armed revolution—one of the crucial instruments of social transformation of Latin American Marxism from the 1920s on—is no longer at the center of its reflections.²⁶ The concern now is to redefine emancipatory

²⁶ See Michael Lowy, *Marxism in Latin America from 1909 to the Present, An Anthology* (New Jersey, 1992), Introduction.

action by critiquing the Marxist Latin American tradition in this respect and by listening to the voices of the new social movements. To this end, the CeDinCi has implemented a number of projects, the most noteworthy of which are the following. In 2006, CeDinCi completed and made available online a catalogue of their holdings entitled *Publicaciones de los movimientos sociales de la Argentina y el mundo, 1890–2005* (Social movement publications in Argentina and the world, 1890–2005). This catalogue is divided into the following sections: (a) labour movement and trade unionism; (b) student movements; (c) gender movements; (d) human rights; (e) antifascist and antiracist publications; and (f) contemporary movements that include assembly movements, territorial movements, movements of the unemployed, antiglobalization movements and environmental movements.²⁷ Another project that relates to current politics is *Jornadas de trabajos de historia reciente* (Workshops on contemporary history). CeDinCi is the co-organizer of this forum, which has met every other year since 2000. Convinced that history is not the study of the past *tout court*, but of the interconnections between the past and the present, the Argentinean collective is continually putting current affairs in historical perspective.²⁸

The Contrahistorias collective, 2003–2010

The CeDinCi is not the only sustained effort to renovate Marxist history in Latin America today. Just as enterprising has been a group of Mexican historians who have adopted the collective name of *Contrahistorias*. Frustrated by the state of history teaching and historical research in their country, they set in motion a series of initiatives to create a new kind of history. In the interest of brevity, I shall concentrate on only two of them. The first is the sponsorship of a handbook for beginners entitled *Antimanual del mal historiador* (The anti-manual of the bad historian) and the second the launching of *Contrahistorias* (Counterhistories), a journal for a more sophisticated audience. Actually, the *Antimanual* appeared in 2002 a year or so before the collective was formed but it became a pivotal part of their renewal project when its author, Carlos Aguirre Rojas,

²⁸ Cuadernillo_f2-1.pdf

²⁷ http://www.cedinci.org,CMS.pdf

became the director of *Contrahistorias* the following year. In effect, the latter picked up where the former left off, but at a higher level.

So what was *Antimanual* all about? Its message was blunt and simple: history as taught and researched in Mexico was obsolete. Not only was the discipline badly exercised, it was also out of step with Mexican social reality. The neo-Zapatista revolt of 1994 signaled the re-emergence of the subaltern classes in general and the indigenous peoples in particular in the forefront of Mexican political life. ²⁹A Marxist history was needed to record the progress of these classes, to provide them with a historical perspective and to contribute to their plans to transform the country. Not the vulgar type, but a new one, one enriched with lessons acquired from other social histories and the social sciences. Despite the bluntness of the message, or perhaps precisely because of it, *Antimanual* was an instant success. It was reprinted in Colombia a few months after it appeared in Mexico, and it was reprinted in Argentina in 2003, Guatemala and Cuba in 2004, Venezuela in 2005, and Brazil and Spain in 2007. By 2010 it has been published in Mexico nine times, in Cuba seven, in Guatemala six, in Colombia five, in Argentina three, in Brazil eleven, in Venezuela twelve and in Spain ten times.³⁰

How does one explain this editorial success? Doubtless, there are several reasons for this. First, there was considerable truth to the charge that the teaching of history was poor and disconnected from reality in Mexico and the rest of Latin America, particularly at the primary and secondary school levels. Second, the economic crises produced by neoliberalism in the 1990s in the entire region and the social movements that emerged as

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²⁹ These classes made their first massive appearance in the Revolution of 1910. As for the neo-Zapatistas, they erupted into the Mexican political scene on January 1, 1994 denouncing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Since then it has declared war on the Mexican state for being a mere instrument of international neo-liberalism and for oppressing the Mexican poor. Its ideology is a mixture of libertarian socialism, libertarian municipalism and indigenous Mayan political thought. From now on I shall refer to them as the neo-Zapatista movement. See: Richard Stahler-Shok, "Resisting Neoliberal Homogenization: The Zapatista Autonomy Movement", in *Latin American Perspectives* 2007, 34 (2) 48-63.

³⁰ The edition used in this essay is *Antimanual del Mal historiador o como hacer una buena historia crítica* (La Habana, 2004).

a result created a demand for scholarship that put both the crises and the movements in historical perspective. Last, but certainly not least, the general tenor of *Antimanual* was extremely appealing: no jargon, no footnotes and no learned apparatus of any kind. Inspired by Bloch's the *Historian's Craft*, the *Antimanual* was an intimate conversation between the author and his readers.

Aguirre Rojas begins the conversation by consigning to the dustbin what in his opinion are erroneous conceptions of history: that history is the science of the past, that it is based exclusively on written documents, that it begins and ends within national boundaries, that it is self-sufficient and has nothing to learn from the social sciences, that it can do without theoretical and methodological guidance, that it is an old discipline that goes back to the Greeks, that it is a collation of chronologies and that one of its main functions is to legitimize the status quo. Turning from theory to practice, Aguirre Rojas identifies the traditional historian's sins of commission and omission. In his opinion, the most important are: (a) "positivism," or the tendency to reduce history to a mere description of events, neglecting historical explanation; (b) anachronism, or the habit of projecting the present back into the past, thereby distorting it; (c) reliance on a Newtonian (physical) concept of time; (d) ordering events in a sequence to demonstrate the inevitability of progress; (e) exclusive concern with voluntary actions, ignoring involuntary ones; and (f) the search for a chimerical objectivity. Having completed his account of the errors of traditional historians, he aims his last volley at present-day postmodernists whom he berates for naively reducing historical reality to historical discourse.

In the rest of the *Antimanual*, Aguirre Rojas proceeds to give us a profile of the good historian. To begin with, he enumerates the seven lessons that a novice should learn from Karl Marx, who, in Aguirre Rojas's opinion, is the founder of scientific history. These lessons are:(a) that history is global and covers everything human in time; (b) that history is profoundly social in terms of agency and context; (c) that history has a material foundation and that central to it is economic life; (d) that historical explanation can only be approached by keeping the totality in mind; (e) that historical events are in constant

flux and one has to see them as dialectically interconnected; and (f) finally, that the discipline of history must be profoundly critical and forever questioning the dominant discourses of any given moment. Aguirre Rojas admits that non-Marxist historians can be critical as well and that one can learn a lot from them when they are. The list of schools of history one can learn from includes the French Annales, the British History from Below, and the Italian Micro historians. What they all have in common is a realistic ontology, a congruent epistemology and a deep concern for the social.

Again, the *Antimanual* is an entertaining read, which explains the editorial success it has enjoyed since it was first published.

Let's now turn to *Contrahistorias*. As stated above, this journal appeared in 2004 two years after the handbook. Its general purpose was to continue the renewal of Mexican history undertaken by the handbook, but at a more sophisticated level. With the endorsement of an impressive editorial board, ³¹ it wanted to address three major shortcomings of the Mexican historians' *modus vivendi*: the lack of a first class journal like *Annales, Quaderni Storici, Review,* or *Past and Present*; the complete absence of debates on the theory and methodology of history; and the neglect of historiography.

The first five issues dealt precisely with these problems. For instance, they introduced their readers to the work of foreign models of historical writing worth following: the *Annales* School (Pirenne, Bloch and Braudel) and Italian micro-history (Ginzburg, Levi, Grendi, Cerrutti and Mastrogregori). Moreover, acting on the notion advanced in *Antimanual* that history is not a self-contained discipline, these issues also contained the work of philosophers and sociologists. Bolívar Echeverría and Walter Benjamin represented the first, Immanuel Wallerstein and Norbert Elias the second.

(France), L. Repina (Russia) and Chen Qineng (China).

B. Echeverría (México), C. Ginsburg (Italy), I. Wallerstein (US), E. Cifuentes (Guatemala), M.A. Beltrán (Colombia), J. Malerba (Brazil), C. Wasserman (Brazil), D. Barreira (Argentina), P. Pacheco (Cuba), F. Vázquez (Spain), O. Rey Castelao (Spain), R. García Carcel (Spain), M. Mastrogregori (Italy), S. Sammler (Germany), M. Aymard

Starting with the sixth issue, the journal began to pay a great deal of attention to social change. This was clearly a reaction to the re-surfacing of the neo-Zapatista movement. As stated earlier, this movement began in 1994; however, it maintained a low profile for about a decade after its initial eruption onto the national and international scene. Then, in June 2005, it suddenly broke its silence with the *Sixth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle* calling for a democratic restructuring of the Mexican state and Mexican society. Convinced that the old political parties, including those of the left, were not equal to the task, the neo-Zapatistas sought to persuade the Mexican subaltern classes to mobilize in favour of their cause.³² They were not successful in this effort, but they did manage to attract the attention of large segments of the population, particularly of leftist intellectuals, including the *Contrahistorias* people.³³

Some, who wanted the journal to retain its academic character, criticized the shift in focus to social questions. But the collective stood firm. Reminding its readers that history is the study of both the past and of the present, Aguirre Rojas asserted that it is the duty of the historian to diagnose current events and identify and oppose the structures of oppression. "What we believe" he wrote, "is that the social sciences cannot exist without a clear social commitment." Acting upon this view, the collective invited sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists who were similarly inclined to contribute their analyses of current events. Wallerstein was one of them and has since become a constant contributor to the journal. Fellow sociologists Miguel Angel Beltrán and Pablo González Casanova, the anthropologists Jan Rus and Andres Aubry, the journalists and social critics Raul Zibechi and Carlos Monsivais have also contributed their work. As for historians, Adolfo Gilly, Dario Barriera, Claudia Wasserman and Aguirre Rojas have done their part, particularly Aguirre Rojas. Arguing tirelessly for the importance of contemporary history, he has contributed a piece, sometimes several, to every single issue of the journal from 2006 to 2010!

³² The "Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle", *Motion Magazine*, August 18, 2005. It can be found in: http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/auto/selva6.html.

³³ C. Aguirre Rojas, Presentación del número 6 de la Revista *Contrahistorias*, No. 7, 2007, 91-96.

³⁴ Ibid., 93.

At first the social question was explored mainly within the Mexican context. But as the years went by, it was also explored in the context of other Latin American countries, especially those in which popular insurgency was taking place, such as Brazil, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador. An interesting initiative in this regard was to give space to the political leaders of some of these social movements. Another one was to cast its methodological net more widely than it previously had. Up to issue No. 9, *Annales*, Italian micro-history and the Frankfurt School had been its main sources of inspiration. After that it began to explore other models, both European and non-European. Issue No. 12, for instance, was largely devoted to introducing the work of the Subaltern Studies group in India and the following two issues had articles on the British Marxists E.P.Thompson and Raphael Samuel. Clearly, a greater acquaintance with the new social movements in Latin America was compelling the collective to find new tools to make sense of experiences that could no longer be analyzed exclusively in class terms.

At the beginning of 2010, a foreign interviewer asked members of the collective to evaluate the achievements and shortcomings of the journal thus far. ³⁶ Concerning the former they said that *Contrahistorias* had extended its circulation beyond Mexico to the rest of Latin America, particularly Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela. They also stated that the journal was well known in Spain. ³⁷ Even more encouraging in their opinion was the fact that its main readership was to be found among young teachers and university students, something that boded well for the future of the kind of history they were promoting. ³⁸ But there had been problems as well. It had not been easy for the collective to secure a wide range of contributors. ³⁹ Over half of the main articles that have appeared so far have been written by just three people: 23 by Aguirre Rojas, 10 by Wallerstein and 4 by Bolivar Echeverria. According to the collective this probably has to

³⁵ See for example *Contrahistorias*, No. 6, 51-56; No. 8, 9-45 and 47-54.

³⁶ Colectivo Contrahistorias, "Entrevista sobre la historia de la Revista Contrahistorias. La otra mirada de Clio", *Contrahistorias*, No. 13, 2010, 7-24.

³⁷ Ibid., 23-24.

³⁸ Ibid., 8-9.

³⁹ Ibid., 17-18.

do with the high standards of academic excellence and critical commitment they have set for themselves, something that may have dissuaded potential collaborators, particularly local ones. Another problem has been the rift that took place in 2006 when *Contrahistorias* shifted its focus to social issues, primarily contemporary ones. Although the collective vigorously defended that decision, it is clear that it has cost the journal the loyalty of erstwhile supporters.⁴⁰

As for political activism, as we have seen, the *Contrahistorias* collective does not accept the idea of the neutrality of the social sciences. Instead, they maintain that their scientific work is openly committed to democratic values; hence the need to ensure a close relation between social science and social practice. Actually, most other Latin American social scientists will agree with this position, to one degree or another. What the latter will insist on, however, is that the relation between social science and social practice be handled with extreme care, lest science become subordinated to ideology. Unfortunately, the Contrahistorias collective has not made it a priority to reflect on the boundaries between the two. To the best of my knowledge, the only reference to the relationship between social science and social practice appears in the director's defence of the journal's 2006 shift in focus to social issues. There, after reminding the reader that the Contrahistorias perspective is that of "history from below," Aguirre Rojas goes on to say that it follows that the journal must lend a hand to the neo-Zapatista movement and help it in its struggle against the Mexican state and the Mexican dominant classes. How exactly? By using the journal to disseminate information about the movement, and by cooperating with the movement's political tasks such as the creation of a network of rebellion. Aguirre Rojas ends his defense of activism by quoting approvingly the words of Gabriel Celaya, the Spanish poet: "I curse poetry conceived as a cultural luxury by neutral people who wash their hands, feign ignorance and equivocate; I curse the poetry of those who won't take sides, won't get their hands dirty." ⁴¹ This may sound good, but it is not a well-reasoned argument. To the extent that the Contrahistorias collective gives the impression that its members do not perceive nor wish to maintain a distinction between their work as social

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⁴⁰ See "Prensentación", Contrahistorias, No. 7, 2007, 92-93.

⁴¹ C. Aguirre Rojas, "Presentación," *Contrahistorias*, No. 7, 2007, 96.

scientists and their political activism, they can and have been accused of advancing ideology, not science.

Both the CeDinCi collective in the south and the Contrahistorias collective in the north are trying to resurrect in different ways Marxist historical analysis in Latin America. The former gives equal importance to documentation and theory; the latter is partial to theory. The former draws inspiration from Latin American Marxist heretics: Mariátegui, Bagú, Vitale, Moreno Fraginals, Flores Galindo, Zavaleta, etc.; the latter seems to be mesmerized by foreign icons: Benjamin, Braudel, Bloch, Ginzburg, Wallerstein, etc. The former wants to identify the conditions for successful leftist action through research; the latter gives the impression that it is their duty to be scholars and political activists at the same time and in equal measure. Both have had considerable influence throughout Latin America during the last ten years. Which current will prevail? Will other collectives sprouting up in the region at this very moment replace them? Only time will tell. What is already clear is that for the first time since the 1920s the toolkit of the Latin American historian is forging instruments adequate to finally reveal, as Thompson would say, the "peculiarities of the Latin Americans." Ethnicity, gender, region, territoriality, ecology, etc.: all the so-called "secondary" contradictions are now being taken seriously. This being the case, a particular kind of Marxist history is in the making in Latin America, one that is based on the realignment between theory and the social realities of the region. Ironically, this state of affairs, although satisfying in many respects, has raised an important question among friends and foes alike: is this kind of history really Marxist?

In the last part of this article we shall briefly explore this problem by analyzing the work of a Chilean historian whose work can be seen as representative of what, in my opinion, is becoming the main tendency in Latin America Marxist history today. This emerging main tendency is closer in approach to that of CeDinCi than that of Contrahistorias.

Part III. "Unsatisfied societies" and Marxist History in the XXI century

Now, let us reacquaint ourselves with an exiled student we met in England in the late 1970s: Gabriel Salazar. As you will remember, he was one of the founders of the journal *Nueva Historia* in 1981. Back in Chile in 1985, Salazar proceeded to expand the idea of a new history, which he now calls "social history". Here is an abbreviated list of the works he has published since his return: *Labradores, peones y proletarios: formación y crisis de la sociedad popular chilena del siglo XIX*, 1985; *Construcción de Estado en Chile (1800-1837), Democracia de los "pueblos". Militarismo ciudadano. Golpismo oligárquico,* (2005); *Ser niño "huacho" en la historia de Chile (Siglo XIX)*, 2006; *Memorias de un Peón-Gañan*, 2008; *Mercaderes, empresarios y capitalistas (Chile, Siglo XIX)*, 2009 and *Dolencias históricas de la memoria ciudadana (Chile, 1810-2010)*, 2012. In recognition of the quantity and quality of his production, he was awarded the Premio Nacional de Historia in 2006 and since then he has joined the lecture circuit in Chile, other Latin American countries and Europe.

What kind of history is Salazar's "social history"? For the sake of brevity we shall base our answer on: "Historiografia chilena siglo XXI: Transformación, responsabilidad, proyección", a long article published in 2006 in which he ponders the future of history as a discipline in his country and, by extension, in the rest of Latin America. As the title states, the article develops three main themes: transformation, responsibility and prospects. With regard to transformation, Salazar asserts that the production and dissemination of historical knowledge in Chile needs to be overhauled if it wants to meet the challenges of the new century. He says that traditionally these tasks have been performed by a small group of professionals in an authoritarian way, thus creating a great divide between the educators and the educated. In time, he goes on to say, this practice became an essential part of a system of social domination. Within this context historical knowledge has been used to maintain the status quo. In his opinion, this state of affairs is unacceptable, for this knowledge, when properly produced and used, should open new

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⁴² In Luis G. De Mussy, ed., *Balance Historiográfico chileno. El orden del discurso y el giro crítico actual*, Santiago, Ediciones Finis Terrae, 2007, pp. 95-167. See also Gabriel Salazar, *La historia desde abajo y desde adentro*, Santiago, LOM, 2003.

paths towards a more progressive social order: hence the need to transform the organization of the profession of historian.

The topic of *responsibility* comes next. In this connection, Salazar states that the task of Chilean historians is not merely to organize sources and interpret them in books, articles and lectures, thus contributing to the academic work of history departments. Besides doing this, which is essential, their work has to relate to social needs. What are these needs? Unlike Britain or the U.S., Salazar argues, Chile is not an advanced nation. In his own words: it is an "unsatisfied society". As such, it has distinctive historiographical needs. One of them derives from the fact that from its origins Chilean society has stacked up unresolved economic, social, ethnic, political and cultural fissures —the outcome of old and new colonialisms—which have bedeviled its integration to the present day. In Salazar's opinion, the responsible historian has to find out why these cracks have persisted so long without repair. Another distinctive requirement pertains to the country's Since the 1980s the Chilean popular classes have current socio-political situation. participated in territorial, occupational, environmental, student, ethnic, gender and other movements, proposing by peaceful means radical changes to the fabric of their society and the structure of their state. It is the business of the historian to provide these social actors with a historical perspective so that their understanding of their circumstances gains breadth and depth, which in turn will help them hammer out better plans of action. Some will say that this is the task of the social scientists: sociologists, political scientist, economists, and the like. Salazar feels that this is a false division of labour. For him the present is thick with *history* and it is only through a historical perspective that the present is truly knowable and Chilean social integration finally achievable.

The last main theme of Salazar's article deals with *prospects*, that is, with the future of historical knowledge in "unsatisfied societies" like Chile. Salazar has quite a lot to say on the subject. For the purposes of this article, it will suffice to single out what he calls his "ten commandments" for the "responsible historian". Rather than listing them one by one as he does, we have organized them according to four categories: ontology, epistemology, methodology and ethics. At the ontological level, Salazar exhorts the

Chilean historian to disregard the beckoning of postmodernist manifestoes and to be an unrepentant realist. There are such things as documents, which reveal the presence of human kind, and these sources, besides written artifacts, include evidence of the human experience in whatever shape or form. Turning to epistemology, Salazar insists on two issues: the "historicity of the present" and what he calls "popular epistemology". We have already seen what he means by the first: we can know the past only from our present, and conversely, we can know the present only if we understand its intrinsic historicity. A more complex concept is that of "popular epistemology". This is Salazar's effort to take into account three cognitive requirements of "unsatisfied societies" like Chile. To begin with, given that the history of the Chilean upper classes is fairly well known, what must be investigated in earnest is that of the popular ones. Without serious studies of all its inhabitants, Chile will never get to know itself. Secondly, as stated above, since the 1980s the Chilean popular classes have been on the move like never before. This cannot be dismissed as simple rabble rousing because it is a process during which they have put forward projects for the construction of a new imagined community. In Salazar's opinion, these projects should be the point of departure for a critical approach to historical writing; for whereas the history of the upper classes is biased in favor of the status quo, that of social movements focuses on social change. To fully grasp this perspective, the responsible historian has to dialogue with the social actors and learn from them since their actions are based on knowledge of their predicaments and, even more importantly, on their deft ways of handling them. The third dimension of popular epistemology takes us straight into the historian's workshop. According to Salazar, when the historian dares to venture beyond his ivory tower he discovers that his professional tools (structuralism, constructivism, postmodernism, linguistic turns, etc.) are part of the larger cognitive capacity a society disposes of at any given time. Awareness of the outer limits within which the historian operates, Salazar contends, should reduce the importance of the "academic" debates that monopolize his/her attention and enable him/her to better understand the sociology of historical knowledge.

There are two aspects of the Decalogue we have not touched yet: methodology and ethics. With regard to the first, Salazar has not much to say in this article. Judging from what he writes elsewhere, he assigns the utmost importance to empirical research based on sound qualitative and quantitative methods; what he does underscore in his commandments is the need for historians to work in tandem with social scientists and humanists. As for the ethical dimension, Salazar is not a firebrand. For conservatives, liberals and even some leftists, "ethical commitment" conjures up visions of scholars taking to the streets and, guns blazing, engaging in armed struggle. This is not what Salazar has in mind. What he proposes instead is more akin to what, evoking Aristotle's Ethics, Alasdair MacIntyre and Bent Flyvbjerg want for the social sciences. 43 In this work Aristotle distinguishes three intellectual virtues: episteme (which concerns itself with the theoretical), techne (with the technical) and phronesis (with the "why" of an intellectual enterprise). Salazar's ethical commandment has to do with *phronesis*. For the Chilean historian, he contends, the "why" should be a fundamental part of historical writing. He admits that different kinds of answers are possible, but he also states that in the case of "unsatisfied societies" the right answer is: to contribute to a better understanding of the impediments to their democratic social integration.

Does Salazar's vision of Chilean history in the XXI century make him a Marxist historian of some sort? To answer this question I shall appeal to a typology offered recently by Omar Acha, an Argentinean historian. According to Acha, Latin America today has two types of Marxism, that of the right and that of the left. The former is practiced by people who idolize past icons, work with a "closed library", are defensive at all times, regard Marxism as the key that reveals social reality in its fullness, the theory that explains all aspects of social reality and the only possible blueprint for progressive political action. The Marxism of the Left, on the other hand, is the opposite in all respects: it is future oriented, it uses an open library, it is tranquil and ready to accept new ideas; it is pluralistic, it is a multidisciplinary enterprise and is committed to social action based on

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⁴³ See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Duckworth, 1985 and Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making social science matter*, Cambridge, 2002.

empirical research as well as on a dialogue with social actors, particularly those from "below." ⁴⁴ Within this typology, Salazar clearly belongs to the second group.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have offered a bird's eye view of the development of Latin American Marxist History from the 1920s to the present. The common thread has been the persistent search for a Latin American way of writing it. All this appears to be affirmative and creative. But is this not a retreat into a kind of provincialism? To dispel this suspicion we should reread what Mariátegui wrote in 1928 in the preface to his Siete Ensayos: "All this work is nothing but a contribution to the socialist critique of the problems and history of Peru. There are some who think that I am a "europeanizer" removed from the life and problems of my country. Let my book be my defense ... (As for my learning), it is in Europe where I acquired the best part of it. And I believe that there is no salvation for Indo-America without European science and western thought". 45 Thus, Mariátegui reminded us that local knowledge in Latin America and elsewhere outside Europe has much to gain by using creatively many of the contributions of Western thought. I would like to add that western thought in general and Marxist history in particular can acquire the rank of universality if and only if it is enriched by knowledge of a broad range of non-European experiences. Local and European knowledge need not be seen as contradictory, as some nativists proclaim. They can complement and correct each other and thus contribute to a future global knowledge.

⁴⁴ Omar, Acha, "El marxismo de derecha: elementos pasa su definición y crítica", *Herramienta*, No. 37, marzo, 2008.

⁴⁵ J.C. Mariátegui, 7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana, 1952. Ver Advertencia.