

## **200 Years of the Independence of Latin America**

This second issue of PortVitoria is dedicated to Latin America, which in 2010 began to celebrate the bicentennial of its independence. The process of independence began in the Spanish American provinces, with Argentina and Chile becoming its first independent republics. This, and much more, is in a two part article which I have written on the independence of the first Spanish American republics, for the present issue of PortVitoria. The first part consists of a summary of the struggle for independence that includes a short biography of the liberators. The second part is a reflexion on the roots of the left-right conflict between state capitalism and free market capitalism that divides the continent. Although our Spanish speaking readership may be well aware of this chapter of the history of the independence of Latin America, many Brazilians may lack such awareness and could benefit from it.

In another article, Norman Berdichevsky shows that the Communist Party of Cuba supported not just Fidel Castro but also the dictator Fulgêncio Batista, a fact that the Cuban dictatorial regime suppressed by presenting a revisionist version of the history of the Cuban Communist Party, emphasizing its history from 1959 but omitting the party's record from its actual beginning in 1920. In this article, Berdichevsky also criticises the jargon of political science discourse where 'right' means reactionary, 'conservative' and/or ultra-nationalist, and religious whereas 'left' means enlightened, beneficial to the working class, 'liberal', secular and internationalist. However, his greatest criticism is to the lack of discernment of the American and European Left in their promotion of undeserving leaders.

Most social observers recognise the tendency of people to hang on to wrong notions and that many unscrupulous politicians use them to promote themselves. One example of this was pointed out in the present article by Berdichevsky, when

he stated that “some 99.99% of left-wing college students and many American journalists proudly wearing their Che T-shirts will assure you that ‘America has always supported corrupt dictators like Batista in Cuba’.” The article reveals why this statement is wrong: the fact that the Communist Party of Cuba also supported Batista and the many presidents that he controlled. However, a problem that is even greater than the ignorance of the people is the cowardice of public intellectuals who avoid tackling popularly held errors in fear of becoming unpopular. The political philosopher Alan Bloom (1906-2005) was the biggest critic of the public intellectuals’ incapacity to resist public opinion. To Bloom, what democracy needs is good criticism, not sycophancy towards the people. It was thinking along these lines that I decided to write *Is the Voice of the People also the voice of God?*, offered in this issue.

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