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22.02.2023

Agustín Cueva: Marxist thought renovator

In Latin America, China has made the most progress in trade relations, investments and rapprochement with governments. A multipolar and multicultural world is born, in which Latin America finds unprecedented opportunities for another type of economic development, which definitively overcomes the neoliberal path, which has done so much damage to the region.



I became friends with Agustín Cueva (1937-1992), the most recognized Ecuadorian sociologist in Latin America at the time, when my activities as a historian were taking off. Although Agustín lived in Mexico and was a professor at UNAM, our approach grew because we were able to meet at various international academic events.

A tremendous and implacable critic, Agustín knew how to distinguish the spaces for

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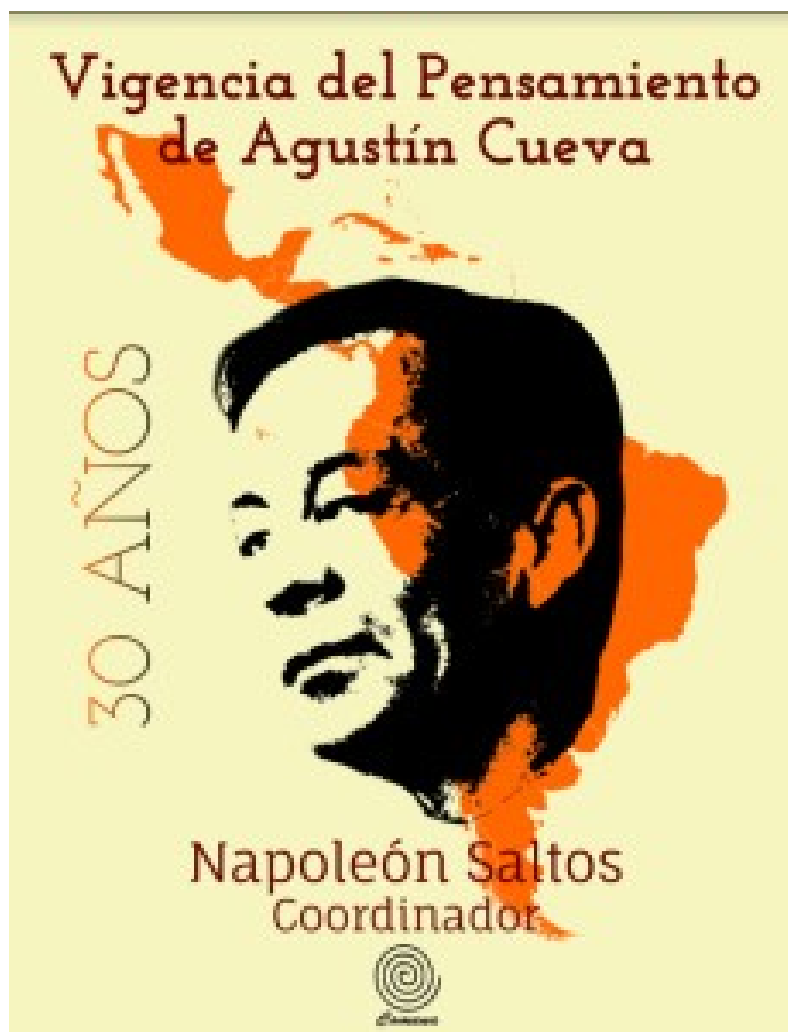
debate and, in addition, to whom to respond or with whom to discuss. He maintained a strong polemic with professors of the FLACSO (Quito) and his conceptions on "populism" and "clientelism", a fashionable topic, which deserved multiple studies in Latin America, among which it is worth highlighting Ernesto Laclau, a defender of populism as a social expression, linked to the masses and related to the rise of the bourgeoisies of the region against the traditional oligarchies.



Agustín Cueva Dávila (1937-1992).

Augustine always identified himself as a Marxist and was a profound connoisseur of the subject, as can be seen in *Marxist Theory. Basic categories and current problems* (1987). In Ecuador, his most widely read and repercussion book for years was *The Process of Political Domination in Ecuador* (1972, although before it had a small print edition). The first part studies the historical development of the country during the republican era, to understand it, precisely, as a process subject to the class struggle. Agustín took a step forward with respect to the Marxist interpretations that preceded him and that had a more inclined orientation to politics, among which stood out texts by Pedro Saad Niyaim (1909-1982), who was for years secretary of the Communist Party, and Manuel Agustín Aguirre (1903-1992), who founded the Revolutionary Socialist Party, was rector of the

Central University and demonstrated solidity in the interpretations on the dialectic of the Ecuadorian History. In the second part of the book, Augustine studies the phenomenon of "velasquismo"; and, although he uses the term "populism" to describe certain facets of José María Velasco Ibarra (1893-1979), five times president of Ecuador, he did not stay in it, but tried to explain that political figure in the various contexts in which he acted. In a later work, entitled *Populism* (1992) and written by several authors, I made the introductory study and stressed that "*populism*" was simply a way of doing politics, open to any party or movement, and that it was a concept whose ambiguity and breadth prevented understanding structural realities and the complex fabric of the class struggle.



Book Validity of the Thought of Agustín Cueva PDF format

The work of Agustín coincided with the takeoff of the Ecuadorian social sciences, something that was common in various Latin American countries, so that in the 80s a new generation of scholars was present, with a wide academic production and whose contributions are significant until the present. Ecuadorian social science distinguished its affinity with Marxist theory and, therefore, the historical foundation that all researchers

knew how to give to their work. The boom was even accompanied by the establishment of several bookstores, particularly in Quito, which were at the forefront of their craft, providing the best of the social literature that came from the most important Latin American publishers. And massively they went to the archives, because it was well understood that a renewing thought, which really discovers the intimate realities of the country, could not be done without resorting to original sources. Although Agustín could not be a man of archives in Ecuador, his interpretative genius and his investigative rigor continued to be demonstrated in new works: *The development of capitalism in Latin America* (1977), was awarded in Mexico. It is a pioneering work in terms of the global interpretation of the region. At the same time, Agustín warned of the arrival of the "conservative times", since the Southern Cone suffered terrorist military dictatorships, the "Reagan era" prevailed and neoliberalism expanded to destroy social conquests and impose the interests of the high bourgeoisie. You can read in this regard his article "The conservative turn: signs and passwords", in the collective work *Latin America in the rightward shift of the West* (1987), as well as two books that followed: *The restricted democracies of Latin America* (1988) and *Latin America on the border of the 90s* (1989).

The collapse of socialism was a blow to hopes for overcoming capitalism. It also affected Marxism, which ceased to be the fundamental reference of the Latin American social sciences. Augustine was gone when at the beginning of the twenty-first century a series of governments in the region defined the first progressive cycle. Thanks to his policies and orientations, Marxism was also able to regain space and even ideals for socialism were reborn. In addition, Presidents Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador postulated the "socialism of the XXI century".



The historical conditions of the past no longer existed, so Marxism served to rethink the

processes of the present and consider democracy and social economies as elements to build new societies. We live in those moments and the paths are no longer unidirectional but multiple. There is an enriched Marxism, which has left behind a series of dogmas that were considered immovable. And the construction of socialism is not a list of conquests that can be checked at an administrative desk, to know which ones have advanced and which ones are missing.

Today's world has altered the axes of geopolitics because China and Russia now compete with the US and Europe in influence and international presence. In Latin America, China has made the most progress in trade relations, investments and rapprochement with governments. A multipolar and multicultural world is born, in which Latin America finds unprecedented opportunities for another type of economic development, which definitively overcomes the neoliberal path, which has done so much damage to the region.

Juan J. Paz and Miño Cepeda for La Pluma, Ecuador February 20, 2023

Edited by María Piedad Ossaba

Published by Blog History and present

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La Pluma.net 20.02.2023