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## The New Cold War Between the US and China

By Manuel E. Yepe  
August 31, 2016

*Havana.*

Leonardo Boff, is a Franciscan monk who was one of the main creators of the liberation theology-until he decided in 1992 to leave the priesthood. On August 12, he granted an interview to journalist Martin Granovsky, from the Argentine newspaper Pagina 12, in which he analyzed the course that Brazil and Argentina have taken due to their subordination to transnational capital.

Asked about the reasons for the advance of neo-conservative processes in Latin America –by means of a coup, as in Brazil, or by the ballot box, as in Argentina– Boff linked them to a new cold war that is being waged between the United States and China. The Asian giant, now part of the BRICS bloc, has been gaining presence in Latin America and this contradicts the US purpose to control the continent. By attacking Brazil, the US attacks China and its huge investments in Latin America that only last year meant \$54 billion for the railway that would link the Atlantic with the Pacific.

Latin Americans are frightened by the U.S. negotiations with Argentine president Mauricio Macri regarding two new military bases, one on the border between Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, and another in Patagonia, near the world's largest freshwater aquifer, says the leader of liberation theology, who is already 77 years old.

Regarding the coup process in Brazil, Boff reported that the Movimiento Sin Tierra [Landless Movement] has the support of Pope Francisco who got very enthusiastically close to President Dilma Rousseff; so much so that she has greeted him on her every trip to Europe. In one of her trips she was accompanied by the Brazilian actress Leticia Sabatella who gave the Pope a first-hand description of the situation. She let him know that the main issue was defense of democracy, because attacking Dilma would bring violent forms of social repression. After listening to her, the Pope said: "It is the work of capitalism: of Brazilian capitalism and transnational capitalism."

Boff believes the Pope has seen that neo-liberalism, which gives more value to the market than to the common good for people, produces great marginalization and great poverty. The forty million Brazilians who were rescued from hunger in the country are now beginning to return to their previous situation.

"As is known, the deputy who remained as interim president dismissed Dilma's cabinet and attacked the Ministry of Social Welfare and the agrarian reform. Social projects are increasingly underfunded, attention to culture was scaled down from a ministry to an undersecretary, and Michel Temer cut the subsidies to public universities by half."

According to Boff, the Pope considered that the parliamentary coup without bayonets seeks the same effect as military coups did before: to reinforce a group of big national capitalists together with transnational capitalists aimed at a greater accumulation of capital by privatizing national assets.

There is a project to recolonize Latin America and increasingly turn it into an area that only exports pure raw materials without adding value to its products. Brazil itself has more than 70 million hectares to produce and satisfy hunger worldwide, and has more than enough water, said Boff.

"Everything would fall under the control of the privatized or internationalized capital. The Pope is aware of this phenomenon and of the fact that the poor would return to misery and hunger."

In Argentina, the state carries out a policy of privatization. It talks to the companies. There is no society but individuals. Wealth accumulation is concentrated in a shrinking group. You cannot analyze the situation in Argentina or Brazil separately or assess the attempt by the United States to align the two countries within the imperial strategy in isolation, Boff said.

"In the 13 years when the Workers Party (PT) in power, it was shown that there are two projects at stake. The two want to be democratic, but neo-liberal democracy is for the few and makes rich policies for the rich and poor policies for the poor."

Boff recalled that there are 210 million people in Brazil and 71,440 superrich who control more than half of the gross domestic product. The World Bank has said that the greatest accumulation of capital in the world is in Brazil, where the most anti-popular and anti-social capitalists reside. They keep much of their fortunes abroad in tax havens and operate through offshore companies. This is definitely an example of the two types of democracy.

The other type of democracy, that of Lula in Brazil, is the inclusive democracy, open to all. The global correlation of forces makes it impossible to prevent the accumulation of capital. But at least we can put some limit to it. In his interview with the Argentine newspaper Pagina 12, Leonardo Boff concluded, "We must do it."