

PRESENTATION

For Alexis of Tocqueville, "there is a fatal circle layout (almost imposed by fate) around each man, outside of which he can't escape. But inside the wide limits of that circle, the man is powerful and free. The same happens to communities."

Francisco Herrera Luque -with his sparkling originality- makes a pertinent and suggestive reading of our political history, in his work: *The four kings of the Spanish pack of cards*. He notices four big landmarks, selected by four characters. They are the incarnation of Venezuela on four moments of its history. The cards' pack of kings is Venezuela. They are the four faces of our country at the entrance to the new millennium. The cards' pack of kings are the representation of four big stages of Venezuela, personified in four equestrian figures of kings, with their respective squires or lieutenants. José Antonio Páez, the king of swords; Monagas, the swords' horse. Antonio Guzmán Blanco, the king of cups; Joaquín Crespo, the horse of cups. Juan Vicente Gómez responds well to the king's paradigm of sticks (*bastos*: one of the four suits in a Spanish pack of cards); Cipriano Castro enters in scene like the horse of *bastos*. And Rómulo Betancourt is the king of gold; Pérez Jiménez the horse of gold.

These four kings would symbolize four Republics or better, four styles of oneself Republic. That allows some people to begin to speak of a Fifth Republic, of a State rebuild or restructured, of a brave new democracy for the new millennium. For the time being, it seems that the holder of the new republican era or period would have in common with the previous "kings": their creole origin with high miscegenation; the sense of embodying the national greatness in time of severe crisis; having the support of the military factor and the fire capacity; the skilled search of genuineness; the lit 'bolivarianism'; the personal conscience that it can change the country, responding to the command of the popular will; somebody possessed by the idea that he is invested

from the High (for Heaven's sake) and from the Low (for the People) of a sovereignty dedicated to be perpetuated and to be lifted up by the ideologists of the régime, although it is known ahead of time that a revolution won't culminate.

They are big questions of difficult answer, in front of the vertiginous events that come happening in Venezuela for the new millennium. The end of the cycle traveled up to now, ¿does it precedes the tedious repetition or the exhaustion? ¿Is it necessary to wait, following an Aztec calendar, the coming of a Fifth Sun, of cataclysm or rebirth? We are in presence of a revolutionary process of change.¿Of which one will come out a rejuvenated republic, a restructured State, a political more efficient and more democratic system? ¿Or will it only be necessary to shuffle the same mallet of letters, in certain time?

For a serious answer and reasoned to so much query, we want to appeal to a knowledge of modern political science, very endowed with the instrumental one theoretical and practical necessary for the task. It is an applicable knowledge. Its body of generalizations, of theories, can and it should be applied, that is to say, used in the practice. This knowledge allows to intervene rationally on political processes, on structures and political institutions, on the political dynamics in an exceptional joint as the current one that Venezuela lives. This knowledge joins science and relevance. It is a critical, strategic knowledge; a knowledge of the action of the men that they build or they reconstruct their own society. And this knowledge can provide useful instruments for a conscious action in front of the situation, historical present and future that Venezuela is living.

This will be, in consequence, our methodology: I. A minimum of relating conceptual Themes (1-12) just as it manages them today the Political modern Science, applicable to countries of limited development as it is Venezuela. II. A reflexive phenomenology

concerning the overcome Fourth Republic (Themes13-17) and the Fifth Republic in march (Themes 18-27). We will suggest, at the end, four political possible scenarios to medium term (Theme 28), and a brief conclusion (Theme 29). All accompanied by a bibliography that has been consulted as well as all the footnotes in the original spanish edition. That gives academic seriousness to the work, to which cannot be requested neither to attribute any political or partisan militancy.

Regarding the personal style of the work, I want to underline that it responds to the author's desire, corroborated by 27 years of academic exercise in the Graduate degree and in the School of Political Sciences of the University of Andes, with periodic multiple publications, manuals and books that have a common denominator. All they have wanted to be a help so that the university members and a learned public can discover the truth of what has happened and it happens; they could be able to order the chaos of so much information that day by day we receive for the means, and make an intelligent reading of that gigantic universe of the political phenomena that we receive in avalanche of news personally. In 1918, a book of North American Lyle Spencer defined news like "something of that I find out today that I didn't know yesterday." Today, and in our current Venezuela, such a definition goes further on, and it reflects the restlessness of many readers, listeners and massively impacted televiewers: "the news is what I understand today, but of what I found out yesterday." In my 340 comments on facts and characters of 45 countries of the world, gathered in the series **Observatory of International Politics** (I Colombia 2001, II America 2002, III, Europe, Asia and Africa 2003, IV Global World 2004), the challenge was to bring near political distant realities by a kind of an intelligent telescope so that they could be seen better for who only perceived them as distant hazy or unreachable galaxies. The challenge being about the political complicated fabric of today's Venezuela is the inverse one. It is something so near that it wraps us for all the pores and it impacts us so much daily that it is difficult (even for an academic specialist) to take

the due distance, to neutralize the opposing pressures. It is necessary to manage well kind of an intelligent microscope that allows us to identify the reality of that happened and to understand today what we found out yesterday.

In the series of Observatory of International Politics we had the academic and financial support of the Council of Scientific, Humanistic and Technological Development of the University of Andes (CDCHT) that we thanked in their moment and that now we appreciate again for this volume that is also published in coedition of Academic Vicepresidency of the University of Andes that has welcomed him in the appreciated series of Social Studies. Thanks to those who continue understanding in our Alma Mater that "the intellectual, as well as the scientist, has the task of putting his knowledge to work. To know is to have responsibility of acting. And to know about the power is to commit with a change of the society" (David Easton).

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