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## INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

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### **Texts of the bicentennial collection: Our republican history. Second year Social Sciences**

Andrés Nasser Silva<sup>1</sup>: Metropolitan University (Venezuela)

[anasser@correo.unimet.edu.ve](mailto:anasser@correo.unimet.edu.ve)

#### **ABSTRACT**

The present work of research has as its aims the analysis, comparison and building of a constructive criticism of the texts of the bicentennial collection implemented by the government of Venezuela. Starting from the idea that each historian reconstructs the history based on his interests and objectives, then we begin a count of what the text *Our republican history* contains, specifically what is related to the chapter dealing with the government of Rómulo Betancourt and the first governments Rafael Caldera and Carlos Andrés Pérez. This because the three characters will become emblematic for the republican history of Venezuela, either for their contributions or their political, social and economic decisions. Each government will be reviewed as it appears in the text of the bicentennial collection and then it will be compared with other major works of Venezuelan historians. The comparison will provide an opportunity to compare views and verify how the story will usually have a significant bias as research often has particular causes.

#### **KEY WORDS**

History – Venezuela – bicentennial – Betancourt – Caldera – Perez.

### **Textos de la colección bicentenario: Nuestra historia republicana. Ciencias sociales de segundo año**

#### **RESUMEN**

El presente trabajo de investigación tiene por objeto el análisis, comparación y construcción de una crítica constructiva a los textos de la colección bicentenario

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<sup>1</sup> Andrés Nasser Silva: Metropolitan University / Department of Legal and Political Studies / Caracas / Venezuela.

[anasser@correo.unimet.edu.ve](mailto:anasser@correo.unimet.edu.ve)

implementados por el gobierno de Venezuela. Partiendo de la idea de que cada historiador reconstruye la historia basado en sus intereses y objetivos, es entonces que iniciaremos un recuento de lo que contiene el texto *Nuestra historia republicana*, específicamente lo relacionado al capítulo que trata el gobierno de Rómulo Betancourt y los primeros gobiernos de Rafael Caldera y Carlos Andrés Pérez. Ello por cuanto, los tres personajes resultarán emblemáticos para la historia republicana de Venezuela, ya sea por sus aportes o por sus decisiones políticas, sociales y económicas. Cada gobierno será reseñado según aparece en el texto de la colección bicentenario y luego será comparado con obras fundamentales de otros historiadores venezolanos. La comparación brindará la oportunidad de contrastar visiones y comprobar como la historia tendrá, usualmente, un importante sesgo pues la investigación suele tener causas particulares.

### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

Historia - Venezuela - bicentenario - Betancourt - Caldera - Pérez.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Modern, and even contemporary historical reconstruction, often more easily make enemies and with them, ample, constant and strong criticism of the methods of presentation, discussion and analysis of events. Especially tedious is to investigate the facts, contexts and decisions in which presidents or public figures are involved who are alive when a historical research is presented. The reasons may lie in both the magnifying glass and objectives of the historian, as in the historiographical handling that the state promotes; and it will result logical that those who promote this or that investigation, have an end, because the historical life of humanity is usually subject to critical judgment of the historian on duty.

The particularity and ends of each investigation are not an obstacle for the historical recount, they are rather a complement to the knowledge of mankind and culture of a country, in this case, that of Venezuela. It will result consonant to think that after sixteen years of arrival of Hugo Chavez and what the government's rhetoric has achieved, the historical reconstruction has varied biased towards the socialist, revolutionary and why not, communist magnifying glass, of the Venezuelan government. It is not a superficial assertion, because later in this essay, the official tendency to defend the initiatives of the Venezuelan Communist Party and its guerrilla variables will be seen. It is not a criticism, it is the review of what the official policy means its and position towards the republican history of Venezuela.

During the course of the essay, we will approach by parts, two chapters related to the governments of Rómulo Betancourt, Raul Leoni, Rafael Caldera and Carlos Andrés Pérez, seen from the presentation of the text *Our republican history*. There synthetically we will expose these four governments, then we will approach the same presidential terms under the scrutiny of other Venezuelan historians, to finally conclude with the contrast and sense of history in both expressions: the official text and other historians.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

- To expose the governments of Rómulo Betancourt, Raul Leoni, Rafael Caldera and Carlos Andrés Pérez, according to the book *Our republican history*
- Present the previous governments according to other researchers.
- To contrast both visions of Venezuelan history on the basis of the above objectives.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

From various specialized sources it is studied, analyzed and compared the different historical situations.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The historical account, as Louis Villoro (s / f) would say, serve for knowing a sector of reality, be it the one that the state furthers through its official rhetoric or the one to which each researcher dedicates in seeking the satisfaction of their own ends. William Shakespeare will affirm that the past is the prologue of the book of our lives and starting from there, is that humanity remits itself to the past to give the present a reason to exist. But then when we return to Villoro (s / f), we see how history responds to the requirements of the present. At this point we stop for a few lines, and it is that this statement of Villoro (s / f) could be the spearhead of the official version of the history of Venezuela. If previously the reconstruction of our political life is focused on the consolidation of projects, ideas and proposals of the governments previous to Hugo Chavez, from 2009 we might consider that it has begun to adapt the story to the molds of the present, largely because in Venezuela there is a tendency to personalize everything, from the laws to the names of the hospitals and elsewhere because the official ideology needs to make a recount of a part of the history that was not counted.

Luis Villoro (s/f) states that "it is common that the particular interests of the historian, linked to his situation, intentionally direct the selection of data, the argumentation and interpretation, in the manner of demonstrating the existence of a past situation that satisfies those interests "(p41). As it can be seen, the fact remains that the reconstruction of the life of a country is the model provisions and proposed by the official ideology, which does not mean discarding or ignoring those that do not fit that mold, but if you select the events and situations that raise social or collective needs participate in either group. History is a cultural forms of institutional justification, belief and even community purposes. Today, as we will later breaking down, we will see our republican history text responds to these community purposes that initially caught a community that had been neglected by governments previous to Hugo Chavez.

The chapters discuss in this essay concerning the presidencies of Romulo Betancourt, Raul Leoni, Rafael Caldera and Carlos Andres Perez of *Our republican history* come to confirm, or not, what we have before introduced on how the official rhetoric or ideology is able to reconstruct the republican history of the country, depending on its interests. Maurice Halbwachs (1968), claims that the history is not all the past and certainly not all the individual events of a country should form its reconstruction, but most of the collective facts necessarily yes, must be considered as support for validation of historical research. Even so, past events are selected, checked and classified according to needs and rules, which does not imply that certain events of the past, such as torture, guerrillas and their actions and the heavy hand of government, can not be restored. That is, while there is much of the history that we read in books and essays, there is another that is only accessible thanks to the painstaking work of historians, small or large memories that were believed lost (Halbwachs, 1968)

Let's look at this time to discuss the first chapter of the book *Our republican history*, dedicated to the governments of Rómulo Betancourt (1958 - 1963) and Raul Leoni (1964-1969). At the beginning we have a few brief lines exposing part of the inauguration speech of Rómulo Betancourt, in which a brief critique of the Communist Party and its ideology is done and how its ideology could be harmful to the construction of the Venezuelan democratic state lines. One of the main criticisms present in this chapter is related to the Punto Fijo Pact and its position against communism and its various variables in Venezuelan political life. Of particular relevance is the fact of what happened in the first year of the Betancourt government at the Organization of American States when measures against the Cuban government were discussed. Ignacio Luis Arcaya, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela, opposed any intervention against Cuba, a decision contrary to the government line of Betancourt, especially what became known over time as the Betancourt Doctrine. With this, the Democratic Republican Union, one of the official parties, withdrew from the government and the Pact of Punto Fijo, that was nothing but a series of minimum measures of strict compliance for the consolidation of democracy. Later in the same chapter, an account of how the government of Betancourt was influenced by the growing influence of the United States and the Pentagon, especially after winning the American president John Fitzgerald Kennedy, in 1961 begins to take place. Kennedy had said in his campaign speech that he would work to "prevent the spread of communism in Latin America" (p130). Based on this influence and the victory of Kennedy, he says that Venezuela broke diplomatic relations with the Republic of Cuba, supporting the OAS resolution in which it expelled Cuba from the organization in 1962. Then we talk about the relevance of the self-determination of the people enshrined in the charter of the United Nations peoples.

The emergence of social and political violence in August 1959, due to the elimination of the Emergency Plan that stipulated the delivery of construction materials to unemployed citizens and peasants who had been mobilized to Caracas, generated a rapid response of the National Guard. By 1960, the invasions of the estates by landless peasants were also suppressed by the same security body. Students and

workers suffered the same consequences for their demonstrations, when, for example, employees of CANTV paralyzed the company, or when students and high school students clashed with police. All these actions generated the suspension of guarantees from the government of Betancourt, but that did not silence the protests. The story of the book continues with a justification for the creation of urban guerrillas in March 1961, led by the Revolutionary Left Movement and the Communist Party. The first guerrilla actions were marked by an attack to a house of anti-Castro Cubans in 1961, who were allegedly cooperating with Venezuelan and US intelligence agencies. Later, a plane of Avensa was hijacked by three students and two workers, as well as the theft of artworks from the Museum of Fine Arts also happened and finally the armed struggle would be organized as a strategy of opposition to bourgeois democracy and the unpopular Fixed Point.

Just as there was a guerrilla struggle, there was also a military uprising in 1962, known as El Carupanazo, where military patriots, in the words of *Our republican history* text, rose up against the government but were soon defeated, pursued and prosecuted by military forces loyal government. Finally, with the decree 752, the Communist Party and the MIR were illegalized, who had previously decreed the armed struggle against the government.

In the final paragraphs about the Betancourt government, an account of other relevant measures that the executive implemented in the constitutional period that corresponded to him were made, we will mention the reduction of ten percent of wages and salaries due to the oil crisis, devaluation of the bolivar, readjustment and restriction of collective contracts, alignment with the policy of containment of national liberation movements (guerrillas), enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law and the enactment of a new constitution with a representative character, creation of the Venezuelan Petroleum Corporation, creation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, inauguration of the cities of San Felix and Puerto Ordaz and creation of the Venezuelan Corporation of Guayana.

#### **4.1 The presidency of Raul Leoni (1964 - 1959)**

Leoni starts presidency with the alliance called "broad base" in which AD, URD and the National Democratic Front, would form the ranks of the national government. The Communist Party, for its part decided to initiate democratic peace, returning with that legal forms of opposition to the government. In the text our republican history, says that with the government of Leoni continued repression and also the missing figure emerged, all as part of "Operation Annihilation" in the peace plan. There were many murders, political prisoners, torture and raids, among which stands out the Alberto Lovera, linked to the PCV and national liberation fronts. In 1966, it would pave the Central University of Venezuela, making prisoners seven hundred students.

The works for the government of Leoni, exposed by the text discussed are: the first stage of the Hydroelectric Complex of Guayana, the bridge over the Orinoco River, the creation of the Bank of Venezuela Workers, the Geneva Agreement was signed (to solve peacefully the problems with Guyana) and the entry of Venezuela to the Latin American Free Trade Association was achieved.

## **4.2 First Government of Rafael Caldera (1969 - 1973)**

One of the first measures of the government of Rafael Caldera was the pacification through the elimination of the DIGEPOL, as the country was still convulsed by the guerrilla, creating a new organ, the DISIP. He also created a Pacification Committee presided by the Cardinal Quintero, as a mediator between the government and the guerrillas. Afterwards, with the acceptance of the PCV of the pacification policy, there were only some guerrilla groups in the country presided by Carlos Betancourt, Gabriel Puerta y Fernando Soto Rojas. In agreement with these pacification measures that Caldera began, diplomatic relations with Cuba were also established, they were started with China and other socialist countries of East Europe, apart from maintaining them with Chile after Salvador Allende won in 1970.

Regarding educational policy of the government, the text states that the ordinary citizens rejected the violation of the University autonomy of the Central University of Venezuela, so it was considered a repressive educational policy, as it went against the university students. These university movements were influenced by social movements of the world, but specifically by the Cuban Revolution and the Latin American guerrillas, among others. Another surprising move by the government of Caldera, in the words of the text, was the decree 120 which established the Diversified Education, as well as the process of “bachelorization” of Technical Schools, causing their disappearance.

Finally, other measures of the government of Caldera stated in *Our republican history* were: the revaluation of the bolivar, the rising price of the oil barrel, the nationalization of the gas and the oil reversal, construction of the petrochemical complex Tablazo, the dam on the river Santo Domingo, as well as interesting advances in the construction of the hydroelectric complex Jose Antonio Paez in the abovementioned dam.

## **4.3 Government of Carlos Andres Perez (1974 - 1979)**

Pérez period, exposed in the book, is quite short and limited as to the works and government projects. The chapter is anchored in the steep increase in oil prices that led to the reform of the Hydrocarbon Law, advancing the reversal of the oil industry in concert with foreign concessionaires. That reversal foresaw the payment of compensations for a figure close to five billion dollars, that if they had waited until 1983, they would not had had to pay. PDVSA was created, which would start operating as a state within a state since there was no official oil policy, but it was the one of the transnational oil companies. Because of this reversion measure, the Venezuelan state lost about a forty percent share in oil exploration, remaining at twenty percent for the next twenty years.

In this government there was also a strong repressive policy against the opposition leaders, namely Professor Jorge Rodriguez.

## **4.4 Governments of Betancourt, Leoni, Caldera and Perez magnifier other researchers.**

#### 4.4.1. Government of Romulo Betancourt (1958 - 1963)

Alfredo Tarre Murzi (1992) in a biography dedicated to who is called today the father of Venezuelan democracy, Betancourt started this presidency expounding about the importance that a series of street and worker protests that started since the Interim Board had since 1959. This as a prologue of the Communist Party's reaction to their exclusion from the Pact of Punto Fijo, but not the possibility to apply for and be elected to public office as indeed happened with Fabricio Ojeda, elected deputy and later guerrilla.

Later, the issue of so-called Emergency Plan and the reasons for its removal is dealt with. Betancourt states that that plan had absorbed more than a billion bolivars "under the pretext of paying a kind of unemployment insurance", besides that there was a huge source of administrative corruption that was not solving the underlying issue in the workers unemployment (Murzi, 1992). The removal of the Emergency Plan, came hand in hand with the creation of new jobs to try to occupy the unemployed.

The presidential facet of Betancourt could be highlighted by two key issues, according to Manuel Caballero (2008), they are: as Simon Saez Merida said, that Betancourt was seen really as President of the Republic and as Commander in Chief of the Venezuelan Armed Forces, being perhaps the first man to have both offices without the slightest glimmer of doubt. The second fundamental aspect, not foreign to the Betancourt Doctrine for foreign policy, was the oil policy with the founding of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries he had in his hands, "one of the most influential cartels of World Economy" (p151)

. With the arrival of Betancourt to power in 1958 not only opened in Venezuela the possibility of establishing a democratic regime but also its main feature as is the freedom of expression, political parties, free elections, respect for human rights and administrative neatness. Manuel Caballero (1998) says that one of the most important aspects of democracy which establishes Betancourt, is a break with paternalism or tethering the power with a person, considering that the constitution created in 1961 broke with all these paradigms, and his driver did not accept the nomination for a third term. Essential for this political project, was the Pact of Punto Fijo mentioned in previous lines, and it was that among its objectives, three of the four political parties proposed the following: extending the political truce to prevent breakage, defending the constitutionality, right to govern according to the election result, defense of the constitutional authorities, government of national unity, common minimum program in order to strengthen democracy as a system, among other things. In the words of Andrés Stambouli (2002), in Punto Fijo (p130) "a political system of conciliation and compromise between heterogeneous social forces, charged with maintaining social cohesion and ensuring the stability of the nascent political form was formed." Thus, the commitment set in this agreement represents the solution to the crisis of governance that Venezuela lived for the moment, since it will facilitate cooperation. Finally, quoted by Caballero (2008), Germán Carrera Damas would say that the enactment of the Electoral Statute will turn Betancourt into a "historical character" (p149), as incorporated into the political life of the majority of Venezuelans who were not citizens: women, young men of

military age and illiterate; "This last made political subjects of those who were not very far from simple objects: the majority peasants" (p149).

#### **4.5 President Raul Leoni (1964 - 1969)**

Fernando Morgado Bossio (2012), makes a brief account of what the government of Raul Leoni was in terms of projects, we will briefly make a review by areas. Meanwhile, regarding the policy of pacification, Leoni enacted the Commutation of a Sentence, managing to release more than 250 indicted because of the armed guerrilla insurrection.

Education: Leoni promotes the construction of 963 primary and secondary education schools, increasing by 80% the school registration, the Institute of Culture and Fine Arts and the Children's Foundation were created.

Health: the General Hospitals of Cumana, Carupano, Maturin, Puerto Cabello, Upata, San Cristobal, Cabimas, Valencia and the University of Maracaibo, in addition to operating several aqueducts across the country were created. Together with the World Health Organization, Leoni implements programs to support women in labor, nursing mothers and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.

Road construction: the Angostura Bridge over the Orinoco River, Arauca International Bridge, the Valencia - Puerto Cabello highway, 2569 kilometers of roads and paving of 3,000 kilometers. The construction of the Cota Mil and the Avenida Libertador in Caracas was started.

Housing: about 154,000 houses for the lower class and middle class were built, plus 19,000 in the rural sector, with which the Savings and Loan Entities were created for home purchases and their improvement .

As regards the industrial sector, the government of Leoni was the most important, since the use of the oil boom, in addition to modernize the country, served to install heavy industry in Venezuela. Such is the case of Alcasa, Petrochemical in Moron and El Tablazo La Cabrera, Las Morochas, La Fría and Punto Fijo Thermal Power Stations, increasing electricity production and expansion of iron, steel and aluminum in the zone of Guayana.

#### **4.6 Rafael Caldera government (1969 - 1973)**

On the website of Rafael Caldera (see references), one can see the main or most important achievements of this presidency. We will enunciate some of them that have been corroborated within this research process:

- The country's peace is achieved, with the incorporation of the guerrillas to democratic life. Murzi (1992), quoting Betancourt, says that "the legalization of communist dissidents was convenient to atomize the traditional Marxist - Leninist" archipelago (P421). That is, it was a state strategy to calm the country.
- Development of a foreign policy of friendship, in which relations were established with Cuba, the Soviet Union. The OPEC was also strengthened.
- Incorporation of farm workers to the Labor Law.
- Achieved the construction of 100,000 homes in a year.

- Achieved oil reversal and gas nationalization, increasing fiscal participation to Bs 34.63 per oil barrel.
- Built the polyhedron of Caracas, the Central Park, the courts of the Republic, began the development of the Caracas Subway and built the Miguel Perez Carreño Hospital.
- Created the National Parks Institute, La Chinita Airport, the second stage of the Guri, the Atheneum of Caracas and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Caracas.

It is imperative to emphasize that the works mentioned above are only a summary of the five year period, in no case it is intended to exclude or include works for the convenience of this research. We only take his most important works, expressed by Andres Caldera Pietri on the official website of the former president.

#### **4.7 Government of Carlos Andres Perez (1974 - 1979)**

Fernando Morgado Bossio (2012), in his weekly column on the digital newspaper El Tiempo exposes by segments, part of what was the national and international policy implemented by the first government of Carlos Andres Perez. We will present some of his projects:

Economy: nationalization of state enterprises, particularly oil and iron, for which Petróleos de Venezuela is created. The Investment Fund of Venezuela and Corpindustria were created.

Education: expansion of school registration at all levels, coupled with an increase in the salaries of teachers and construction of numerous buildings for colleges, schools and universities. The recognized scholarship program Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho for the Venezuelan youth, the Gran Mariscal library for the production of books and texts of Venezuelan authors and finally the National System of Youth Orchestras were created.

Housing: about 350,000 households were created, stimulating construction apart from all the necessary materials such as cement, steel bars, sand, stone and sanitary parts.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Compare and analyze the two visions briefly outlined above.**

The introduction to this work could, in a sense, sound biased or suggestive as the proposal of historical research starts as one that meets the objectives a historian or researcher, either by personal motivation or by express request of the government of a country. To reconstruct the historical fact, it is not an easy task, especially when you analyze the different historiographical trends that exist and how each one emphasizes one or another event. In the case of the history of Venezuela, it is evident as the process of recovering the political, social and economic life of the country tends to be the focus of official policy, but this should not imply to have only one version of the story. The government of Betancourt and Murzi (1992) states it, faced a very strong armed struggle that even attemptss against his life, but that

fact should not be the only relevant to the historian, since over five years more was done than' to face the guerrillas. But from the point of view of *Our republican history* book, the Betancourt government was focused on meeting US interests and pursue and imprison guerrillas and confront Cuba and Communist regimes in the world. Carlos Aguirre Rojas (s / f) in the Antimanual of the bad historian suggested that the story should be told highlighting the achievements of the vanquished and the victors, because it is multi cause and the culture of a country is determined by those events of the past that influenced their generations. The guerrilla persecution is a fact that Venezuela lived for nine years, but the importance of the democratic pact signed in 1958 is also central to the stabilization and consolidation of a democratic process that built important infrastructure works throughout the national territory. On the other part, George Duby (s / f), also speaks of the intentions of history and that claim is closely linked to the ultimate goal of this research, since depending on the magnifying glass with which a historical fact is analyzed we can understand why this or that statement. Now, while it is true that the objectives of the author are critical, it remains true that even then history should be rewritten in the possibility of obtaining a demonstrable truth and with the necessary rigor for that purpose. Anyway, Duby (s / f) says, the significance of some stories, depend on how much society is identified with them. The question for the Venezuelan case would be, which of the modern histories of Venezuela we today study, we identify? Michael Halbwachs (1968), just talks about the collective memory and historical memory and the first thing he says is that they are not the same thing. In the psyche of a part of our society, memories of the armed struggle of the sixties, the guerrillas, booms brought by the governments of Democratic Action and COPEI but also long periods when oil distracted our rulers from serving and solving the major problems of our country. History should be a bridge to the past, not to imitate it but to see it on the big screen and analyze what we were and did and thus understand what we are. Halbwachs (1968) argues that history is selected and classified in the books according to needs, which could be social or political. Today, reading the book *Our republican history* we realize which are the details that matter and which are the microhistories that after sixteen years we are teaching children and young Venezuelans are. They are not false stories, it is the version of the vanquished of which Aguirre Rojas (s / f) spoke, then the fundamental criticism, or rather the wake-up call, would be to rescue the good of both versions and reconstruct a complete text that guides and enable our society to choose which ideological tendency to pursue, to split hairs in the reconstruction of the facts as from the understanding of our past is that we will understand our present.

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