**The Empire Strikes Back – the resurgent right in Latin America**

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In this short paper I’m not going to discuss, for example, the soft coup as happened in Paraguay and Brazil or the electoral reverses, such as in Argentina.

Instead I want to suggest that there has been a US inspired rupture in the unity of the trade union movement in Latin America.

Although it may be worth just asking a question about just how valuable that unity was on the ground given that one of the unions involved in the rupture, the CTM from Mexico, is implicated in the murder of activists from the genuinely independent union, Los Mineros.

<http://www.tradeunionfreedom.co.uk/two-strikers-assassinated-in-mexico/>

In 2016 a group of union federations from Latin America and the Caribbean followed a course of action designed to force a rupture within the International Trade Union Confederation's organisation in the Caribbean and the Americas – TUCA.

These 12 union federations presented themselves as Corriente Alternativa Democrática (CAS) and consisted of union federations from Aruba, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Curaçao, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela.

At the meeting of this group in September 2016 in Mexico, where the creation of CAS was announced, the assistant Secretary of Labour of the Mexican government [the ministry that Los Mineros hold complicit in the murder of its activists] who was invited stated in public that the initiative to create a new regional organisation would be “the start of a major change for the international labour movement.”

We may assume that this “major change” is not necessarily in the interests of workers.

The founding Congress of the separate regional confederation now called Alterntiva Democrática Sindical (ADS) took place in Bogotá in April 2017 and has reduced to 10 federations, although it could have been up to 14 at one point as the CTH – Honduras and CGT – Honduras flirted with membership. The ten are:

* FTA – Aruba
* Forca Sindical – Brazil (not the CUT)
* CAT – Chile
* CGT – Colombia (not the CUT)
* CGTC – Curaçao
* CSE – Ecuador (not the CUT)
* CROC – Mexico
* CTM – Mexico
* CGTP – Panama
* CNT – Paraguay

Note that the CAT – Peru and CTV – Venezuela do not appear on the final list.

It would be good news for us if the CTV Venezuela had been and action taken against it by the ITUC as it is the pro-coup, anti-Chavista union but it seems to drop out of the narrative as the story unfolds.

Although the ITUC does not recognise the Bolivarian union federation, CBST, it would be a step forward if it also did not recognise the anti-Chavista CTV.

Perhaps the reason the rump CTV did not persist with the split was to maintain its illegitimate recognition from the global union confederation.

A leader of the CROC Mexico made this statement:

“ADS is an organisation that will strengthen the union work in Latin America and will also strengthen the policy of our governments in all our countries, because in the ILO there are organisations that are attacking our countries. And the organisations of TUCA and the ITUC do not reply to this criticism that are made towards our governments. Therefore the ADS will have a voice in the ILO and will defend trade union organisation in Mexico and also actions of our own government in this international court.”

This is a bizarre statement for a union leader to make as the criticism made by the ITUC at the ILO against the government of Mexico would be for labour rights violations!

These 10 federations have been suspended from the ITUC and will in all likelihood be expelled next year.

The ADS has recently been in Washington soliciting funds from the National Endowment for Democracy.

It would seem unlikely that this organisation just pitches up in Washington seeking funding from the NED.

This nascent relationship with that National Endowment for Democracy leads me to suggest that the US is behind this split in the trade union movement in Latin America – almost a rerun of the CIA’s old Cold War tactics of either suborning existing unions or running its own yellow unions in competition with real unions supported by workers.

One difference this time is the ITUC’s principled stand against this right wing splinter group has the support of the American AFL-CIO, unlike for much of the Cold War period when many US unions were seemingly in league with the CIA.

Further info at: <http://www.tradeunionfreedom.co.uk/ituc-suspends-right-wing-yellow-unions/>

For a comprehensive report of this contribution to the Empire Strikes Back workshop see: <http://www.latamrob.com/mexicos-union-charros-go-regional/>