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The bridges that integrate Latin America and the Caribbean: Letter to readers

The Brazilian Journal of Latin American Studies, **BJLAS**, scientific journal of the Postgraduate Program in Integration of Latin America, is very pleased to present the last edition of 2022, number 44.

Interested in disseminating research, theoretical analysis and critical interpretations of the Latin American and Caribbean reality, the BJLAS has been receiving more and more proposals for articles whose daring and original themes require interdisciplinary dialogues between the various social sciences and the arts. Here, the COVID-19 epidemic is the backdrop for studies on new constitutionalism, indigenous struggles and theater in virtual networks. The absence of social policies dialogues in this issue with foreign policy, with Latin American feminism and with the constitutions. The absence of democracy and the authoritarianism of the State, here, are

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portrayed in the work on female actions against State violence or in the soundtrack of Brazilian music inspired by the Cuban Revolution.

As for Mercosur, once hegemonized by economic studies and international relations, today it is thematized in studies on human trafficking in dialogue with human rights, in analyzes on networks and creativity in relations between countries, through the literary pages of several writers.

This is how, in a fruitful, transversal and sometimes even undisciplined way, our authors surprise us in the pages of this issue of **BJLAS** with case studies in specific countries, or by comparative analysis between countries, including locating our region in the complex scenario of the contemporary world-economy.

The first study in this issue deals with Chinese investments in Latin America -especially in Peru and Chile- and the impact of this initiative on trade and the regulation of laws, and argues that expanding connectivity is a condition for consolidating regional agreements with China. ***The Belt and Road Initiative and its impact on Latin American connectivity: A case study from Chile and Peru*** is the result of a study carried out by researchers and specialists in International Law, Maria Eugênia Kroetz (*Getúlio Vargas Foundation, Brazil*) and Marco André Germanò (*University of Sao Paulo, Brazil*).

The second study deals with Brazil's international cooperation with Haiti as part of operations encouraged by the UN in what became known as MINUSTAH. The study is centered on an aspect of this cooperation that is little discussed: ***Brazilian foreign policy and international transfer of public policies: MINUSTAH as a window of opportunity for Brazilian cooperation in Haiti (2004-2017)***. Despite the criticism that the sending of Brazilian military troops to the Caribbean country may have aroused in spheres of politics and academia, the study values the experience of the Workers' Party governments in social policies to define its foreign policy. The interpretation results from the research work of Rodrigo Fernando

Gallo, at the *Federal University of ABC (Brazil)* and at the *University of São Paulo (Brazil)*.

The next studies analyze the Common Market of the South, Mercosur, from three different perspectives, international law, economics and literature, which provides angles of observation and consistent criticism of the Bloc's failures. The three articles also include alternatives along the paths opened by human rights, alternative development and cultural production.

Let's look at the first article.

The priority agenda that human trafficking represents for international law and for human rights is the subject that organizes the analyzes of the specialist in Public Management and International Cooperation, Brenda de Paula Mendes Dominguez, from the *Federal University of Paraíba (Brazil)*. The article is entitled ***Fighting Human Trafficking in Mercosur*** and is the result of a thorough research into documents and legislation produced over thirty years by the Common Market of the South. In this work, the researcher identifies the main bottlenecks in anti-trafficking cooperation between the Bloc's countries, which would make a solid regional policy to face this crime unfeasible.

The second study on Mercosur is based on the Creative Industry segment in the economic Bloc, as an alternative for the sustained development of the Region. Entitled ***Creative Economy in Mercosur countries: brief conjunctural analysis***, the article indicates how this sector, formed by internet services, television, books, games, cinema, radio and, among others, music, has been putting information into circulation, cultural products and knowledge capable of generating resources and alternative economic benefits for development. The work written by Isaías Albertin de Moraes (*São Paulo State University, Brazil*) and Mônica Heinzemann Portella de Aguiar (*Federal University Fluminense, Brazil*) is a relevant

contribution on the Bloc's performance in perspective compared to other regions.

The last study on the Southern Cone Bloc, ***The Mercosur Fiction: Politics and Literature in Gabriela Aguerre's O Quarto Branco***, is a bet on art and, in particular, on literature -through the novel- for the construction of identities common in this region. By analyzing the work of the Uruguayan writer Gabriela Aguerre, the article assumes the Bloc's failure to build a regional identity. And when asking whether it is possible for the countries of the Southern Cone to overcome the national borders of identity, Sarah C. Lucena, from the *University of Georgia (USA)*, offers the alternatives of fiction and shared imagination as a path not yet tried. At the heart of this work lie Benedict Anderson's theses on Imagined Communities and the old dilemmas of a Latin America dismembered, mischaracterized and alienated from itself.

Art as a possible resource for dialogue between countries, subjects and peoples is also the intellectual bet of the next article that unites Brazil and Cuba, based on a Brazilian composer and artist, Gonzaguinha. The article presents excerpts from several attempts and experiences of solidarity and dialogue, not only Brazilian, promoted by composers engaged against the dictatorships that since the 1960s spread across Latin America. ***Gonzaguinha and "Libertad Mariposa": A connection with Nueva Trova Cubana*** brings to mind the lyrics of songs produced since 1960 against exception regimes, and also rescues works silenced by censorship. Finally, in the metaphors of Freedom, historian Rodrigo Laureano Soares (*Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*) pays tribute to the Cuban Trova and, in particular, to *Querido Pablo* (Pablo Milanez, died in 2022), one of the best chords and one of the sweetest voices representing Latin American and Caribbean music.

The next article in this issue of **BJLAS** also deals with art and the bridges that integrate the countries of Latin America. ***Latin American Theater in***

Times of Pandemic: International Festivals and Aesthetic Crossings is a study that takes place in the context of the Covid-19 epidemic and the confinement that took artists from their stages and audiences. Far from remaining in silence and obscurity, a group of theater producers and artists, articulated internationally, reinvented themselves in festivals and theatrical videographic shows in the virtual modality. This article, proposed by Luiz Paixão Lima Borges (*Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil*), deals with this experience, new languages, new techniques and proposals for the democratization of theater. The study analyzes debates, lectures, workshops, as well as announcements and invitations from festival organizers and theater groups in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela, and concludes that in times of confinement, the reinvented theater was also a decisive vaccine against the pain of isolation.

The pandemic crisis is also the background against which the actors of the article ***Political Participation of Indigenous Women in Ecuador: from the Citizen's Revolution to the Covid-19 pandemic***. By journalist and political scientist Ana Luísa Melo Ferreira (*University of Florida, USA*), the article analyzes the activism of Ecuadorian indigenous women against the various forms of exclusion that exist against subjects with minority identities -like them- in countries dominated by coloniality, racism, patriarchy and neoliberalism. In a feminist and decolonial vein, the article analyzes the main events since the constitution of the Plurinational State of Ecuador, through a perspective that allows the re-reading of recent history by the political protagonism of indigenous women. By ending the analysis with the consequences of COVID-19 in the Andean country, now dominated by minimal State policies, the intellectual demonstrates not only the importance of women's actions in containing state necropolitics, but also the protagonism that indigenous women have always had - though silenced- in Ecuadorian political struggles.

Yet on the trail opened by Latin American feminism, the interpretation of the next article is about ***The Trajectory of the Feminist Movement and legal achievements towards gender parity in the constituent process of Chilean Constitutional Convention***. The work rescues the main events of the social struggles of the last decade in Chile, and demonstrates how, from secondary schools, a movement of young women students progressively forms with agendas on social and educational policies and on women's rights agendas. The critical awareness of this movement, inspired by the studies of the anthropologist of violence Rita Segado, is organized mainly in response to state violence -symbolized by the sexual violence promoted by the carabineros- and over time it turns into clear agendas against gender relations. This process will be enshrined in the new Chilean constituent, with the participation of women on an equal basis, and with proposals that link women's rights to the rights of indigenous peoples, social and environmental rights, in a clear response against neoliberalism. The work is by researchers Paloma Gerzzeli Pitre and Ana Paula Galvão, from the University of São Paulo (*Brazil*).

As in every issue, **BJLAS** closes its issue with a review of a contemporary work by a great Latin Americanist author: ***Theoretical problems of the integral state in Latin America. Forces in tension and crisis***, a work organized by the Mexican intellectual Lucio Oliver Costilla. The work brings together interpretations of several intellectuals from the region, with local perspectives, based on the guidelines bequeathed by Antonio Gramsci, correctly betting on the originality of the Italian thinker to understand the crisis of hegemony of the States in Latin America. The review is by sociologist and researcher at the ***National Autonomous University of Mexico*** (México), Nicolás Laguna.

Enjoy the reading!

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