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On this day of (mis)/remembering MLK, I think about the promise of Latin America's pink tide (into which I was born and which molded me politically) to deliver economic redistribution and socialism by peaceful means, a version of MLKs dream. ■

In the past 20 years, various spots in Latin/Central America have been the murder capitals of the world. It remains the most dangerous place in the hemisphere to be a journalist or a politician. A half century of coups and counter-coups have beleaguered the continent

Collapsing global economies have left many countries behind, and almost all are struggling to find an economic path forward, including Vnzla which now under US sanctions and dwindling reserves must construct a post-petrol economy to survive and has failed to begin to do so.

MLK's peaceful vision for racial and economic transformation in the US made him into an enemy of the state for whom racial and economic violence is both foundational and necessary for its hegemony and he was murdered by those complicit in that mission of domination.

Allende, MLK's contemporary, succeeded in achieving part of MLKs vision by winning a democratic mandate for social justice and transformation at the ballot box and without firing a single bullet. This made him into an enemy of a faraway State, the US, and he was murdered for it.

The Argentine elite then visited a decades long regime of terror and violence that their enemies in the working masses had consciously elected to spare them from, to spare them the fate Cuban/Spanish colonialists of the Caribbean had met at the hands of the July V movement.

Democracy returned to Argentina, but Allende's promise was never fulfilled. Cuba, one of the poorest countries on the planet, defiantly remains the closest example of socialism in the West, and has been duly punished for half a century for this crime.

Malcom X, often butting heads with MLK, put an ultimatum to the American people during his peak as a militant Black nationalist, it's the Ballot or the Bullet. Effectively, liberation means Allende and MLK, or Che and Castro
https://t.co/rhxXIeY1yf

“Ballot or the bullet” has a different meaning in 2020. White supremacist militias radicalized on misinformation, organized on social media, and emboldened, ordered around by the POTUS have literally shot bullets into the highest seat of government...

And await a rapturous delivery from the clutches of impending communist rule, or so they believe, backed by a global cabal of media elites and shadowy billionaires protecting a deep network of human and child trafficking. A belief rooted in not just alt facts but an alt cosmology

The same racial violence and hatred which fueled the insurrection at the Capitol sits just beneath the deliberate misremembering of MLK by the powerful who cannot, will not commit to even a shred of reform, truth, or reconciliation without existential pressure.

In the presence of a labor movement this existential pressure comes in the form of strikes, boycotts — a way to build power in the working class that has been systematically obliterated so thoroughly that the only option many see is violence

Especially those who believe that the military, the police, the official instruments of the state which hold a monopoly on “legitimate” violence are secretly on their side.

In Alabama and Mississippi, MLK day and the birthday of Robert E Lee are celebrated on the same day. An official tradition which is so deeply insulting to MLKs memory there is no possible justification. This is the yolk of white supremacy this nation cannot shake.

The Ballot or the Bullet is a very real choice. We make it every day. Every day without truth and reconciliation, without redistribution, without liberation and real democracy is a step closer to the Bullet. But there are no guarantees as to who will be firing it and where.

I don’t like violence. I’ve lived a relatively comfortable life and already had my fill of it. MLK committed to a radical vision of peace even under the constant threat and indeed experience of physical, political, emotional violence, one instance which killed him.

I don’t really have a way to end this. Just reflections. I don’t have answers. But we need democracy, real democracy, bad in this Empire, and every day we do not achieve the Ballot we are merely exporting the Bullet elsewhere.

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