

Farewell to Tabaré

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Tabaré Vasquez died Sunday morning in Montevideo.

The former president of Uruguay, Tabaré Vázquez, passed away in the early hours of this Sunday morning, leaving a sound legacy that should be studied and debated in progressive and leftist parties in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Coming from a humble family in Montevideo, he managed to graduate as a doctor and before becoming involved in political life, he took a sporting career and was elected in 1979 as president of the Atlético Progreso Soccer Club, which under his leadership was declared champion of the Uruguayan First Division in 1989.

In a country where the distribution of power was essentially between the Colorado and National Parties, Vázquez became the first leftist candidate to occupy the position of Intendant of Montevideo in 1990, nominated by the Broad Front coalition. This was a relatively new organization, founded in 1971 with the alliance of different forces of the Uruguayan center and left wings -- among them the Communist, Socialist, Social Democracy, Christian Democrats parties, and other groups that joined over time.

Tabaré Vázquez was the candidate for the country's presidency for the Broad Front in 1994 and 1999, but lost the elections on both occasions. Nevertheless, bipartisanship was finally ended when he achieved victory in 2004 and then in 2014, receiving office directly from José "Pepe" Mujica.

The importance of all these years of Broad Front governance was highlighted by Vázquez himself recently during his last interview to the television program "El Legado" on the Uruguayan channel 10.

He pointed out that the involvement of the left wing with the presidency had broken several myths, among them, the belief that there would be a massive flight of capital and investments, hence many companies would close and unemployment and poverty rates would increase. In fact, something entirely different happened.

During the Broad Front's administration, the human being was placed at the core of the government's actions, all inequalities were tackled and some efforts were undertaken to achieve people's wellbeing.

Another myth, the former president pointed out during his last interview, was that with a leftist administration, the institutional process would be affected, following social divisions and confrontations.

There was no persecution, street fights or deaths, and even when not everything was perfect, the country continued to be one of the most peaceful in our region.

There are neighboring nations that should review this documentation, and study the role played by Tabaré Vázquez, because as Argentinean Vice President Cristina Fernández expressed: "He helped consolidate the ideal of the Great Homeland."

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