

# A VICTORY FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira

*Folha de S. Paulo*, April 5, 2010

**It's time celebrate the victory of Obama and the American people with the approval of the reform of the healthcare system.**

I know that it is not politically correct to believe in progress, but I am convinced of its existence. I don't believe in the enlightened progress identified with the advance of reason, but I believe in progress as an economic, social, and political development; as a historical process that began with the capitalist revolution, under which development the Enlightenment philosophers were living. From then on, for each country that completed that revolution, the economic development became relatively automatic and opened the way to the other forms of development. From this essential change in the history of every people, the achievement of the major modern political goals – security, freedom, economic well-being, social justice, and environmental protection – occurred gradually. Not by accident, but because the political struggle of citizens endowed with republican spirit produced cumulative results, instead of running out with the decadence of an empire, as it happened with the Roman Empire. If we analyze, in 50-year periods, the countries that already achieved their capitalist revolution, we will see that despite the regressions that always happen and that can be terrible, there were advances in the achievement of those political goals.

The last 60 years of the history of the United States, however, belied me up to a certain point. Between 1776 and 1945, they experienced a remarkable progress, but after the summit reached with the victory in the World War II, this progress lost momentum. If we compare it with the progress of the Western and Northern European countries, it becomes clear that the United States were lagging behind. They continued to lead the economic and technological development, but they proved incapable of reducing social inequalities, and were not able to correct the influence of money on elections, as did the Europeans.

Many factors may explain this backwardness. However, this is not the time to discuss this issue, but rather to celebrate the great victory of President Barack Obama and the American people with the approval of the reform of the healthcare system. It was difficult to understand that a country as rich as the United States still did not have a universal healthcare system. The right to healthcare is a right whose universality only compares with the right to basic education. No argument, no criterion, nothing justifies that the richest or the most powerful people should have more access to healthcare. In the United States, however, there was complete inequality, since more than 40 million people did not have any protection. Now, with the introduction of a nearly universal healthcare system, there was an improvement. The American healthcare system will continue to be unfair and inefficient; the insurance companies that fiercely opposed the reform will continue to be a source of tremendous inefficiency. The United States will continue to spend with healthcare twice as much the European countries spend in relation to their GDP in order to have a result, in terms of protecting their citizens, that on average is equivalent, but that is much more unbalanced. The reform is far from having solved all the problems. But now the number of those who will remain without any protection has been largely reduced – and this is already a reason for celebrating. It was a victory for the American people that confirmed my belief in progress. And reminded me that we live in an unequal and unfair world, but where there is, in the end, a basic solidarity. Reducing injustice is not only a victory for those who suffer injustice; it is a victory for all those who fight for justice.