



Platform for dialogue

"Chile half a century after Allende: the struggle for democracy and the Constituent Assembly"

San José, Costa Rica

September 2-3, 2021

Virtual mode

September 4, 2020, marked 50 years of the electoral triumph of the Popular Unity (UP) in Chile. It was a fact of extraordinary impact in Latin America and globally. With the inauguration of Salvador Allende, an ambitious and original political reform process began in Chile within the framework of other projects that had objectives similar to those of the UP.

Rethinking it half a century later, in the midst of the vast mobilizations that preceded the covid-19 pandemic and that reemerged despite it, revealing a deep popular dissatisfaction, it is not only an academic exercise but also an effort of current political importance, especially in the context of debates, mobilizations, and conflicts surrounding the project of elaborating a new Constitution approved in Chile with a large majority in the October 25, 2020 plebiscite.

In this half-century, in-depth transformations occurred in the economic and political reality of Latin America and the world that, far from advancing towards the direction proposed by the UP, frequently took an opposite direction. They were years of radical application of neoliberal policies promoted by governments such as those of Ronald Reagan in the United States (1981-89) and Margaret Thatcher in England (1979-90). Progress was made in privatization and financial liberalization mechanisms at a global level, which fed a process of concentration of wealth in a few hands that, since then, has not stopped accentuating.

The coup d'état against Allende's constitutional government, fueled by a broad political initiative promoted and financed by Washington - as it is sufficiently documented today- is a fundamental moment in this process of applying neoliberal reforms at a global level, but particularly, for Latin America.

The authenticity of the Chilean process - a result of both the depth of the reforms promoted and the electoral form chosen to promote this political alternative - was answered with particular brutality, but above all, with a radical economic counter-reform. The liberalization model of the economy has hardly been carried so far in any other country, nor has it been so far advanced in the privatization process.

In his book *Chile actual. Anatomía de un mito* published in 1997, the sociologist Tomás Moulián tries to understand "a time full of extreme experiences, tragic for many, with actors living in a world where the application of a certain strategic rationality (that of terror) led them to delirious performance". Today's Chile –in Moulián's words– "comes from a capitalist revolution", in reality a counterrevolution, which was the conservative response to an ascending popular movement –

a statement that already opens a wide avenue of reflection to analyze the results of these 50 years -. The Chilean sociologist affirms that "a decisive element in Chile today is the compulsion to forget." Facing that challenge, rescuing that experience, is another good reason to analyze and reconsider the Chilean process.

A third element is a debate on the nature of democracy. In particular, the "undressing of the simulation of procedural democracy." He assures that anyone who observes the existing democracy in Chile without blinders should realize that it is a "substantive" democracy, but that substantivity consists "of guaranteeing the reproduction of a social order based on the property and the private profit." Exploring what sustains it, after the military tutelage is over, is another relevant aspect of the debate.

Publications on these aspects have been multiplied, on the 50th anniversary of the triumph of the Popular Unity. The magazine *Anales*, from the University of Chile, published an issue dedicated to the subject.¹ Clacso also published a digital book from the Working Group "*Izquierdas: praxis y transformación social*" *Chile a 50 años de la Unidad Popular: Trayectorias históricas*. Therefore, looking back at that bifurcation in history that the "Chilean case" signified is a particularly relevant exercise for the analysis of Latin America. The experience of the Popular Unity has been the subject of the most diverse analyzes. It is the appropriate time to systematize these efforts and analyze them within the framework of the new regional reality.

Isn't one of the explanations for this dissatisfaction behind the counterrevolution that has been established in the region since then? What characteristics did the so-called democratization process have that replaced the military dictatorships established in various Latin American countries in the 60s and 70s, after the overthrow of the Popular Unity government? What was the particular characteristic of that transition in Chile? What role has the military played? How much was neoliberalism affirmed? What kind of democratic regimes have been achieved?

These are just a few questions that stem from this interest in rethinking the history of the past 50 years.

Call for application

Based on these reflections, the Regional Central America Center and the Caribbean CALAS convene the Platform for Dialogue "Chile half a century after Allende: the struggle for democracy and the Constituent Assembly." The meeting will offer a space to present and discuss individual experiences, academic analysis, political positions, literary and artistic representations. In particular, it seeks to retrieve, from the perspective of people still active today in the professional and academic life of Chile, the aspirations of the UP government and the consequences of its overthrow by a military coup. It is about having the participation of those who then participated in the political process (not necessarily in relevant leadership positions) and of young people who today participate in the protests against the current regime. It is also about fostering a dialogue between political actors of that time and academics who have studied the "Chile case" and its importance for Latin America, pointing out that, in various cases, both categories overlap. Finally, it is about thinking about the democratic crisis in Latin America in the light of these reflections.

¹ Fifty years after the triumph of the Popular Unity. *Anales Magazine*, Seventh series, Nº18 / 2020 –University of Chile, Santiago.

Thematic axes

The Platform for Dialogue will be structured around the following axes:

- What was proposed and what is still in force in the Popular Unity program?
- Dictatorship and (neo) liberalism: the case of Chile
- Social movements in Chile in the 21st century
- Lessons from the Constituent Assembly
- Repercussions of the “Chilean case” in Latin America
- Security and military
- Crisis of democracy
- Imperialism and anti-imperialism

Basis of the call

- The call is directed to applicants from the Social Sciences, Law, Humanities, Journalism, Arts and Literature who can contribute to the themes exposed both in empirical, theoretical and methodological terms.
- Application: Fill in the [application form](#) with a title and a summary (300-400 words) of the proposal and a brief academic record with an indication of the professional career and relevant publications.
- Languages: Spanish, Portuguese and English.
- Deadline for submitting proposals: May 30, 2021.

An academic committee will select the works under criteria of excellence. Applicants will be notified before June 30, 2021 about the opinion of their work.

Platform date: September 2-3, 2021, in virtual mode.

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