

Santiago de Chile, 8 September 2023

50 years of military coup against socialist government of Salvador Allende



Reproduction of La Moneda presidential palace after the 11/09 attacks

On 11 September 1973 armed forces attacked the Presidential Palace La Moneda where President Allende died. Since that date until 1988 a terrible, bloody dictatorship terrorised the country, tortured and murdered the political opponents, not only in Chile also outside with the so-called Operation Condor.

Under the military dictatorship Chile became the neo-liberal laboratory with Milton Friedman and the Chicago boys counseling the dictator. Nowadays the country is still suffering from social divide which are not visible in OECD statistics.

A huge wave of international solidarity movement was the progressive answer and as such the commemoration of the 50 years is of global importance for our political family. The call of today is “Never again” at a time when far right is gaining in public opinion, polls and elections.

In Chile the political right is trying to revise the historic facts and to gain hegemony in the interpretation of what happened by putting the responsibility on Allende’s government and pretending that the military coup was to prevent a communist coup and the result of his mismanagement. They neglect the thousands of victims, the breaching of human and civic rights, the thousands of still disappeared. They neglect the social progress made in the “1000 days” of Allende’s Presidency and the hope given to the people.

Against this background progressive parties, unions and civil society organisations are united to stand against this wall of lies and rectify the historical view. In these days Salvador Allende seems to be more present than ever in the hearts and minds of many Chileans of all generations.

For us his legacy is the pacific way to socialism, his social-democratic approach and the unification of the left within the “Unidad Popular”. The US supported the military coup – like in many other countries on the continent in the 70s and 80s. In Chile it was prepared from the moment Allende won the elections on 4 September 1970.

The dictatorship was also the betrayal of the centre right which left the democratic consensus. They only came back after 15 years of dictatorship and joined “la Concertation” which allowed the centre left to win elections with both Presidents Ricardo Lagos and Michelle Bachelet.

Against this historical backdrop we can learn the lessons at a time where democracy is under threat, when only 20% of the world's population is living in democracies, when military coups have come back not only in Africa like in Burkina Faso and Niger, when the centre rights prefers the support of the rights extreme to defeat the centre left like in Finland and Sweden instead of defending the democratic firewall.

Therefore 50 years is more than commemoration, it is about defending democracy, uniting progressives and democrats, putting the social first. It is also about the power of international solidarity.

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