

Allende for All Time

By Rolando H. Vergara

September is a month of multiple and contradictory meanings. However, for 46 years, for Chileans and Latin Americans, it announces invariably a relevant heroic deed and an immortal hero who has become bigger with time. It commemorates the heroic combat of President Salvador Allende at the Palacio de La Moneda on September 11, 1973, for the dignity of the Chilean people, for democracy and socialism.

After forty six years of his death, Allende's universality continues to grow. New streets, new squares, new parks, new hospitals and new monuments add on to the hundreds, perhaps thousands that already bear his name in the farthest places of the world. Even more significant is that his ideas continue to illuminate the thinking and action of new generations of social and revolutionary activists in Latin America, the Caribbean and other continents.

The man who imagined the 21st century socialism is not dead, he continues to be current, vital, and appreciated more than ever in the democratic and revolutionary struggles of Latin American peoples in order to achieve fundamental social political transformations and the reinstallation of socialism as a solution and alternative to the great problem of humanity.¹

What is happening in Latin America and Venezuela in particular, with the heroic struggle of the Venezuelan people and the Bolivarian Revolution, confirm the full viability, timeliness and fairness of the "Allendista path" to build socialism in freedom, pluralism and democracy.

Commander Hugo Chavez, a visionary and audacious Bolivarian revolutionary, understood very well this great challenge and expressed it in a touching tribute to President Salvador Allende just day before his own death.

"Some (...) theorized by saying that the path to socialism was impossible along this path, through the electoral path, through peaceful means. The years passed and I believe that what is happening today in Latin America vindicates the attempt of Allende and I believe that what is happening today in Latin America vindicates the attempt of Allende and the Chilean people. It is not [sensible to say] that it is not viable by through peaceful means to build the paths of socialism."²

The most profound sense of the countless commemorative events taking place in September and the tributes to President Allende and all the women and men who offered their lives in the prolonged and bloody resistance against the fascist dictatorship should be precisely the significance bestowed by that the great Venezuelan leader. Commander Chávez urged the study, reflection and analysis of the Chilean revolutionary experience and, above all, of the political legacy of Salvador Allende with the aim at drawing essential lessons and applying them to the new conditions of the emancipation struggles of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean

The strengthening of the democratic popular processes in Bolivia, Uruguay and Nicaragua, but above all the heroic resistance and the consolidation of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela are demonstrating the validity of Salvador Allende's political legacy. And to sustain today the validity of an Allendista political project is to reaffirm the actuality of the socialism, is to believe passionately in the 21st century socialism_ a democratic, pluralistic and libertarian socialism_ that today has a practical expression in the Bolivarian Socialism. The Bolivarian revolution is, unquestionably, the paradigm of 21st century socialism.³

It is no coincidence that Venezuela, these days, is being assaulted and attacked by the interventionist policies of Donald Trump and the imperialist government of the United States, in collusion with the Venezuelan oligarchy and the ultra-right governments of the Continent.

Venezuela has faced, since President Hugo Chavez's first electoral victory, an unconventional war that has a clear objective and has been taking various forms and used different weapons.

He has used "the guarimbas" with violent fascist groups, experts in street insurrectional struggle paid for by the US embassy; has implemented media campaigns to invent a dictatorial government, show a country in chaos and with humanitarian crises; has used diplomatic isolation, imposed financial sanctions and issued executive orders to impose an illegal and criminal economic blockade.

The strategic objective of the empire and the bourgeois counter-revolution is to defeat the historic political project of the Bolivarian Revolution, regain political power for the oligarchy, re-established a neoliberal economic model and undertake a massive repression against the popular movement and the political forces of Chavismo.

Why is Venezuela an irreconcilable and so dangerous enemy to the empire? There are two main reasons: an economic and a political one. The economic aspect often it tends to be overestimated as if the empire's only interest was the appropriation of the natural resources of developing countries and in the specific case of Venezuela its large oil and gold reserves.

When it comes to Venezuela, however, the geopolitical reason carries infinitely greater weight for the American empire. The Bolivarian Revolution represents a different political alternative which could restore not only to the countries of the continent, but also to the whole humanity the essential utopia that a better than capitalist model of society is possible to organize the productive forces and human existence. ⁴

As Nicolas Maduro pointed out, very well in the Forum of Sao Paulo in Havana, " Since the beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution the empire has tried, and has increased its actions, to neutralize the transformation impacts of Chávez's revolutionary leadership and the Bolivarian project revolutionary leadership, of the achievements of Bolivarian socialism and to try to remove at the root and finish for good the project that they could not defeat in 200 years, the Bolivar project, our revolutionary project"(...). ⁵

The Bolivarian Revolution, these days, heroically resists and has been defeating each of the imperial aggressions with the indestructible civic-military unity and majority support of the Venezuelan people.

It defeated the guarimbas by convening the constituent power of the people and calling for free elections to elect the members of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) that culminated in the re-election of President Nicolás Maduro. It also defeated the last coup attempt of April 30 that began with the self-proclamation of the puppet Juan Guaido recognized as president by the White House and the allies of Washington. In an ironic historical table turn, the Bolivarian government has gotten strengthened and more popular after each coup attempt and after each imperial aggression.

In Latin America and the Caribbean social and political events are undoubtedly taking place, which shows the advances and setbacks of popular and progressive forces. In this new reality, the left studies with interest and vindicates essential elements of the Allendista legacy, which contrasts notoriously with what is happening in Chile.

What is the situation on the left in Chile after 46 years of the military coup?

It is certainly possible to respond from a purely theoretical point of view, but it is more pedagogical to examine the reality of the Chilean left in action on the political stage of the country and more specifically by participating in an important political event such as the presidential and parliamentary elections on November 19, 2017.

The left went to these elections divided into five options and thus proclaiming five different candidacies. On the one hand, the centre-left (PC and PS) through the Nueva Mayoria coalition (NM) put forward the candidacy of Alejandro Guillier (22.7%). The so-called anti-system left, on the other hand, went to the elections with four candidates and four different political-electoral platforms. The Frente Amplio (FP) with its candidate Beatriz Sánchez (20.27%); the platform of the Partido Progresista with its candidate Marco Enriquez-Ominami

(5.71%); the platform of Union Patriótica (UPA) with its candidate Eduardo Artes (0.51%) and the platform of Partido Pais with its candidate Alejandro Navarro (0.36%).⁶

The conclusion is dramatic and shocking. 46 years after President Allende's death, the left remains divided and scattered. Clearly, under these conditions, the left is unable to offer a distinct, serious and attractive political alternative to the large majorities suffering the dire consequences of the neoliberal policies of the governments in power.

It cannot be denied, however, that there are some new elements and actors. Since 2017, the Frente Amplio (FA) makes its official appearance in the country's political arena and gains rapid notoriety as a result of its impressive election results. The FA scored only two points less than the NM in the presidential election and elected 20 deputies and senators to the parliament. The media and some political analysts immediately began talking about the emergence of "a new left."

The creation of the FA generated great expectations and ignited the flame of enthusiasm in many political sectors interested in regrouping the left, but over the years the new political coalition has disappointed the enthusiasts and wane the expectations.

The FA itself was early responsible for rebutting the term "new left," with its constant refusal to declare itself a left-wing coalition. There has also been a serious lack of a programmatic nature, that is, the lack of a transformative programme.⁷ Not to mention the ambiguous and inexcusable international stance which, in practice, has led the FA to make common cause with the empire and to condemn revolutionary experiences such as the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela and the socialist Cuba.

Chile is also a different country this September 2019 because of another relevant event. Unidad Social (Social Unity) emerges, an umbrella body of movements and social organizations that has as its common objective the defense and recovery of the fundamental freedoms and rights of the large majorities of the country.

From the Plaza de la Constitución and in front of the Palacio de La Moneda in Santiago, on August 4, spokespersons of Unidad Social issued to the country a Manifiesto Convocatoria. The document begins by making a precise and shocking diagnostic of the reality of the country. "A feeling of outrage, frustration and anger spread across the country as its people feel the injustices, inequalities and impunities increase as they notice that there is almost no sector of society that is unaffected by corruption or the moral crisis, which corrodes greatly to institutions of the Republic."

The movements and social organizations then point out that they intend to change the current situation in the country to build "a different society with more freedom and democracy, with more equality and justice, with more solidarity and fraternity".⁸ And they end up calling for a day of National Protest on 5th of September.

The emergence of Unidad Social is a fact of great significance that irrevocably changes the current state of things in the country.

The National Protest was held anyway _despite not being authorized by the Provincial Government in a clear denial of a fundamental democratic right_ and involved numerous social and labor organizations among them the Workers Unitarian Central (CUT), the Association of Fiscal Employees (ANEF), the College of Teachers, the Confederation of Students of Chile (CONFECH) and the National Coordinator of Workers NO+AFP to mention only a few.

The right-wing Government of Sebastian Piñera is solely responsible for the violent and brutal crackdown of police forces against peaceful protesters, ending with the unjust detention of more than 135 men and women.

It is clear that the current situation on the left is tremendously disappointing and demoralizing, but it is in this grim and daunting reality that Salvador Allende's essential political legacy becomes more current and urgent than ever.

In these difficult times, marked by a great weakness and dispersion of popular forces, it is essential to study Allende's political practice in order to take on with resolution the arduous and prolonged task of forging the unity of the popular movement and the left. From 1952, the year of his first presidential candidacy, until his last days Allende was a persevering builder of the workers' unity and the unity of the political forces representative of the popular movement. Not for an instant did he gave up in his unitary efforts, despite how complex and hard that mission often became.⁹

This seems to be the commitment and challenge that Unidad Social is taking in its hands. If the political unity of the left has not been possible for all these years, it is quite right to try other ways to forge the unity of the popular movement. In Latin America there are successful experiences where the unity, mobilization and struggle of social organizations and movements around goals of change and profound transformations of society, have created the conditions for political unity and have enabled the victorious conquest of power.

The best tribute that organizations and social movements can pay to President Martyr on the occasion of a new anniversary of his death is to take on the great task of building the social and political unity of the popular movement with patience and perseverance. It is to reaffirm the commitment to be more Allendistas. And to be like Allende, today, is precisely to believe with passion in the possibility of a new society, of a new socialism. And in this way paraphrasing President Salvador Allende begin, once and for all, to open the great avenues through which free women and men pass to build a better society.

Notes

1. See, Rolando H Vergara & Miguel Sánchez, The Dream of Allende Era Possible, Latin American Research Institute, September 2013.
2. Hugo Chávez, Press Conference at Hotel Alba, Caracas, Venezuela, September 2012.
3. See, Rolando H Vergara & Miguel Sánchez, Allende and the Current Challenges of Latin America, PienSaChile, September 2018
4. See, Rolando H. Vergara, Allende and the Alternative to Build, PienSaChile, September 2014.
5. Nicolás Maduro Moros, Address given at the XXIV Meeting of the Forum of Sao Paulo, Diario Granma, Havana, Cuba, July 2018
6. Public and Solemn Bulletin of Preliminary Election Results for President of the Republic 2017, Santiago, Chile
7. Noam Titelman, The Chilean New Left, New Society, Democracy and Politics in Latin America, Buenos Aires, Argentina, May-June 2019.
8. Manifiesto Convocatoria, to the Movements and Social Organizations of Chile, New Digital Daily World, Santiago, Chile, August 2019
9. See, Rolando H. Vergara, Allende and the Alternative to Build, PienSaChile, September 2014.