

Díaz-Canel says he's enthusiastic that Latin American Left forces honor common history of struggle

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Message from Díaz-Canel for the 50th anniversary of the Popular Unity of Chile. (Photo: Estudios Revolución)

Dear Monica Valente, dear colleagues, brothers and sisters of the Sao Paulo Forum.

It is exciting and moving that, in this year full of challenges of survival for all, the Left forces of Latin America honor our common history of struggles, by deciding to celebrate 50 years of Popular Unity.

The Popular Unity, the mythical Chilean Popular Unity, not only brought to power the socialist Salvador Allende, opening a path of hope for the first socialist construction through the electoral way.

They did it in such a creative, enthusiastic and truly popular way, that we can still feel the joy of their songs in the midst of the profound struggle of all society to transform itself, transforming everything.

That was such an exciting and contagious process, that its powerful external adversaries, in a sad alliance with the internal ones, shot it down when it was only a promise of three years of government.

In the few more than a thousand days that it lasted in power, the Popular Unity was able to radically transform that country, by vindicating the historic aspirations of the Chilean people such as the nationalization of copper, the expropriation of large estates and the expansion of Education and health care among all.

In synthesis, they dared to touch the interests of big national and transnational capital with the only aim of putting it in the hands of its legitimate owners and giving the people rights that until then had been concealed from them.

Like Arbenz's Agrarian Reform and that of the Cuban Revolution, like our nationalizations and our sovereign decisions, the conquests of the Chilean Left were placed under siege and its economy was blocked. An unprecedented media war was unleashed against the experience and the empire led the operations for the overthrow in its worst style.

Chile entered the dark night of fascism, which extended its claws throughout the Southern Cone, under the cover of Operation Condor, that is, the transnational of terror. The coup plotters imported schools and Yankee methods to fulfill the mandate of the North. Neoliberalism began to impose itself as the magic formula for development. But no lie lasts forever.

The Chilean model of the Chicago Boys, sold as successful, has ended up being as despised by its people as the coup management of Augusto Pinochet. And the revolutionary process of the 1970s remained in Latin American history with its painful but unavoidable lessons for future revolutionary processes in our region. No social fighter, no politician of the Left, could face his battles today by ignoring that process.

The methods of building the unity of diverse forces are as instructive as those that would be implemented by their enemies to crush it, from the media war to the current fascism.

It is a duty and an opportunity to stop, even if only for a few minutes and from a distance, at what that government meant, what the Popular Unity meant, what the articulation of the forces of the left meant around a socialist ideal and by what ways and methods imperialism managed to break it, imposing by blood and fire an economic model that excludes the majorities and represses them even in their so-called democratic periods.

On the 50th anniversary of the historic victory of the Popular Unity, and also in memory and honor of the exemplary resistance to the fascist coup against Salvador Allende in 1973, I want to share with you a personal experience closely linked to the event that we are commemorating today.

In January 2013, accompanying Army General Raúl Castro Ruz to the First Summit of CELAC, which took place in Santiago de Chile, we visited the Palacio de La Moneda, where Salvador Allende -- the central figure of the Popular Unity we are celebrating today -- fell heroically. Right there, the delegation received a call from Cuba. It was Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, who, upon knowing where we were, told us: "There is a spirit, find it."

That invitation, coming from a Marxist like Fidel Castro, was totally lacking in mysticism. It was, without a doubt, calling us to review a history that still has much to teach us. May this half century of Popular Unity serve as an incentive to find it.

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