

Development as national liberation

The experience of the Popular Unity government in Chile

Martín Arboleda

During the twentieth century, the concept of development galvanised a wide variety of popular struggles for democratisation, agrarian reform, socialism, and economic sovereignty across the global South. In social theory, the question of development also sparked major intellectual debates that shed new light on the nature of power and liberation in the interstate system.

At some point, however, this ideal waned as an emancipatory horizon for social thought. Since the publication of Wolfgang Sachs and of Arturo Escobar's seminal critiques of the (Western) development project, the idea of development has generally been dismissed by poststructuralist social theory merely as a neocolonial discourse of power.¹ These texts, it has been argued, marked the emergence of a new intellectual consensus that no longer sought alternative paths to development but rather alternatives to development *tout court*.² Also, the consolidation of the Human Development approach as an overarching framework for policymaking across the wide spectrum of multilateral institutions and NGOs would seem to have reduced development to the allocation of aid and social policy. In a similar way, Latin American neostructuralism has been said to strip the tenets of classical developmentalism of their democratic and political content and reframed development as nothing more than a quest for 'growth with equity'.³

In short, it would seem as if this once-contested idiom of power and struggle had reached an impasse. However, the dynamics of extreme social inequality – both between and within countries – and ecosystem collapse that have followed from recent world crises have opened new forays for reflexive engagements with the

concept of development. It has become increasingly evident that any viable solution to the intertwined threats of fascism and an escalating climate emergency is unthinkable in the absence of a political movement that is able to wrest control of the economy from the domestic oligarchies, large transnational corporations, and imperialistic interests that hinder the possibility for real human and ecological flourishing. How to attain authentic national independence from the disruptive, polarising forces of a hierarchically-structured world economy, it should be noted, was precisely the underlying question that animated the radical theories of development that emerged from the Third World – and especially from Latin America – during a considerable part of the twentieth century. In this sense, it is unsurprising that recent years have brought renewed attempts to uncover some of the key principles that informed these traditions of thought, which have since been eclipsed by either poststructuralist or liberal approaches to development.⁴

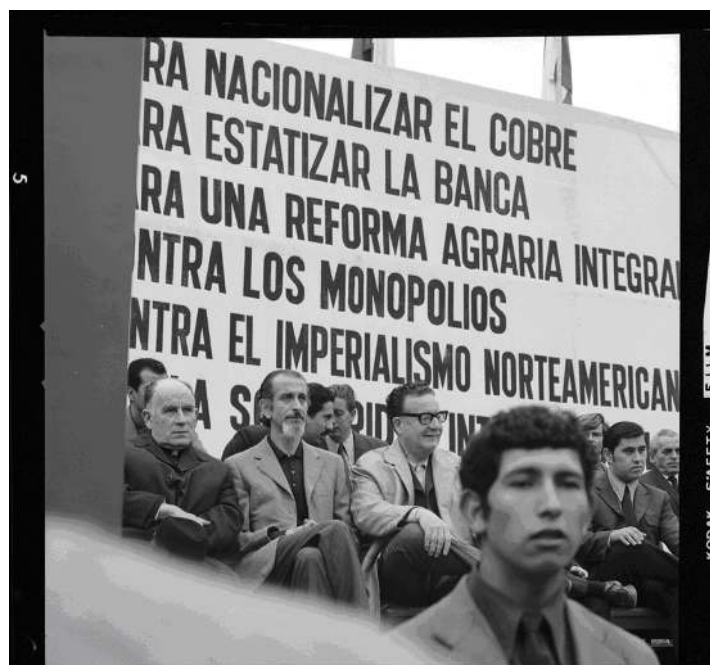
This article argues that development can be mobilised as an emancipatory ideal for democratic struggles, especially when positioned within current efforts to place freedom firmly once again on the agenda of the political left and of critical social theory. In recent years, an emerging tradition of socialist republicanism has expanded the normative ideal of freedom by pointing out that the most blatant forms of tyranny and domination are in fact manifested in the despotic organisation of work, assets, and production in the capitalist economy.⁵ In Latin America, an emerging scholarly discussion on the lineages of this tradition has also unfolded alongside historical explorations of the ways in which tropes

of republican freedom underpinned the design and implementation of novel anti-oligarchic, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist institutions that advanced the frontier of democratic experimentation into unforeseen realms. Although revolutionary movements for national independence in the nineteenth century have been a core focus of inquiry,⁶ the era of development and of national liberation struggles in the twentieth century also looms large as an instance of conceptual and political intensification within the long historical arc of this intellectual tradition. As José Miguel Ahumada shows, Latin American theories of development were informed by an eminently republican understanding of the free state as that which not only ensured material wellbeing but could also assert its own self-determination against the complex framework of domination that is the capitalist interstate system.⁷

In light of the above, this article explores the links between development theory and national liberation struggles in Latin America. It does so by unearthing the case of economic planning under the Popular Unity government in Chile during the 1970-1973 period. The case of Popular Unity [*Unidad Popular*] is noteworthy not only as a historically-unique experiment in the design of an intricate institutional infrastructure for a model of socialism that was avowedly anti-imperialist, libertarian, and pluralistic; crucially for the purpose of this paper, it was also where development and dependency theories became more directly interwoven with the decision-making fabric of the state.⁸ Specifically, the article looks at the Popular Unity project through the lens of two of its most emblematic figures: Jacques Chonchol and Pedro Vuskovic, both of whom were organic intellectuals formed in the tradition of dependency theory and also served as ministers of agriculture and economy, respectively, during the Allende government. In the same way that the Haitian Revolution advanced an immanent critique of Enlightenment ideals that enlarged the content of freedom, economic planners working with Popular Unity unmasked the nature of capitalist progress as *faux* progress, and advocated for ‘*a popular option for development*’ that could deliver real human progress in its stead.⁹ Consequently, Chonchol and Vuskovic embarked on an ambitious set of transformations that not only sought to reconfigure the structure of production but to redistribute wealth and power in society through mass

worker empowerment and through the implementation of pluralistic property forms.

Conventional understandings of the origins of development are rooted in a diffusionist narrative that considers political idioms and ideas to originate in the global North, and to later flow to the global South where they become adopted and reproduced.¹⁰ My article contributes to recent efforts to supersede this diffusionist narrative and reconstruct the era of development as one where Latin America emerged as a key site of theoretical and institutional innovation.¹¹ Specifically, it takes forward Luciana Cadahia and Valeria Coronel’s lucid invitation to ‘return to the archive’ of the republican imagination and put into focus the role that the region has performed in shaping global debates over the nature of democracy, power, and political modernity.¹²



Salvador Allende, 1 May 1971. Photo by Armino Cardoso. Archivo Memoria Chilena.

In its first section, the article reassesses the question of national liberation by framing the contributions of Latin American theories of development and underdevelopment. The second section begins by highlighting the specificity of development theory marshalled by Popular Unity, and then goes on to explore the specific modalities of development planning devised by Jacques Chonchol and Pedro Vuskovic. In the third section, the article discusses the reactionary forces that the reforms implemen-

ted by Chonchol and Vuskovic unleashed. To the extent that they challenged the vested interests of oligarchic groups and of US imperialism, these reforms were met with trenchant forms of economic sabotage that eventually became apotheosised into a ferocious reactionary retaliation by the military in September of 1973. In this way, the article also intends to shed light into the high political and social stakes that development as national liberation entails.

Reopening the archive of development

During a considerable part of the twentieth century, development became one of the most contested and polysemic concepts in the political vocabulary. On the one hand, it provided an entire policy rationale to theories of modernisation that conceived history in stagist and unilinear terms, and where Europe was deemed the *telos* or most advanced stage of human civilisation. Economies were considered ‘underdeveloped’ (i.e. backward) to the extent that they deviated from specific features of European societies, in turn considered the yardstick by which human progress was measured. On the other, development also became asserted as an idiom of emancipation by plebeian and popular struggles that sought to challenge unilinear understandings of progress and break free from imperialist and oligarchic forms of domination. It was during the 1980s that this concept underwent a process of theoretical closure as it was severed from its radical and emancipatory interpretations. Especially, it was the Latin American School of Development – which encompasses the traditions of structuralism as well as dependency – which most systematically advanced a normative and methodological concern for economic sovereignty within the context of a stratified yet interdependent capitalist world-system.¹³ This focus – itself the ‘rational kernel’ of the Latin American School – in turn presupposes a specific understanding of freedom (i.e. republican freedom as non-domination) that today seems to have been eclipsed.

Some of the key theoretical principles of international authority and stratification that gave rise to the Latin American School emerged after the creation of the UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) in 1948, and especially by the formative contributions of Argentinean economist Raúl Prebisch.¹⁴

Tropes of national liberation in the twentieth-century, on the other hand, became widespread in the aftermath of emblematic historical events such as the 1910 Mexican Revolution – whose rallying cry was ‘land and freedom’ – and subsequent processes of anti-oligarchic nation-building.¹⁵ However, it was not until the Cuban Revolution in 1959 that development and national liberation became more systematically intertwined, especially on the basis of a political program that sought to advance human emancipation through conscious economic planning. As one of the leading public figures of the new revolutionary government, Che Guevara in particular helped to forge links between these political and normative ideals.¹⁶ In a 1964 address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, titled ‘On Development’, Guevara denounced a system of international trade that had become weaponised into a mechanism for enforcing the subordination of underdeveloped economies. He insisted that the principle of self-determination included in the Charter of the UN should be fully implemented, to encompass the sovereign right of nations to choose their own strategies of development and economic specialisation without incurring reprisals of any kind.¹⁷ These ideas were not only influential for national liberation struggles in the region, but also for the epistemic circuits and intellectual milieus that would later lead to the emergence of dependency theories.¹⁸

Despite the various nuances and disagreements between the traditions that comprise the Latin American School of Development, the literature suggests that they share a set of common features that make them distinctive vis-à-vis other competing approaches. First, they share the assumption that the global economy is hierarchically structured into cores and peripheries. This not only means that the level of analysis is the interstate system as such, but that the latter is woven together by relations of domination between its internal elements (i.e. national economies).¹⁹ A crucial implication that emerges from this assumption, according to Cristóbal Kay,²⁰ is that the Latin American School of Development presupposes a counterpoint to major theories of modernisation insofar as the development of the core is premised on the underdevelopment of the periphery. Originally introduced by authors in the tradition of structuralist economics during the 1950s, the core-periphery model had mainly revolved around questions of unequal ex-

change and bilateral economic relations. It was with the emergence of Marxist dependency theory in the late 1960s and 1970s that the framework for understanding international subordination advanced towards a more deliberate concern with the structure of production and the regimes of labour exploitation. This enabled Marxist readings of dependency to lay bare the forms of impersonal and systemic economic domination that ensued from large-scale industrialisation under an international division of labour. A landmark moment in this second phase of theoretical elaboration was the publication of Ruy Mauro Marini's book *The Dialectics of Dependency* in 1973.²¹

Second, these approaches also shared a methodological emphasis on the vexing problem of the distribution and appropriation of the economic surplus. This means that underdevelopment was seen as a concrete result of the changing forms in which socio-political actors appropriated rents, profits, and interests at the national and international levels.²² Consequently, the historical-structural method became harnessed as a research technique designed to grasp the concrete forms in which the economic surplus became extracted and mobilised.²³ Third, and as framed by Cardoso and Faletto's classic statement on the topic, the program of development is ultimately concerned with *the social control of production and consumption at the national level* – that is, the logical corollary of development is the transformation of the productive and technological structure of the national economy through conscious planning.²⁴

Proponents of Marxist dependency theory considered that the question of planning also brought to the fore the eminently international and *internationalist* nature of socialism – as a distinct framework of relations between free and equals in the world system. Because the intensive utilisation of national wealth through science and technology would demand considerable material and economic resources, Vânia Bambirra stressed that robust mechanisms for international economic solidarity between socialist nations would need to be put into place. Under a consciously planned economy, Bambirra argued, 'industrialisation would continue to depend on foreign inputs even though it would no longer be dependent accumulation.' Rather, the author concluded, 'it would be essentially a particular form of socialist reproduction underpinned by relations of exchange and cooperation

between free nations.'²⁵

It was the particular form to be assumed by development planning, in fact, which marked the major point of contention within the Latin American School broadly considered. Structuralist authors (who favoured a reformist approach to public intervention and social change) considered that development was possible under capitalism, whilst dependency theorists (who espoused a more avowedly revolutionary stance) considered that the development of the periphery could only be achieved by means of a particularly socialist form of economic planning.²⁶

These theoretical and methodological principles, it should be pointed out, bear a striking resemblance to those that inform recent scholarly efforts to reconstruct the normative ideal of republican freedom as non-domination. It was the traditions of political theory and intellectual history that gravitate around what is commonly referred to as the Cambridge School that first sought to recover an understanding of freedom that departs from the liberal emphasis on methodological individualism and mere non-interference. According to the programmatic interventions of Philip Pettit and Quentin Skinner, the liberal idea of interference is confined to contingent practices of individual coercion and brackets out more insidious, institutionally-mediated and prolonged practices of domination and dependence that place both individuals and states at the mercy of others.²⁷ Another key tenet of this approach has to do with the fact that individual freedom can only be achieved within the framework of a free state, understood as a political arrangement where citizens govern themselves according to laws of their own making.²⁸

In recent years, an emerging tradition of socialist republicanism has questioned the contributions of the Cambridge School insofar as its understanding of freedom has been said to elide dynamics of *economic* domination, and especially those that result from the undemocratic and oppressive organisation of work, production, and property systems in the capitalist economy. The original blueprints for this understanding of domination, as authors such as William Clare Roberts and Antoni Domènech point out, are to be found in Marx's own framing of socialism in terms of a 'society of free and associated producers.' Marx's idea of *free* or *combined* association, it has been argued, presupposes a mode of eco-

conomic interdependence that is free from external barriers –and therefore a political and normative commitment towards freedom in its republican guise.²⁹ For Marx, these barriers were not reduced to the exertion of direct force but included the blind, external coercive laws of the capitalist market and their institutional manifestation in the bourgeois state. From this, it follows that for Marx, democracy was not to be understood exclusively as a mode of collective self-legislation or self-expression, but also as a means for checking and controlling the powerful.³⁰

The ideas of power and domination laid out in the tradition of socialist republicanism, however, have remained circumscribed to the realm of the national economy and are yet to include a more systematic theorisation of the ways in which capitalist power also becomes manifested and reproduced in the interstate system.

In Latin America, by contrast, the rediscovery of this tradition has unfolded alongside a more deliberate attempt to problematise the evolving forms of international subordination that first originated with colonialism, and later morphed into more complex and advanced configurations.³¹ Even though abolitionist movements, anti-colonial struggles, and wars of national independence have been central objects of concern for reconstructing a distinctively republican understanding of freedom in the region,³² the socio-political processes that encompass the era of development and of twentieth-century socialism, however, are yet to be fully elucidated. In a 1978 book written from her second exile in Mexico, Vânia Bambirra, for example, suggests that the idea of national liberation would only acquire full theoretical and discursive consistency when anchored to the instrumental task of overcoming the class basis of international economic subordination as expressed in dependent capitalism.³³

In this way, and according to José Miguel Ahumada,³⁴ Latin American theories of development raised the conceptual and political stakes of republicanism by positing the normative problem of freedom at the level of the interstate system. For Latin American developmentalism, the capitalist world economy is an intricate system of domination based on an industrial monopoly that enables hegemonic nations to submit peripheries to relations of economic servitude. In this way, Ahumada shows that core-periphery relations of dependency in the interstate system are often theorised as analogous

to the forms of peonage that are usually found in the debtor/creditor relation, or in other elementary forms of bondage such as chattel slavery or feudal serfdom. This insight also leads Kay to suggest that a major preoccupation for these traditions was ‘to uncover the external and internal mechanisms of exploitation and domination in order to elaborate a path of development free from exploitation and oppression.’³⁵ When viewed through the prism of republican freedom, Ahumada thereby concludes,³⁶ underdevelopment no longer refers to ‘economic backwardness’ but is rather more accurately conceptualised as *economic domination*.

Although Amartya Sen is internationally renowned for linking development to the question of freedom, his own understanding of the latter concept departs from a civic, republican emphasis on *non-domination* and is more closely aligned with a liberal reading that posits freedom more narrowly in terms of methodological individualism and self-realisation – an approach that he, in dialogue with Martha Nussbaum, has framed in terms of building *capabilities*. Although Sen’s approach is noteworthy for having disentangled development from macroeconomic performance – especially as expressed in GDP growth – his reading of freedom is premised on a methodological emphasis on poverty, not wealth or the dislocations that result from its deregulation.³⁷

Unsurprisingly, the framework of Human Development, largely inspired by Sen, has been espoused by the multilateral policymaking apparatus of the UN constellation in order to craft a technocratic approach to development that abandons any aspiration to planning and economic self-government, and is instead centred on the governance of poverty – regardless of how multidimensional its conceptualisation.

As Wolfgang Sachs rightly admits,³⁸ the Western development project therefore shifted from one that during the postwar period aimed at fostering growth, to one that came to foreground questions of social aid and welfarism. In a similar vein, Ha-Joon Chang claims that the mainstream understanding of development is that of an *ersatz* developmentalism of atomistic individuals and uncoordinated efforts that has nothing to say about organisational transformation through industrial and technological change.³⁹ The origin of this rationale, however, can be traced further back in time to the 1961 Punta del Este Summit in Uruguay, when the US administration un-

der John F. Kennedy introduced the Alliance for Progress, an initiative that sought to purge development of the political content it had acquired in Latin America at the time. The Punta del Este meeting was attended by many experts and political leaders of the region, including Che Guevara and also Raúl Prebisch, who were critical about the vision that inspired the Alliance for Progress.

As Margarita Fajardo points out, rather than ‘pro-pounding the industrialisation of Latin America as the path to development, the Alliance for Progress’s experts privileged ‘the construction of aqueducts, houses, sewers, and the like’, fomenting what [Che] Guevara called ‘the planning for latrines’.⁴⁰ At this meeting, Prebisch – who was the head of CEPAL at the time – also warned about the perils of narrowing down the scope of development to the mere deployment of aid and philanthropy. In the years that followed, and as Michael Löwy recounts, Guevara would expand on some of these insights to probe further into the relationship between development planning and freedom. Guevara’s notion of the plan is closely bound up with a philosophic problematic of the conscious transition to communism and his notion of freedom as the supersession of forms of alienation. In Guevara’s view, Löwy concludes, ‘planning is the path that leads socialist society toward the realm of liberty’.⁴¹

More recently, however, the various strands of post-development theory and cognate approaches have largely surrendered the ideas of freedom, progress, and development to the political right and to the neoliberal policymaking intelligentsia. Instead they have retreated to a vernacular and conservative language of anti-modern critique that only seems to speak to the concerns and anxieties of the professional classes. In this way, the commitments of the Latin American School of Development for a libertarian vision of democracy and social change seem to have fallen into historical oblivion. The remaining sections are devoted to recovering the memory of this radical tradition.

Popular Unity’s libertarian strategy for development

It is not coincidental that the political history of twentieth century Chile and the intellectual history of the Latin American School of Development seem to overlap in im-

portant ways. Chilean socialism emerged from a vibrant militant culture that resulted from a motley variety of artisan federations, women’s groups, *campesino* movements, labour unions, and mass political organisations.⁴² Theoretically, the idea of socialism in Chile was fashioned in terms of an anti-oligarchic democracy anchored on a Marxist understanding of history *and* on the democratic principles of political freedom, social equality, and economic justice that informed nineteenth-century revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴³ Moreover, the influx of grassroots anarchism and also of liberation theology in Chilean political life enabled the crystallisation of a distinct ethos of ‘libertarian socialism’ that would later prove to be foundational for the political program of the Popular Unity coalition (hereafter UP for its Spanish acronym).⁴⁴ The concept of freedom that emerges from this political tradition becomes starkly opposed to the moral solipsism of liberal individualism and places the emphasis on militant organisation for the emancipation of society (from both capitalist *and* bureaucratic domination), and for the elevation of the human condition. This dual concern for economic sovereignty and humanism, according to Julio Pinto,⁴⁵ would later mark the world-historical uniqueness of UP as a pioneering model of democratic socialism, one that was clearly distinct both from liberal democracy and from state socialism.

It was the vibrancy of this socio-political environment that attracted the intellectuals who, during the 1950s and 1960s, settled in Santiago, taking positions in its universities and research centres. Some of these scholars and intellectuals would eventually become key proponents of structuralism and dependency theory, and would also eventually provide key policy and theoretical insights for UP after the electoral victory of Salvador Allende in November of 1970.⁴⁶ Accordingly, Sergio Bitar – an intellectual who also served as a minister in the Allende government – frames the specificity of UP’s development strategy as one whose central objective was the satisfaction of the essential needs of the population and the achievement of greater social equality.⁴⁷ This objective, according to Bitar, presupposed a systematic reconfiguration of the structure of production, the dynamics of consumption, and the framework of international economic relations. The realisation of this program, he argued, demanded ‘the displacement of dominant groups – both domestic and foreign – from the stra-

tegic sectors of the national economy, and through the concerted efforts of mass worker participation and state intervention'.⁴⁸

Pedro Vuskovic and Jacques Chonchol were two of the organic intellectuals who would eventually establish a direct nexus between development planning and some of the insights that emerged from the energetic intellectual atmosphere that gravitated around the research centres in the dependency tradition. Before being appointed as a minister of the Popular Unity government in 1970, Vuskovic had worked as an economist at the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) and had also been a member of the Centre for Socioeconomic Studies at Universidad de Chile (CESO); Chonchol, in turn, had worked as an agronomist and international consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and had been the director of the Centre for the Study of National Reality at Universidad Católica (CEREN). Because Pedro Vuskovic was a militant of the Socialist Party and a practicing economist and lecturer on economic planning at CEPAL and Universidad de Chile, his writings reflect a deliberate determination to connect theories of development to some of the most pressing problems of Chilean reality. During the 1964-1971 period, Vuskovic authored several articles and working papers that reflected on the political and policy implications of Chile's dependent and subordinate insertion into the international division of labour.

An important feature of these writings is that they depart from the methodological nationalism that was common to mainstream variants of structuralism and dependency. Inspired by the work of Theotônio Dos Santos and Ruy Mauro Marini, Vuskovic sought to uncover both the external *and* internal mechanisms that rendered the Chilean economy unable to meet the basic needs of the population. According to Vuskovic,⁴⁹ Chile was underpinned by a pattern of economic development that was both 'exclusionary' and 'monopolistic'. These two features, according to Vuskovic, contributed to a highly uneven pattern of income distribution, as well as to a limited rate of scientific and technological dissemination. Because capital-intensive production had become concentrated in 'enclaves' oriented either towards primary-commodity exports or towards luxurious items of consumption, Vuskovic considered that the under-utilisation of resources was one of the most pressing problems faced

by the Chilean economy. A situation of 'structural heterogeneity' in which wealthy and globally-integrated enclaves coexisted with an impoverished and underperforming traditional sector, according to Vuskovic,⁵⁰ led to high unemployment rates as well as to major deficits for basic consumer goods.

For Vuskovic,⁵¹ it was the traditional or informal – in his words, 'vegetative' – sector which had lower capital and investment requirements, as well as a larger potential to absorb the idle workforce. Accordingly, he advocated for an industrial policy that was able to channel resources towards the traditional sector as the potential lever for a more robust import-substitution strategy. This, for Vuskovic, was justified on the basis that it would not only combat high unemployment rates, but would expand the macroeconomic savings ratio whilst also increasing the production of staples and basic consumer goods – an urgent task in its own right given the high rates of hunger and undernourishment in the population. This 'popular option for development', as economists Sergio Bitar and Eduardo Moyano termed it, sought to create an internal market that could reconcile an ethical commitment for redistributive justice with a technical concern for sound macroeconomic performance.⁵² However, Vuskovic was adamant that the implementation of such an industrial policy did not rest on the mere allocation of government subsidies. This kind of sectoral design, according to Vuskovic, was unthinkable in the absence of a broader, more political project to combat the disruptive forces of oligarchic power, largely embodied in the landholding aristocracy, the banking system, and commercial monopolies, that were increasingly dependent on export-oriented and exclusionary enclave economies.⁵³

Because of its eminently political nature, the industrial policy proposed by Vuskovic therefore departed from structuralist authors that favoured alliances with the national bourgeoisie as a means to achieve economic development. Instead, he sided with more avowedly Marxist readings of dependency – such as that of Marini, Frank, and Dos Santos – that deemed domestic oligarchies and capitalist classes incapable of advancing the national interest given their own relations of dependency with foreign capital. It was for this reason that Vuskovic considered the working class to be the historical subject of development, and mass political organisation (i.e.

poder popular) a precondition for the successful implementation of the development strategy of a popular government.⁵⁴ The broadening and consolidation of popular power, according to Vuskovic, would stimulate mass support for the structural reforms of the UP's development strategy.

Known as the *Plan Vuskovic*, this strategy encompassed four core targets: First, the creation of a Social Property Sector (*Área de Propiedad Social* or APS) of nationalised and public firms that were deemed strategic for economic development; second, the implementation of a robust program for income redistribution that could democratise access to consumer goods and social security for the vast majority of the population; third, the creation of a state-owned banking sector and foreign trade company that could boost small and medium-sized companies by giving them access to credit and to international markets; fourth, an agrarian reform that could redistribute land away from the inherently inefficient and authoritarian *hacienda* system.⁵⁵



Jacques Chonchol (left), 1 May 1971. Photo by Armindo Cardoso. Archivo fotográfico Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.

Because hunger was one of the most urgent problems in the agenda, and the landholding aristocracy had come increasingly to be considered a major obstacle for efficient agricultural production, the agrarian reform was deemed one of the most emblematic elements in the

political program of Popular Unity. Jacques Chonchol would eventually emerge as one of the leading experts behind UP's ambitious plan to overhaul the entire structure of agrarian relations in Chile. Trained as an agronomist, Chonchol acquired vast empirical knowledge of Latin American agrarian systems during his time as a consultant for the FAO and CEPAL. After leading missions to Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, and revolutionary Cuba in the early 1960s, Chonchol learned about the various dimensions of the *hacienda* system in the region and also about the different visions and experiences of agrarian reform.⁵⁶ A 'revolutionary Christian', as Claudio Robles refers to him, Chonchol began his political career as a militant of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) but eventually grew dissatisfied with the party's reformist stance. In 1967, Chonchol began to espouse a more distinctly socialist orientation when he and other PDC militants drafted a manifesto titled 'A Non-Capitalist Path to Development.' This document aroused a heated polemic with the party leadership that eventually led Chonchol to split from the PDC and to become the co-founder of *Izquierda Cristiana* [Christian Left], one of the organisations that entered the UP coalition after 1970.⁵⁷

It was perhaps because of his intellectual affinity with liberation theology and other humanist currents within Christian thought – especially the communitarian tradition of Jacques Maritain and Louis Joseph Lebret – that Chonchol reflected systematically on the relationship between freedom and development. In his 1964 book titled *Desarrollo sin capitalismo* [Development without Capitalism], which he wrote with Julio Silva Solar, Chonchol suggests that the profit imperatives of capitalist accumulation not only thwart the flourishing of the poor, they also put the wealthy in a position of unfreedom that is inimical to the common good. Hinting at the ways in which the unregulated concentration of wealth hinders the possibility for real social and human development, the authors hint at a more expansive understanding of freedom than that of Amartya Sen – one primarily concerned with the (un)freedom of the poor. A communitarian or non-capitalist path to development, according to Chonchol and Silva Solar, would then not only be concerned with the liberation of the poor but also with the liberation of the rich from the abstract compulsions of capitalist reproduction. The only way to free the rich from their submission to the disciplinary force

of market allocation, the authors considered, was to re-configure the structure of property relations, a task that was impossible under capitalism.⁵⁸

Chonchol's concrete interest in the practical problems of agro-food systems would also lead him to write a set of technical texts throughout the 1960s, in which he explored the complex relation between economic development and agrarian reform. In a 1967 article on the topic, he suggests that the process of land redistribution that would ensue from an agrarian reform was not to be reduced to a mere matter of social justice; it was ultimately one of economic development understood as self-government and national unity. If the land question remained unsolved, Chonchol argued, there would be no political democracy for the popular masses, and Chile would remain a disunited caste society.⁵⁹ Moreover, Chonchol questioned the idea that the pattern of industrialisation applied in Western Europe had to be replicated in Latin America. Departing from such a stagist and unilinear understanding of social change, he advocated for an indigenous approach to agricultural intensification that would enable complex combinations between modern technical inputs and also labour-intensive tasks that could create employment for the rural poor.⁶⁰ But he was also critical of the autarchic tendencies that were brewing within the narrow nationalism of some political traditions in Latin America. The development of a robust endogenous market for foodstuffs, he argued, would have to be imbricated within an internationalist framework of foreign trade that would increase the political leverage of dependent economies and act as a geopolitical bulwark against the protectionist tendencies of the Western core.

Inspired by liberation theology and by communitarianism, Chonchol also became invested in the design of intermediary bodies and of pluralistic property regimes that could offer an alternative to the utilitarian individualism of liberalism as well as to the rigid collectivism of state socialism. He developed a close personal and intellectual relationship with Paulo Freire during the years he spent in Santiago writing *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and working at Chile's National Institute for Agricultural Development (INDAP).⁶¹ In this ground-breaking book, Freire was adamant that modernisation should not be conflated with development. For the author, there cannot be genuine development in a society that suffers from cultural invasion, and development is therefore only pos-

sible as a genuine outcome of a process of creativity, creation, and soul-searching that is generated internally by a self-governing polity. For this reason, Freire considered that popular education was a fundamental mechanism for engendering the capacities for self-government that real development entailed.⁶² Inspired by these ideas, Chonchol introduced various initiatives for rural popular education and political organisation that included unionisation, the creation of cooperatives, and the publication of booklets that sought to elevate the political consciousness of the peasantry.⁶³

In agronomic terms, his aspiration to reconcile the transition to socialism with a more expansive understanding of human individuality would also eventually translate into an attempt to foster productive forms that could counter the intrinsic contradictions and inefficiencies of mass industrial production (as embodied either in the large capitalist farm or in the Soviet *kolkhoz*), as well as those of petty commodity production. He was inspired by the early efforts of the Cuban revolution to chart a different path to that of Soviet collectivisation, one in which forms of individual land tenure would be designed to co-exist with cooperatives and with larger productive units of socialised labour.⁶⁴ Although the Agrarian Reform Law was passed in 1967 under the Christian Democratic government of Eduardo Frei Montalva, Chonchol would later enlarge its initial design in order to create a novel, integrated amalgam of productive systems that reflected the country's agronomical and socio-cultural heterogeneity. A tier of individually-owned farms became synergistically combined with a network of farming cooperatives, as well as with larger productive units, termed Productive Centres (CEPROS) and Agrarian Reform Centres (CERAS). The former were devised to act as training facilities for medium-scale agricultural production, whilst the latter sought to rationalise the use of geographically remote and unpopulated lands – especially the Magallanes region – for grain and livestock production.⁶⁵

Although the Vuskovic Plan and the Agrarian Reform became the two core pillars of Popular Unity's development strategy, neither Vuskovic nor Chonchol were able to foresee the reactionary forces that they would unleash.

Sabotage of development

In a 1977 postscript to *Development and Dependency in Latin America*, Cardoso and Faletto reflected on the emerging authoritarian regimes that had crept across the region, often as a response to popular and democratic efforts to ascertain economic sovereignty. Far from episodic, Cardoso and Faletto argued that this authoritarian turn was instead symptomatic of a broader 'Bonapartisation' of political power that had rendered the state apparatus more directly subservient to the interests of oligarchies and transnational corporations.⁶⁶ In this emerging new formation of Latin American dependent development, Cardoso and Faletto pointed out, authentic popular demands are considered suspicious, subversive, and are therefore met with repression. Insofar as the demands of racial minorities, of feminist groups, and student movements, among others, are increasingly seen as a challenge to the existing state of things, these authors warned that the public interest itself was becoming problematically conflated with the defence of the enterprise system. In a 1978 book titled *Socialismo o fascismo* [Socialism or Fascism],⁶⁷ Theotônio Dos Santos expanded on this insight by suggesting that the authoritarian turn that began with the 1964 coup in Brazil was not an instance of reactionary oligarchies resisting the process of bourgeois modernisation. Rather, Dos Santos argued that the combination of fascist ideology and political repression became the hallmark of a new pattern of global capitalist expansion where state violence became more directly harnessed as a lever of free-market reforms.⁶⁸

The 1973 military coup in Chile did not mark, of course, the first moment of reaction to the project of endogenous development in the region; important historical precedents include the US-backed overthrow of the Jacobo Árbenz government in Guatemala in 1954 as well as the 1964 coup against the João Goulart government in Brazil. The case of Chile, however, acquired the status of a canonical example of the trend theorised by Dos Santos, given the relatively high levels of foreign industrial penetration and monopolistic integration that characterised the country by 1973.⁶⁹ Also, the stakes were exceptionally high considering that the political program of Allende's presidential campaign was framed in avowedly developmentalist and libertarian terms; the

declared objective of the UP government would not only be to curb the oligarchic and imperialist forces that were leading to widespread social suffering, but to overhaul the productive and technological structure of the national economy.⁷⁰

Once in office, UP demonstrated an impressive determination to pursue execution of the Agrarian Reform and the Vuskovic Plan, the core pillars of its development strategy. To begin with, the UP government (with Chonchol as its Minister of Agriculture) greatly accelerated the process of land redistribution that had begun during the previous government. The Frei administration expropriated 3.5 million hectares during the 1965-1970 period, whilst the Allende administration managed to expropriate 8.8 million hectares during the 1970-1972 period.⁷¹ The emergence of the peasantry as a political actor was also clearly demonstrated by the number of people involved in peasant unions, which rose from 2,118 individuals in 1965 to 282,617 in 1972.⁷²



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In terms of the Vuskovic Plan, the UP government was also able to set up the Social Property Sector (APS), which enabled the nationalisation or requisitioning of 377 firms in strategic sectors such as mining, industry, forestry, construction, retail and fishing. Because the banking system was also an important element of the UP's development strategy, the government was able to exert control over 16 banks whose combined portfolio accounted for 90 percent of all credit allocations in the country.⁷³ During its first year, the economic results of the UP government were astonishing. GDP growth amounted to 9 percent, while industrial production grew by 13 percent. Unemployment also decreased, going from 8.3 in 1970 to just 3.8 percent in 1971, whilst real income increased by 20 percent – chiefly as a result of aggressive wage increase policies.⁷⁴ Although a detailed account of the economic intricacies of the UP project is well beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that a set of unforeseen circumstances – both domestic and international – soon began to threaten macroeconomic stability and undermined the government's political footing. Food shortages caused by a major earthquake and extreme weather conditions were exacerbated by international volatility in copper prices; this, in turn, led to high trade imbalances and to an escalating fiscal deficit, which went from 15.3 to 30.5 percent during the 1971-1973 period.⁷⁵

Although macroeconomic pressures posed important challenges, it was the variegated mechanisms of reaction which ultimately led to an escalation of political conflict that created the conditions for the overthrow of the government in 1973. Termed 'economic sabotage' by Allende and Vuskovic, the reactionary tactics deployed against the UP's strategy of development involved a diverse set of actors and mechanisms. To begin with, the government faced a parliamentary blockade that thwarted a progressive tax reform that would have provided some leeway for its fiscal spending programs.⁷⁶ At the international level, and following Richard Nixon's infamous mandate to make the Chilean economy 'scream', the US administration and its network of closely-aligned international banks and foreign aid institutions (such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and USAID) withdrew access to crucial credit instruments and aid programs. Private credit extended by US banks to Chile plummeted, going from USD 219 million to USD 32

million during the 1970-1972 period, whilst foreign lending from the Inter-American Development Bank went from USD 310 million in the 1960-1970 period, to a meagre USD 2 million during the 1970-1973 period.⁷⁷ The financial blockade was also met with a commercial blockade that rendered Chile unable to gain access to technical inputs and spare parts for industrial and agricultural production.

In an essay written from exile and titled 'Indictment of imperialism', Pedro Vuskovic would later argue that the economic boycott suffered by Chile was indicative of the concrete political and instrumental power that the core was able to exert over dependent economies.⁷⁸ Moreover, Vuskovic claimed that 'the tragic experience of the Chilean people' acted as an exemplary, world-historical reminder of the unbearably high social and human cost that projects for democratic self-determination would have to endure in the future.⁷⁹ The backlash suffered by the UP government, however, involved more than parliamentary *realpolitik* and foreign intervention. In fact, the case of Chile is also reminiscent of the fact that dependency relations are not to be simplistically reduced to those of the interstate system; rather, they quickly metastasise into the domestic class struggle in ways that are often complex and unpredictable. The turn of events in Chile strongly resonated with the idea that dependency relations often lead to the emergence of a 'lumpenbourgeoisie' whose material interests are aligned with those of foreign capital and therefore at odds with the general or national interest.⁸⁰ An aggressive media and propaganda campaign was set into motion by some of the major economic groups in the country in order to foster an environment of fear and uncertainty among the population. As Casals points out,⁸¹ the media apparatus conveyed the idea that the UP's undeclared objective was to establish a totalitarian dictatorship that would destroy religion, the family, the nation and private property.

It was during late 1971 that the campaign against the UP – initially led by domestic oligarchic groups and the US – escalated into what Casals refers to as a formidable 'counter-revolutionary bloc' that included petty retailers, landowners, right-wing paramilitary groups, as well as wide sectors of the middle-class and the political centre.⁸² It was the Bosses' Strike (alternatively known as *paro camionero* or truck drivers' strike) of October 1972 that further coordinated the various reactionary

forces operating against the government, setting the country directly on the trail to the military coup that would come the following year. Due to rumours that the UP government was about to nationalise the private cargo sector, members of the national trucking federation decided to stop the transport of basic consumer goods and also to block some of the country's main roads for a period of nearly one month. Aside from paralysing a large portion of Chile's transport infrastructure, the Bosses' Strike also incited actions by petty retailers who closed their shops, thereby leading to food hoarding, economic panic, and thus widespread outrage against the government.⁸³

It was against this background of escalating socio-political conflict that both Pedro Vuskovic and Jacques Chonchol were pressed to resign, the former in June of 1972 and the latter in December of that same year; at the same time the dream of a 'popular option' for development began to fade away.

Conclusions

This article has intended to establish a dialogue between two emerging agendas of scholarly research that have so far developed in isolation from each other, but whose assumptions are complementary. One of them is concerned with the effort to reclaim the forgotten legacy of Latin American theories of development, especially against the historical erasure that either oversimplifies their key tenets or that severs the theory from the dreams, aspirations, and mass emancipatory struggles that inspired it. The other has to do with accounts that have rediscovered the eminently republican understanding of freedom that informed the design and implementation of novel anti-oligarchic, anti-racist, and anti-imperialist institutions in crucial periods of Latin American history. It is an understanding of freedom as non-domination from an arbitrary will or from capitalist impersonal power, the article has argued, which lies at the heart of the normative and epistemological sensibility that informs Latin American theories of development and dependency. On this basis, the article has also intended to reclaim the concept of development from liberal and poststructuralist interpretations that reduce it either to the governance of poverty, or to a neocolonial discourse of power, respectively. The experience of Popular Unity in Chile helps to

demonstrate a wider point, that Latin American societies were not passive recipients of the Western development project, but often advanced original and revolutionary understandings of what genuine human and social progress should be about.

It was by harnessing a politics of immanent critique that intellectuals from the Latin American School, rather than refrain from using the concept of development, mobilised it to reclaim a seat at the table and to challenge the Western economic orthodoxy in its own terms.⁸⁴ As Macarena Marey has recently argued, neoliberal dispossession has by now advanced to such an extent that it has even severed us from our emancipatory vocabulary.⁸⁵



Serigraphy by Agrupación de Plásticos Jóvenes (APJ) for the anti-dictatorship campaign of the 1980 plebiscite. Reproduced from Nicole Cristi and Javiera Manzi, Resistencia gráfica. Dictadura en Chile (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 2016).

Marey, a major proponent of Latin American plebeian republicanism, insists that we can no longer afford to surrender words to those who are not willing

to consider us as equals. As the case of UP shows, the idea of development has embodied longstanding popular aspirations for wellbeing, progress and economic sovereignty, and therefore for *political* freedom. These ideals, it should be noted, continue to be relevant for the labouring classes, and it is for this reason that social theory should take them seriously. Accordingly, it would not only be elitist but also politically dangerous to abandon these social values to the apparatus of multilateral neoliberal governance and to the political right, as the post-development tradition urges us to do. The task at hand, then, is to lay bare their distorted and ideological forms, and to reinterpret them in emancipatory and radically-democratic ways. Debemos disputarle el 2023 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the military coup that was orchestrated against Popular Unity, and it is a year in which the threat of authoritarianism is once again looming over the region. Commemoration of Popular Unity, then, should help us to reclaim some of the explanatory power, the emancipatory content, and the strategic vision of the theories of development that emerged during this convoluted historical period.

Martín Arboleda is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago de Chile. He is the author of *Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction under Late Capitalism* (Verso, 2020), as well as *Gobernar la utopía: sobre la planificación y el poder popular* (Caja Negra Editora, 2021).

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