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THE CHILEAN POLITICAL POSTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SALVADOR ALLENDE (1970-1973)

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ABSTRACT:

With the election of Salvador Allende in September 1970 representing the political conglomerate of Unidad Popular (UP) (Popular Unity) that drew together a great part of the Chilean leftist parties, the poster had an important function in conveying this plan. It was a clear and precise language, taking into consideration the reception of those messages from the part of: the neglected people, the worker, the peasants, the shantytown woman, the young people. The poster was one of the most politically committed media of the Government and the echo of social demands.

The political component of its posters, enabled that its visual proposals during the period of the Government of Popular Unity, between 1970 and 1973, that finished abruptly with a coup d'état, experimented the deep changes in its focus, its ways of composition, and making up a new visual discourse that the Chilean graphics had never had until then. The confrontational (formal opposition and that of content), the identifying (a generation with strong relations to identity), the corporate (the

medium for the dissemination of the programme of Popular Unity), the innovatory (communication strategy, unpublished graphics), and an eclecticism expressed in the formal synthesis of styles and tendencies are only some of its most important elements.

Key Words:

Confrontation, identity, corporatism, innovation, eclecticism.

MAIN TEXT

The Political poster of the Chilean left, related with the Government of the Popular Unity (UP), begins to appear on the walls of the cities of the country during the months after the political agreement of the parties that formed the coalition, which ended up appointing Salvador Allende as Presidential candidate, in December 1969.

This first period starts at the beginning of 1970 and finishes with the triumph of Salvador Allende in September of the

same year, this includes the posters that were made for the presidential election. The second period begins at the moment of this triumph, and continues during the three years of the popular government, until its sudden end on September 11th in 1973, through a bloody coup d'état perpetrated by the Army Forces

The political poster of the Chilean left agrees in its essence with the North American writer and essayist Susan Sontag declaration in an article of 1970, "While the presence of posters used as commercial advertising indicates to what extent a society defines itself as stable, in the search of a social and economical status quo, the presence of political posters at times tells that society considers itself under a state of emergency" 1. In these words are included the origins of the political cartel of the Chilean left in the process of changes that would lead the government of the Popular Unity. This way what Susan Sontag had declared in her essay written in 1970 became reality.

The political and financial instability that occurs at the same time of the triumph of Salvador Allende, must not only be ascribed to the strong opposition of the Chilean oligarchy gathered in the right, with the accompaniment of the Christian Democratic Party, but specially to the intervention of the government of the

United States led by Richard Nixon, widely documented issue in the present time. One of the first most meaningful facts that preceded the violent atmosphere of the times was the murder of the Commander in Chief of the Chilean Army, René Schneider, by an improvised assault group of the right, at the end of October, in 1970.

The changes that were occurring in the Chilean society of the moment which redounded in the poster, not only political, but also social and cultural represent not only internal phenomena but are also the result of a series of external facts

1. VVAA "Foundations of Graphic Design", article "The poster, publicity, art, political instrument, commodity" author Susan Sontag, p246

2

The internal background

The Agrarian Reform led by the government of Eduardo Frei Montalva from 1964 to 1970, meant the distribution of the farm land to the peasants, this decision was preceded by the expropriation of large landed states that were part the country. The antecedent must be looked for at the end of the government of Jorge Alessandri and his Agrarian Reform. The decade of 1960 was marked by the policy of cooperation from The United States towards Latin America materialized in

the Alliance for Progress, program of financial support for the Latin American countries driven by the government of John Kennedy, as an answer to the events related to the Cuban revolution in 1959. A retaining strategy against the advance of the leftist ideas and revolutionary movements. An answer to the Cuban Revolution and to the uprising of the people through the creation of guerillas groups and the "Tupamaros" in Uruguay "Montoneros" in Argentina and the "Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR) in Chile

The University Reform started symbolically in the middle of 1967 when one of the most important superior education institutions, Universidad Católica de Chile was occupied by the students demanding a new structure, this meant that this behavior was imitated in all the university centers of the country. The University Reform was an aim that crosses Latin America since the twenties, with mournful repressive facts coming from the different Estates. In the case of Chile, this process, made real since 1968 was aborted by the coup d'état, which in the educational side, as in social security, property of the state, or land ownership, was also affected by process of neoliberal counter reformation unique in the world and only possible to exist under the military government

The Congress of the Socialist Party in Chillán, took place in November, 1967, and it will declare in separate paragraph number 1 the following "the Socialist

Party, as a Marxist-Leninist organization, states the taking of the power as an strategic objective, to settle a Revolutionary State that releases Chile from the dependence and the economical and cultural delay and through this starts the construction of Socialism"2. This will bring consequences in the local political world, due to the fact that it implied for the first time the party was defining that there was not only one way to reach the power, through elections, giving room to the possibility of doing it through weapons. This way, the atmosphere began to predefine as belligerent.

2<http://comunismogenocida.blogspot.com/2007/02/el-congreso-socialista-de-chillan-de.html>.Source: Julio Cesar Jobet, History of the Chilean Socialist Party.

To the bursting of the world of young people, being most of the population young in 1960, 38.5% were under fifteen, another factor is added, the increase of the urban population, consequence of the migration from the rural areas to the city looking for better life expectations. In 1970 it reached to 71.3% in the cities, and only 28.7% belonged to the rural world. This led to a series of urban problems, at the same

time a paralyzation had been occurring and also a high inflation.

“El Tacnazo”, known this way because of the name of one of the Army headquarters in Santiago, was a try out of coup d’état, performed by Army General Roberto Viaux in October, 1969, they were claiming for institutional replevies, but it failed. This would be one more clue concerning the battle lived in the period, preceding the presidential elections of 1970.

A number of cultural facts were showing a change in the Chilean society. The arrival of the miniskirt in 1967, together with the edition of Paula magazine, that had as its objective the gender issue. Among the contents that the staff of journalists covered, large number of them women, were divorce, abortion, sex before marriage, contraception, etc. along with a treatment of the articles, turned it into the first massive magazine that joined the women’s liberation movement, one of the many issues that were part of the social disturbances of the sixties decade. It contributed in the new way of designing magazines, modern, with greater impact, applying concepts on their covers, simple and catchy, only showing the face of a woman, causing an even greater impact. In the design of headlines, taking the Helvetic font for the cover.

The death of Violeta Parra one of the outstanding local, folk singers who aimed to rescue the most genuine and identifying work, from musical to plastic,

and the investigation of folklore takes place in February 1967. The death of revolutionary leader Ernesto “Che” Guevara in October of that year, turned him into a hero and martyr for the left of latinamerica and of the world.

In this period takes place the uprising of the first local rock groups that received influence from the movements of the new musical paradigms that appear as well as in England as in the United States. Many of them made “covers” of hits from groups as the “Rolling Stones” or “The Beatles”. Nevertheless the ones that would have a political and cultural impact of greater dimension would be the ones belonging to the musical movement known as the “New Chilean Song” among some of them we can find:

“Quilapayún”, “Inti – Illimani”, Ángel e Isabel Parra, Patricio Manns, Rolando Alarcón and others. They made a song of protest with clear political intention that was calling

for social change, revolution and political disturbance. The great majority were university students that made of songs a tool for social struggle. Many of them belonged to the political parties or were with the government, what once more gave consistency to the discourse of the Popular Unity, to turn an ideological project into reality, this

means to cover up the social , financial, political and cultural areas.

In the association of “the ours” it is expressed the Latin American identity sense, which has been looked for at the beginning of the newborn States in the nineteenth century, and associated with the concept of nation. It is a topic that has been controversial until now. It is the discourse of the first socialists of the XX century, where the sense of cultural independence prevails opposed to the one of cultural dependence. Concerning trade, under the motto of “anti-imperialism”, which was joined by the left political parties, one of nationalist root praised by the Chilean bourgeoisie added. These ideas began to flow with more strength in the seventies. This identity searched by some of the original expressions of the workers, the peasants and their artistic representations finds echo in the intellectuals, musicians and artists, interested in the rescue and promotion of the local patrimony.

It is important to outstand that the Chilean left political posters had other influences. From the iconographic field came the Muralist Brigades “Ramona Parra”, “Elmo Catalán” and others, especially from the first one, where its flat colors iconography is recognized, the outline that surrounds the characters, the triad of profiles, worker, peasant, miner and a number of national symbols. This construction of the political poster of the left also contaminated the murals made by the brigades through all the country. Many

of them were reproduced in the shanty towns, assuming their iconography and adjusting them to the format of the walls.

The social actors had a very important role, coming from the political parties of the left, such as the PS, PC, IC; and the universities: Technical University of the State,(UTE) and University of Chile. The first one through the Communications and Extension Vice Rectory, the second one from the Extension Departments. It is necessary to state that the University of Concepción, in the south of Chile, also did the same, but until the moment visual material has not been found, nevertheless this is known through an interview to the designer Domingo Baño, who was one of the people in charge of the Extension Department of this University. Other institutions were the “Polla Chilena de Beneficiencia” the “ Consejería de Difusión de la Presidencia de la República” and the “Secretaría Juvenil de la Presidencia”: There is evidence that they strongly supported the propaganda of the popular government through the poster.

The external background

One of the first external antecedents that would modify the language of the poster of the Chilean left was the bursting of the hippie movement, that came especially

from the United States. The reception of this was mainly seen in the young people belonging to the bourgeoisie elite, though it had a wide diffusion in the local media through the written means of communication, TV, and university world. In Chile this movement would be rather mild, perhaps because of its elitist tendency, the leftist parties would assume the more political side of this trend, as a way to attract the young people, with a more modern language and in agreement with their preferences.

It is important to outstand, though with less relevance, May of 68 in Paris, that came to confirm a movement of young people that started to play a main role in the social, cultural, and political changes, in societies where democracy deepened. Among other international antecedents, a sense of discipline that was further than just doing and was linked with communication and mass media became stronger. Besides it has to be considered a cultivated Chilean elite whose interests have always belonged to the cultural constructions that come from abroad.

The Vietnam war (1964 - 1974) was another political milestone that had strong repercussions among the young followers of the Chilean left, whom through many posters made common cause with the independent movement and the end of the North American invasion.

Design, a new profession that arose among the young students as a cause of the already mentioned

University Reform was backed in the ideological production centers, especially in Europe, specifically Germany and Switzerland where the most influential phenomena of modern design took place: The Bauhaus, HfG and the International Typographic Style.

Another meaningful fact was the access to some design magazines as "Gebrauchsgraphik" (German), "Graphis" (Switzerland), along with others from the United States: "Art Direction" and "The Magazine of Communication Arts" (CA). In the case of the design magazines they run along private subscriptions, the same occurred with the university ones and through local advertising agencies.

In an interview to Vicente Larrea, outstanding poster designer of the seventies, whom had a relevant role together with his brother Antonio and Luis Albornoz, tells about his connection with these publications: "We always were, since we were formed,

very attentive to as reading about what other graphic designers of the world were doing. I was subscribed to magazines such as GebrauchsGraphik, Graphis and after Communications Art and Print".³

About the same subject, Waldo González, another outstanding professor and poster designer who was also part of

a group of designers that had great impact in the national sphere, tells that in the middle of the fifties, when he was still a student, he was assistant in the library of the School of Applied Arts of Universidad de Chile. Referring to the already mentioned magazines, points out: "The library was small but very complete; we had good collections of books, and we also received *Graphis* and *Gebrauchsgraphik* magazines monthly" (Castillo 2011). Another magazine that has been located was "Up to date Hoescht",⁴ interesting publication in which great part of its covers and back covers made direct reference to pop Art and Psychodelia.

Cultural changes came from Pop Art, Psychodelia and hippie Revolution, and though it has been said that was rather a small group the one that practiced it, its effects on communication were more relevant than its actions. The arrival of a visual aesthetic that made reference to formal principles of representation, the return to nature, the recovering of the handmade, sex freedom and its peace option to solve the conflicts, gave room to colorfulness in the national political poster which undertook a change in the formal language influenced by these trends: the use of a base and saturated color, the use of photography as a means of great impact, the use of the sans serif fonts, that arrived through the transferable letter (Letraset catalogue). Another relevant point was the impact that the School of

the Cuban Cartel had in the topic treatment of the poster with images of high ideological content, confrontational and that revealed itself as an object of clear political position.

The mentioned representation styles had a great repercussion in the reproduction of a graphic that reflected especially in posters used for promotion of musical groups, and in the covers of their records. This aesthetic impact included the newborn local rock groups, as well as the "New Chilean Song", and was also quite present in the origin of homey rock, measured in musical forms that would point out a

3 Interview carried out by Mauricio Vico to Vicente Larrea, October 2003

4 Edited in the city of Frankfurt, and printed in Germany. Though in this magazine the treated topics were centered in the industry, agriculture, international tourism and other issues. It catches the attention that all the covers and some back covers were designed with the Pop Art and Psychodelia style. Some issues were located, though it is known since 40. The date of the magazine could only be specified in number 48 issue, where it is stated the date of its edition, September 1969.

type of melody that appeared in the seventies and that became strongly related to syncretism among rock instruments, pianos, electric guitars, drums, Andean instruments, Indian reed flutes, panpipes, Araucan trutruacas, etc. Among these groups "Los Jaivas", "Congreso", and "Los Blops" can be mentioned as the most popular ones.

The formal components

The formal and stylistic components of the Chilean posters made between 1970 and September 1973 show a hybridization in its composition, typography, use of image of a low degree of iconic realism. It renewed the type of diagramming, using the transferable letter that came from the "Letraset" catalogue, with this it got up to date with the new typographic trends. The posters designers took responsibility for modernity along with many others, through the typographic use of the sans serif letter. The composition of the headlines with these fonts looked for the synthesis in the message and the clearness when reading. A great deal of these typographies came from the International Typographic Style and the German rationalism. This allowed to work on diagramming in a faster way, enlarge the letters to any size, taking advantage of its versatility giving more freedom to the composition of the headlines in the magazines as well as in the "slogans" and the downward of the texts in the posters. It helped the fact that the texts could be enlarged through the process of the making up of the sentence, after this make them go through the photographic enlarger and get its respective negative or kodalit. 5 This technique allowed to enlarge them afterwards and to set the texts in photographic paper, fact that from the point of view of the poster as a piece

must be looked at from distance, it was considerably beneficial.

Besides they knew how to combine the manual expression of typography, designing the titles of the posters giving them a special mixture. The use of these fonts originated in gestures, trying through this variant to find a sense of style founded in the Latinamerican, by the way a quite vague concept, but strongly associated to the artisan construct. This type of typographic composition appeared for the first time in the design of the cover of a record designed by the Larrea brothers, that is merit of Vicente, "Folk Songs of America", by Victor Jara and the "Quilapayún" group. "The cover was designed with a colorful tropical jungle drawn by Vicente who also experiments with the design of the title, with typographies inspired by the painter and typographer Ben Shahn"

5 It was called like this in the industry of printing because they type of film was manufactured by Kodak Company

(Larrea 2008). In many of later designs of covers of records, the form of gesture typography was used, an example, is the back cover of the record "x la CUT" (1969), "Y diez años van" (1969), "Angel Parra Canciones de Amor y Muerte" (1969) "De Isabel Parra" (1970), "Margot

Loyola, siete compositores chilenos” (1972)¹, “Dúo Coirón” (1971), “Los Moros y Jorge Yáñez” (1971), “La Peña de los Parra” (1971), “El cantar tiene sentido” (1971), “Canto para una semilla” (1972), “Ballet folklórico Nacional de Chile, Aucaman” ² (1972). This way of working with typography started with the work of Vicente Larrea consolidating definitively with the logotype of the Chilean musical group “Quilapayún” designed by him. This type of typographic construction was repeatedly used by other designers from the period 1970- 1973.

One of the constants that distinguishes these posters, the use of black outlines, a sometimes clean, firm or soft stroke, others, nervous, strength practiced in especial by the Workshop of the Larrea brothers, for them it meant a formal solution. A technical solution to make up for the mistake produced by the undermining produced by the movement of the offset machines. Another relevant case is the one formed by the duet González-Quiroz for the series of posters made for state institution “Polla Chilena de Beneficencia”. The use of the black outline in the illustrations came from a especial characteristic of the drawing style of Waldo González, it was an aesthetic solution -to give an stylistic peculiarity to its proposal- rather than the solution of a technical problem.

Another side was the opening to the experimentation of techniques of expression , the way to make the illustrations, as far as traditional ones (“guache, watercolors, pen, sign makers) as unusual ones (kite paper, shoe polish, color inks, color papers, typographic cliché and others), this resulted in the

unevenness of the cutting of the color areas, the irregularity of the line, the exaltation of color through its saturated use, having as a property used papers, as color cardboards and kite paper. All of them were used to make maquettes , peculiarities that were imitated in the processes of printing. The final results told about the closeness with the maquettes and the quality of the technicians and workers of the printing shops, as far as in the offset system, serigraphy and typographic clichés , and their skills to reach what the designer of the posters asked for in agreement with the specifications previously defined by the creators.

6 In this record only the name of the investigator and national folk singer is elaborated with gesture typography

7 In this cover only the name of the group Aucaman is designed with the same typography

8 It was a way of printing by melting lead plates, technique used by many Chilean printing shops which had precarious reproduction systems

9

The arrival of the four colors offset printing in 1964 made possible the printing of great editions of posters, it allowed the use of a big format that was meant to be given to the posters, many of them of 110 x 77 cm, to cause a greater impact. An industry of printing that thanks to its technicians and anonymous effort of many of its workers, it achieved a great quality product. They still attract the attention , and brings

them close in quality to the big centers of development of posters around the world.

The incorporation of photography as an effective and more daring technique in its use applied to poster, together with a new concept in the development of magazines and covers of records, turned into expression and identification of the more rebellious and confrontational generations, using a more direct language, covering topics that for many lustrums Chilean society has not touched, using characters of the local and international world, searching in the image of these characters the identification of the values of struggle, work and idealism.

The new language of the poster of the Chilean left was shown in a new use of icons, a new typography, a new composition and the use of the new technologies of the industry, ended up in a trend, as a formal resource, though it can not be said that it has been a determined program, it rather stood out an eclecticism of how the posters designers interpreted the renewal of the graphic language in a palimpsest of formal crosses that came from outside as well from internal processes.

Interviews to some of the designers and cartellists of the period point out that the only referent that had in common from the theoretical discourse, was the political commitment of many of them with parties from the left and their different factions: Communist Party (PC), Socialist Party (PS)

Unitarian Movement of Popular Action (MAPU), Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR) and Radical Party (PR) among the main ones.

The interest that arose in the new generation, the plastic renewal and the desire to settle links with the contingency, drove them to develop and experiment with an iconography that would allow the direct access to immediate reality, identifying with the fact, with the characters. The setting based on a simple and identifiable image with the new visual and factual referents, flags, stars, raised fists, birds, weapons, guitars, peasants, workers, women, children, students, etc.

The different individual and institutional actors, gave a relevant change and of great impact to the local poster, which is confirmed through the roles that both had and that would give a new space to this genre. In this sphere a new type of poster was

born and thrived: the poster of Chilean left. In general the creators were young university students and some autodidacts, but all of them agreed- as well as the young musicians of protest song- in being adherents or militants of a party from the government of the Popular Unity.

The young poster designers agree in a moment of the History of Chile, expressing through their creations the big topics that disturb the society of the period. In the investigation it is appointed as the generation of the unfinished visual, because they shared certain features: their youth, their political and social commitment, the idea of dreaming of a country for everybody, the sense of a search for renewal and change in the visual language, a new aesthetic. Many of them believed that this social change could be made through revolution, and commitment through their occupation. The cartel could be more than only a political instrument but also could make the city prettier, in periods when the population did not have access to culture. This way the daily expression was guided, also the reflection of people whom felt identified in the images that such cartels offered

Finally what characterized the cartel of the Chilean left was the confrontation contained in the rebellious replying message that called for social change and for a new society that would be founded under the principles of socialism, which the cartels tell about clearly in images as well as in the slogans. On the other side the search of the identifiable finally came in the mixture of styles that tangled up, due to the plastic events that mostly came from abroad, without forgetting some signs that came from local pottery, and also internal aesthetics influences of some Chilean engravers which tried other forms of

figurative expression: Jose Venturelli, Pedro Lobos, Rafael Ampuero, Carlos Hermosilla, Santos Chavez.

Another peculiarity was the corporatism that they practiced, even though it was not under any ruling, gathered for whatever reason the "Basic Program of the Government of Popular Unity", known as "The forty measures". The corporatism concept, though it originated later, due to the change in the economical pattern (from the value of use to the value of change), imposed by the military government (1973-1990). This will mean that from now the private enterprise will be the motor of the economy. From then in the country emerges the concept of corporatism, though this was already settled in the international enterprise. Nevertheless it can be said that the government of Allende and its project has a corporate character, even though in this case this orientation comes from the State

The innovation was another difference in these posters: the search of new referents in formal language: the typographic modernity represented by the sans serif letter, using transferable letter, the use of saturated and base color, the composition of the justification of texts left and right, taking advantage of the own dynamics that each piece demanded. In this classification it is also

the eclecticism, which went far from the dogma of the imposition that talked about “one” way to make poster, idea that had been a constant in the political cartels until then. This expression was so diverse, free of impositions, far from any ruling, that could be a political party, government institution or union, that the Chilean cartel of the period had an expression of authenticity.

The posters, the ones from the presidential campaign as well as the ones from the three following years, show that the creative freedom fell on young artists which were interested in the knowledge and in learning, they also had the responsibility of developing a new poster, that would be up to what a new society meant “the new man”, who stated with great insistence the discourse of the socialism of the world. The political poster of the Chilean left wanted to turn into a tool for the cultural change, in a cultivated discourse of commitment with the people.

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