

This is not Chile

Jernej Letnar Černič

The Republic of Chile will soon mark its 50th anniversary since the military coup d'état on 11 September 1973. The coup resulted in seventeen years of authoritarian rule, oppression, and general and systematic human rights violations. Chile is now, fortunately, a proper constitutional democracy based on the rule of law and human rights. Upon the dark anniversary, the Chilean state institutions and their leaders have condemned the coup and subsequent military rule as one of the most deplorable chapters. As such, a clear institutional position and memory exist of the systematic and general human rights violations during the military regime. The heinous nature of human rights abuses and authoritarian rule has not been disputed.

Nonetheless, despite institutional condemnation, the abuses of the junta regime have not been in Chilean society consensually condemned. A good third of the population of Chile does not condemn the coup and the subsequent violations. Chilean novelist Nona Fernandez opines that despite condemnation, Chile could return to the same old practices (Fernandez, 2022).

Things could not be different in Slovenia nowadays. Even though Slovenia has been subjected to three totalitarian regimes in the past, there has been universal condemnation of only two, nazism and fascism, which lasted the shortest. The crimes and human rights abuses of the communist regime, which survived the longest among all three totalitarian regimes, have been dividing Slovenian society for decades. As such, there does not exist unanimous condemnation of the authoritarian regime's general and systematic human rights abuses between 1945 and 1990. Moreover, no one has been prosecuted for the crimes committed.

On the contrary, most previous governments, including the incumbent government, have often turned a blind eye to past vi-

olations. The incumbent government has, against the uproar of civil society, even earlier this year, abolished an official day of remembrance of the victims of the communist regime. The streets across Slovenia continue to carry militant names, whereas many cultural, educational, and sports institutions have revolutionary names. The former members and officials of the Communist Party have never pushed outside the institutions of the democratic state. Moreover, their descendants have, since the democrats and independence of Slovenia, taken over Slovenian state institutions, mostly managing them against the public interest.

In the past decade, the rule of law and the institutions of the Slovenian state have remained weak and subjected to vested interests (Avbelj, Letnar Černič 2022). Similarly or even worse, compared to the rule of law erosion in Hungary and Poland, the Slovenian state institutions (and without proper supervision of European institutions, except for 2020-2022) have been subjected to the meddling of vested interests of various interest and corporate groups. Through state institutions, those groups have governed by law and allowed the rise of arbitrariness in almost every dimension of Slovenian institutions and society. Collision of corporate and government interests has been the norm in Slovenian society. Through their control of the most prominent media outlets, those groups have created a parallel reality in Slovenian society, which propelled voters to vote for instantly created political parties.

The past crimes have served the elites in Slovenian society as an excuse to engage the Slovenian public in ideological battles. In contrast, the critical decisions have been made behind the scenes. As such, Slovenia is not Chile. It has not been able to universally condemn abuses, construct memorials, and remedy victims of human rights abuses. Therefore, the traces of the previous regime can be seen hidden in all corners of Slovenian society, all of which harm the current and future implementation of the rule of law and worsen the quality of life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

Fernández, N., El País (22 November 2022): »En Chile intentan que conciliemos el sueño otra vez«, https://elpais.com/babelia/en-pocas-palabras/2022-11-26/nona-fernandez-en-chile-intentan-que-conciliemos-el-sueno-otra-vez.html?rel=buscador_noticias

Avbelj, M., Letnar Čerňič, J. (2020). *The Impact of European Institutions on the Rule of Law and Democracy: Slovenia and Beyond*. Oxford, Hart (Bloomsbury).