The return of Evo Morales to Bolivia

In Andean culture, time falls under cycles and is represented as a circle or wheel locked in perpetual motion. The conception of space, associated with agricultural and pastoral activities, is interpreted in similar terms. On November 11, the former president Evo Morales, closed a cycle as he stepped foot on Chimoré International Airport, returning from his exile. Surrounded by half a million people, the first indigenous president in Bolivian history arrived to the same place from where he had departed exactly one year earlier.

By Francisco Méndez Prandini - December 1st, 2020
On November 9th, after Luis Arce was sworn in as the new president of Bolivia, Evo Morales crossed the border between La Quiaca and Villazón by foot. In the company of Alberto Fernández, president of Argentina, he began his trip back home.

In 48 hours, he traversed more than 1100 kilometers, going through three departments. On the second day, he held 12 public events. With traditional dishes and clothes, peasants, miners and indigenous people greeted and welcomed back the man that was their president for 14 years.
Along the trip, Evo visited three symbolic locations: Salar de Uyuni, the country’s main lithium reserve, where he gave a speech on the importance of its nationalization; Orinoca, his hometown; and Chimoré, where he began his political career as congressman, in 1997.

The caravan was a public celebration. A woman wearing a pollera waves the Wiphala flag. By her side, a man holds the blue, white and black flag of the MAS-IPSP party. When Morales arrived, a flower necklace was put on him, while a siku ensemble provided the music.
The resounding victory of the MAS, with 55.1% of the vote, was a consequence of the cohesion within the party’s base. The racism suffered by indigenous people and women wearing polleras, as well as the burning of Wiphalas, had a significative effect. What constitutes a target of hate for reactionaries is a source of pride for the people.

Evo Morales is synonymous with his land, his mountain, his people. The link with his territory is inextricable. So is it with the music: tinkus, sicureadas and tarqueadas. In Oruro, the Bolivian Carnival capital, orchestras played the autochthonous sounds of each community.
“Unity among humble people, those that fight for their dignity, the people that fight for their identity. Our diversity is the wealth of our identity. It is important to know how to unite the people, to peacefully solve social demands”, Evo Morales stated.

“The politics of the region are embracing other values. I have a lot of hope in what is going to happen in Ecuador, in Chile’s referendum and in the permanent fight in Colombia. Through
social movements, we can strengthen this Latin American fight”, Evo Morales assuredly declared.

“A year ago, we said that millions would come back. Here we are, millions of us, today”. Before Evo Morales went into exile in Mexico, his vice-president, Álvaro García Linera, saved a fistful of soil. They then gave it back to Pacha Mama. In this way, he symbolically sealed his return: as the beginning of a new cycle.

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