

Lessons of Chile

by Alan Woods

Bourgeoisie and Landlords

The conquest of Chile, begun in 1536-37 by Diego de Valdivia, was carried out with the same brutality that was used in other parts of the continent. But the conquerors did not find any 'El Dorado' in Chile. The rather scarce deposits of gold did not compensate for the costly wars in the Aracuan frontiers which lasted until 1880 and which made Chile a deficit area for the Spanish Crown.

In the north and in the south the climate made the development of agriculture very difficult. Whilst Mexico and Peru attracted the most adventurous and imaginative elements of the ruling class, Chile didn't offer the same perspectives for personal enrichment and prestige. On the other hand the Aracuan Indians heroically resisted the foreign invader until 1880, demonstrating a great intelligence and strength of courage, changing their military tactics and way of life according to the changing conditions of struggle.

The invaders only achieved "pacification" of the Aracuans through a policy of systematic extermination. In the bloody wars against the Indians we can see the real character of the Chilean landlords, a character forged in the conquest and enslavement of the population, methods which they became accustomed to for centuries as they considered the Indians to be inferior beings, slightly better than animals. This mentality of a superior race has characterized the Chilean ruling class up to the present time.

Behind their "civilized" and "enlightened" skin there is hidden the mentality of the conqueror and feudal master, with the exception that nowadays the Chilean "nobles" and their bourgeois allies are nothing more than the sub-agents of imperialism, depending shamefully but voluntarily on foreign capital. For centuries the best agricultural land, concentrated in the central part of the country, was divided into enormous private estates ("haciendas" or "fundos") that were set up immediately after the conquest. According to a 1925 census these estates covered nearly 90% of all the land in this region. In the valley of the river Aconcagua, near Valparaiso, 98% of all the land is in the hands of 3% of landowners. Some of these estates cover more than 5,000 hectares. Only a very small part of the land is in the hands of small peasants who are hardly able to live.

The land problem has always been the central problem of Chilean society, together with the emancipation of the country from imperialism. There has always been a shortage of agricultural land: in the north because of insufficient rain, in the south because of too much rain. Only the central region offered good chances for the development of prosperous agriculture. This part was ideally suited for the development of a Mediterranean type of agriculture based on the production of wine, olives and fruit ... but the biggest obstacle to this development has precisely been the concentration of agricultural land in the hands of a few landlords.

The big landowners always used their estates for the cattle raising. The biggest part of the land was used for growing alfalfa grass and other foodstuffs for the herds. Resting on the cheap labor of the agricultural population which lived in very bad conditions almost like feudal slaves, the landlords didn't have the slightest interest in modernizing agriculture.

The rudimentary methods of the big landlords have been the main factor that impeded the development of agriculture. In the south from 1850 the German immigrants established small farms based on the production of wheat and dairy cows. But in the greatest part of the country there did not exist a numerous class of prosperous peasants, but rather a clear division between the big landlords and their "tenants" living in semi-feudal conditions, with a large class of rural semi-proletarians, the "broken ones" (rotos), subjected to the most brutal exploitation and living in sub-human conditions.

In contrast to other countries Chile never knew an agrarian reform that is worthy of the name. From 1925, but especially from 1945 they tried to divide the big estates. But these attempts, beside being very partial ones, didn't take place as a consequence of a revolution (Mexico) or government policies (Bolivia), but on the initiative of the landlords themselves who realized that it was far more profitable, in some cases, to divide their lands and sell them off in lots. The feudal mentality of the Chilean landlords didn't present any serious obstacle when it came to participating in the most shamefaced speculation. The landlords sold a part of their land and invested their profits in business in the towns. They controlled their banks and other financial institutions.

The Bourgeoisie's Subservience

In a much clearer form than in other countries in Latin America the interests of the big landlords, the bankers, and the capitalists in Chile, are completely fused together in a powerful oligarchy which controls, together with imperialism, the economic life of the country. It is therefore virtually impossible to establish a clear line of demarcation between the big landlords and the Chilean bourgeoisie, who quickly recognized their identity of interests and united in a more or less homogeneous bloc opposed to radical changes in the structure of Chilean society. This explains the absence of a bourgeois democratic revolution in Chile, and the frustration of all attempts to carry out a real land reform as one of the most important historic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Chile, and the frustration of all attempts to carry out a real land reform as one of the most important tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. The achievement of a whole number of democratic rights in Chile in the past were not the result of a bourgeois democratic revolution, which in reality had never existed, but because of the existence of a powerful working class and powerful trade unions. The pressures of the Chilean working class compelled the oligarchy to make a number of concessions, which they could do thanks to the relatively privileged position of the Chilean economy in the period between the two world wars.

After winning independence in 1818 the best and most radicalized elements in the army, strongly influenced by the example of the French Revolution, tried to carry out a number of

reforms, which went against the interests of the church and the large landlords. But these attempts clashed with the resistance of the feudalist faction, the 'pelucones', who imposed the reactionary constitution of 1833.

The development of capitalist elements provoked a confrontation between Liberals and Conservatives in the second half of the 19th century. But at the end of the same century they fused together and distributed the booty among themselves thanks to their control of the government and the state. An important element in this fusion was the constant wars against Peru and Bolivia for possession of the mineral wealth in the northern zone. With the conquest of the Arica desert important nitrate deposits passed into the hands of the Chilean oligarchy. The Pacific War resolved the question of these deposits in favor of Chile in 1883. Chile took possession of the ancient Peruvian provinces of Tacna and Arica, with a commitment to carry out a referendum (which, of course, never took place). The capitalists were content to share their power with the feudal class and the military caste, whose military victories opened up the perspective unprecedented enrichment. The profits from the nitrate workings were a launching pad for Chilean capitalism, which saw no reason for creating a confrontation with the feudalists and the military caste, which for its part, didn't hesitate in participating in the business of the bourgeoisie.

In this way from the very moment of its birth, the Chilean national bourgeoisie showed all the symptoms of a senile degeneration. Instead of a thoroughgoing fight against the power of the big landlords they submitted to a servile alliance, handing over to the landowners the biggest part of state power and sharing with them the wealth extracted from the super-exploitation of the workers and peasants, as well as the booty from the frontier wars. The bourgeois had lands and the landlords had shares in industry, mining and commerce: both classes were closely linked by the banking and financial interests.

For these reasons the Chilean bourgeoisie ended up being totally impotent for carrying out the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution which had been realized by the English and French bourgeoisie in the 17th and 18th centuries.

We saw the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the landowners strengthened after the military victory of 1883 and the final defeat of the Arica Indians in the same decade. This alliance had given them very satisfactory results: expansion of the national frontiers and an enormous increase in national wealth derived from the nitrates. The 'historic compromise' between the different factions of the ruling class found its expression in the political field with a long period of parliamentarianism. The world economic boom of the 1891-1913 period gave the Chilean ruling class a certain room for maneuver. Chile's neutrality in the First World War also produced a number of economic benefits. The fusion of banking, landlordism and big business was completed. There were no fundamental differences between the political parties represented in parliament.

The following figures show the secret of "Chilean democracy" of those days:

Production of nitrates

1832; 300,000 tons

1896; 1,000,000 tons

1901-10; 1,700,000 tons p.a. average

1911-20; 2,500,000 tons p.a. average

The rise in the world trade and the demand for Chilean nitrates forced up the price of this product. It rose 75% between 1910 and 1918.

Something similar happened with copper, which, little by little, was replacing nitrates as the most important export of this country. The annual production of copper rose by 33,000 tns per year on average between 1901 and 1910, and by 68,000 tns a year between 1911 and 1920. The foreign trade of the country rose from a total value of 140m pesos in 1886 to 580m pesos in 1906.

But in the same way that the Chilean bourgeoisie was incapable of carrying out a land reform, even in the field of industry and mining, in this “golden age” of Chilean capitalism, the national bourgeoisie surrendered itself in a most servile manner to foreign imperialism. Already in the years of the First World War some 50% of the investments in the mines were of foreign origin. Very soon imperialism, above all that of the USA, came to own the copper industry. El Teniente, which produced a third of the national total, went into the hands of a U.S. company in 1904. Chuquibambilla was bought by another U.S. company in 1912. This mine produced about half of the national total. In 1927 Anaconda and Kennecott Copper represented one sixth of national copper production. For more than half a century companies like Anaconda and Kennecott Copper have carried out a real plundering of the mineral resources of the country, accumulating immense fortunes at the cost of the Chilean working class.

What is true for copper is also true for other sectors, like iron, a mineral which is of good quality and in abundance in Chile. Bethlehem Steel took control of El Tojo in 1913 and worked it until it was exhausted. The greatest part of Chilean steel went to the USA.

In this respect too the Chilean bourgeoisie has given enough evidence of its complete incapacity to carry out another fundamental task of the bourgeois democratic revolution: the emancipation of the country from the domination of imperialism. Before the First World War Chile was a semi-satellite of British imperialism. These people, who nowadays talk so much about the country ('fatherland') and the 'national ideal,' are and always have been, absolutely incapable of freeing Chile from its humiliating dependence on imperialism. From the first instance they have been content with the role of being the local administrators of imperialist interests, the bellboy of the large multinationals. Under the rule of the bourgeoisie all the enormous wealth of Chile has been robbed by the imperialists or squandered by the oligarchy.

They have not even been capable of modernizing the country and developing a minimally decent infrastructure, as the deplorable conditions of the roads show. The few good roads that

there are in the north were built by foreign companies in the mines. The greatest part of Chilean exports are carried in foreign ships.

All this demonstrates the need to carry out in Chile a whole number of historic tasks that were accomplished in Western Europe a long time ago, in the epoch of the bourgeois democratic revolution. But the whole history of Chile demonstrates in a thorough manner the complete incapability of the 'national' bourgeoisie to carry out these tasks.

Labor Movement's Birth

Capitalism had already become the decisive force in the country before the First World War. But Chilean capitalism, from its birth, was tied in a decisive manner to foreign imperialist interests. On the other hand it was tied to the interests of the big landlords through banking and commerce. It is precisely for this reason that the 'national' bourgeoisie has never been capable of carrying out the historic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution and never will be capable of so doing.

How could a serious fight against imperialist control of the country be posed when the vital interests of the Chilean bourgeoisie were dependent upon foreign investment and foreign trade? How could a real agrarian reform be posed when an important part of its capital came from the same landlords with whom the bourgeoisie were connected by thousands of ties of family, education, etc.?

In short the historic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution could not be carried out by the bourgeoisie. Which other social class could carry them out? The peasantry? These "dark masses," dispersed, ignorant, and subjected to the most brutal oppression for centuries, were only capable of periodically carrying out desperate acts of rebellion, without any possibility of success, because they didn't find a conscious leadership in another social class, based in the nerve centers of the country, the towns. The peasantry, the most heterogenous social class has been the social class that is least capable of playing an independent political role. It either acted under the leadership of the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. In fact the struggle for political hegemony in the peasantry is a key question for the socialist revolution in Chile. In this sense the first step is the recognition that it is impossible for this social class to play an independent role.

The middle class? The political representatives of the middle class in Chile have got nothing in common with the French Jacobins, the petit-bourgeois revolutionaries of the 18th century who made up the spearhead of the bourgeois democratic revolution. The long period of the economic boom which lasted from 1891 to 1918 gave the Chilean oligarchy a wide margin for manoeuvre to buy the loyalty of the middle class, offering it bureaucratic careers in the State and in government. In this way there arose a new caste of professional politicians. The 'liberal' politicians of the middle class sold themselves to the oligarchy for a small amount of money. From that moment the middle class in Chile thought of politics as a very profitable business: this has been even more true for the so-called 'progressive' politicians of the bourgeoisie. The

'liberals', 'radicals' and 'Christian democrats' fully participated in this repugnant spectacle of corruption and prostitution, whilst the masses of the peasantry and the working class were mere passive spectators of the parliamentary game. The political representatives of the middle class were tied hand and foot to the carriage of the oligarchy, which guaranteed them positions in the administration. For them the system functioned quite well. From the very beginning the Chilean "liberals" have been the left boot of the oligarchy.

On the other hand the rise of the Chilean economy carried with it the development of industry and the working class. With the development of industry and commerce masses of poor peasants emigrated to the towns from the country. In 1907 some 43.2% of the population lived in urban centers. In 1920 this figure reached 46.4%. In Santiago alone there was 14% of the total population. This rapid process of proletarianization led to the first attempts to organize the working class, beginning in the trade union field.

From the beginning of the century Luis Emilio Recabarren already headed the process of organization in the nitrate mines. Much later in 1910 the FOCh was formed. Two years later Recabarren tried to give the first political expression to the Chilean labor movement with the formation of the POS in Iquique.

But it was the events which followed the First World War, above all the Russian Revolution, which provoked an enormous radicalization within the young Chilean working class. The world recession which began in 1918 caused a fall in the price of copper and nitrates. All the social contradictions which were hidden in the previous period came to the surface. Between the years 1913 and 1923 the real wages of the workers were reduced by 10% because of inflation. The importance of this period of radicalization is demonstrated by the wave of strikes that took place between 1911 and 1920: some 293 were counted.

The key event in the process of the awakening consciousness of the Chilean workers was the Russian Revolution. In an atmosphere of general radicalization the Socialist Workers Party of Chile (POS) came out in favor of the Russian Revolution and in 1922 accepted the 21 conditions by which it could enter the Communist International, changing its name to the Communist Party of Chile.

In the following years Chilean society experienced a permanent crisis at all levels, which created enormous possibilities for the triumph of the socialist revolution. The illusions of the masses in the "progressive" politicians of the bourgeoisie were frustrated after the elections of 1918. The "Liberal Alliance" government of Alessandri Palma showed its complete inability to solve even one of the problems of the working class.

The workers learnt through bitter experience to completely distrust the 'liberal' politicians of the bourgeoisie. Economic power remained in the hands of the monopolies and the landowners. The economic crisis went from bad to worse. With the growing control of imperialism over the economy it became increasingly evident to everyone that the Chilean bourgeoisie was nothing more than the local agency of foreign capitalism.

The political instability was reflected in the number of “pronunciamentos” (military coups) and in the change in constitution in 1925.

The world recession of 1929 hit Chile very hard, forcing it to abandon the gold standard and to repudiate its foreign debt. Mining production in 1929 only reached 52% of the average for the period of 1927-29. Unemployment rose massively. In 1929 there were 91,000 miners employed, at the end of 1931, only 31,000.

Opportunities Lost

The generalized discontent at all levels of society found its most clear agitation amongst the students at the University of Chile. In general intellectuals and students are a very sensitive barometer of the contradictions and tensions within society. Lenin explained many times that the objective conditions for carrying out a socialist revolution were (and are) four in number: in the first place that the ruling class loses confidence in itself and cannot continue exercising its rule with the same methods as before. Secondly, that the social reserves of reaction, the middle class, are vacillating or at least neutral. Thirdly, that the working class is ready to fight for a radical and decisive change in society. And fourthly that there exists a revolutionary party with a revolutionary leadership that is able to lead the masses towards the taking of power.

The crisis of the Chilean ruling class was shown by the permanent government crises that characterized the decades of the 1920s. The ferment among the students indicated a generalized discontent among the middle class. Doctors and other professional sections joined in the protests of the students. There were a number of violent demonstrations, which led to the collapse of the Ibáñez dictatorship and his fleeing the country. If there had existed an authentically mass revolutionary party in Chile, the pre-revolutionary situation could have been transformed into a revolutionary situation with the taking of power by the working class.

The tragedy of the Chilean working class was that the consolidation of the Communist Party coincided with the Stalinist degeneration of the USSR. We saw the same process reflected in all the parties of the Communist International, which continued to blindly follow the political line determined by the interests of the Russian bureaucracy. From 1928 onwards the International, created under the Leninist policy of proletarian internationalism, officially approved the Stalinist line of “socialism in one country,” which effectively converted the Communist Parties into mere instruments of the foreign policy of the Russian bureaucracy. This was the decisive step in the national reformist degeneration of all the parties of the Comintern.

At the same time, under the instructions of the Stalinist clique in Moscow, the parties of the International approved the ultra-left madness of the so-called ‘Third Period’, according to which all the other organizations of the working class were ‘social fascist.’ This policy was the cause of the terrible failure of the German working class in 1933. In all the other countries the Communist Parties lost their base amongst the masses as a consequence of this madness, which went directly against the policy of the United Front as advocated by Lenin. In Chile too the Stalinist

policy produced disastrous results. We saw the CP reduced to a sectarian grouplet isolated from the masses at a decisive moment, and totally incapable of giving serious leadership to the revolutionary movement.

Foundation of the Socialist Party

Consequently the opportunity was lost. The short-lived 'socialist' government of Carlos Davila was overthrown in September 1932 by the coup d'état of Arturo Alessandri. It's interesting to draw attention to the fact that the 'liberal' party of the Chilean bourgeoisie, the Radicals, supported Alessandri. During the 1930s in fact the Radical Party was controlled by a clique of landlords and big capitalists.

In the main the disaster of '32 was caused by the absence of a mass revolutionary party. The Davila government had proclaimed the 'socialist republic' of Chile, but not continuing on the active support of the masses it remained suspended in mid-air. The method of the 'pronunciamento' is sometimes sufficient to carry out a radical change without breaking the bourgeois order. But the socialist movement has to be based on the conscious movement of the working class. In this context Adonis Sepúlveda comments in his article on the history of the PSCh ('El Socialismo Chileno' May 1976, No. 1):

"The movement didn't maintain its support in the masses, it didn't hand over arms to the people to defend the government, there wasn't a party to give a lead to the resolve of the workers to fight."

The experience of these events convinced the best fighters of the Chilean working class of the urgent need for a new party, a party which would really defend the interests of the working class, which would not base itself on the social-democratic reformism of the Second International, nor the Stalinist perversion of the Comintern, but which had to return to the authentic ideas of Marxism-Leninism, the ideas of Bolshevism and the October Revolution. Many cadres of the old POS, discontent with the Stalinist line of the CP, joined in with this initiative to found the Socialist Party in April 1933.

Here it would be convenient to précis some of the most outstanding points of the old 'Declaration of Principles' of the Socialist Party.

'Methods of Interpretation.'

"The Party accepts Marxism, enriched and altered by all the scientific contributions of constant social developments, as a method of interpreting reality."

'The Class Struggle'

"The present capitalist organization divides human society into two classes which are clearly defined as each day passes. One class which has appropriated the means of production and

which exploits them for its own benefit, and another class which works, which produces and which has no other means to live than its wage.

“The need of the working class to achieve its economic well-being and the eagerness of the possessing class to maintain its privileges determines the struggle between the classes.”

‘The State’

“The capitalist class is represented by the existing state which is an oppressive organism of one class over another. Once classes have been eliminated the oppressive character of the state should disappear and it should limit itself to guide, harmonize and protect the activities of society.”

‘Transformation of the System’

“The system of capitalist production based on the private ownership of the land, the instruments of production, exchange, credit and transport, should of necessity be replaced by a socialist economic system in which the above-mentioned private property is transformed into collective property.”

‘Dictatorship of the Workers’

“During the process of the total transformation of the system a dictatorship of organized workers is necessary.

“The evolutionary transformation by means of the democratic system is not possible because the ruling class has organized itself into official armed bodies and has erected its own dictatorship to maintain the workers in poverty and ignorance and prevent their emancipation.”

‘Internationalism and Economic Anti-Imperialism’

“The socialist doctrine has an international character and demands a joint and coordinated action by the workers of the world.

“In order to realize this aim the Socialist Party will propose the economic and political unity of the peoples of Latin America to achieve the Federation of Socialist Republics of the continent and the creation of an anti-imperialist policy.” (‘Socialismo Choleno’ pages 15-16)

These basic principles were kept in a written form in the membership card of every militant of the PSCh for the first 25 years of its existence.

After the victory of Hitler in Germany the foreign policy of the Russian bureaucracy took a new turn. Initially Stalin tried to arrive at an agreement with Berlin. When this failed Moscow embarked on a new policy based on the idea of an alliance with the ‘democratic countries’

(mainly with French and English imperialism) against Germany. From one day to the next the 'communist' parties received new orders: finish with the previous policy of the 'Third Period' and enter into new pacts and alliances not only with the Social Democratic parties (which yesterday were called 'social fascists') but also with the 'progressive' parties of the bourgeoisie in order to stop the danger of fascism.

In this way the leaders of the 'communist' parties became the most ardent allies of the 'liberal' bourgeoisie. Lenin had fought all his life against this policy of collaboration with the so-called 'progressive' elements of the bourgeoisie, refusing to enter the provisional government in coalition with the bourgeois liberals after the February revolution in Russia. The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries at that time justified their entry into the provisional government – the first edition of the 'Popular Front' in history – by alleging that in Russia, a backward country where the working class was a small minority of the population, the immediate tasks were those of the bourgeois democratic revolution, and that therefore socialists should ally themselves with the 'progressive' bourgeois parties in order to fight against the remnants of feudalism and the fascist counterrevolution. Lenin came out with a hard-hitting reply. No confidence in the bourgeoisie, no support for the provisional government. Distrust above all the most 'radical' elements of the bourgeoisie, like Kerensky. No rapprochement with the other parties (mainly referring to the Mensheviks). In other words – trust exclusively on the forces of the organized working class in the soviets, or workers' councils, as the only power capable of destroying reaction, carrying out the tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in alliance with the masses of the poor peasants through the seizure of power, and consequently, going over in an uninterrupted manner to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and beginning the process of socialist revolution.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks understood that the building of socialism was not possible in a single country, and even less in a backward country like Russia at that time. They therefore raised the urgent need of extending the revolution to other countries, above all to the developed capitalist countries of Europe. They therefore created the Communist International, which proclaimed the need for a world revolution, the united socialist states of Europe, and finally a world socialist federation.

The First Chilean Popular Front

Under Lenin and Trotsky the Communist International cemented together the most revolutionary conscious elements of the working class on a world scale. Learning from the bitter experience of the Social-Democratic International (which, in the words of Lenin, wasn't an International but rather a 'post-office' with hardly any links between the different national parties) the Bolsheviks returned to the authentic concept of the International that Marx and Engels had during the days of the International Workingmen's Association – a world party of socialist revolution, with a common program, strategy and leadership. This idea was not in the slightest anti-democratic, nor did it mean the dominance of one party over the others. The complete opposite was the case. In the first four congresses of the Comintern the internal debates show the wide margin of internal democracy, of freedom of discussion, where even the smallest party could express its differences with the policy of the biggest party, the Bolshevik Party. There was a wide autonomy

for the national sections within the general policy established by the congress of the International, which until the death of Lenin were held despite all the difficulties.

With the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian revolution, which came about as a result of the isolation of the workers state in a backward country, this situation changed completely.

The process of the Stalinization of the Communist Parties was mirrored by a parallel process in the Comintern. All the critical elements were bureaucratically eliminated, something which never took place in the days of Lenin. The leaders of the International became Stalinist functionaries whose only aim was to carry out the orders of Moscow. From 1928 these elements carried out the ultra-left policy of the 'Third Period'. Then in 1935, without any problem whatsoever, they took a turn of 180 degrees towards the 'Popular Front' policy, which Trotsky had correctly characterized as a "malicious caricature of Menshevism" and a "strike-breaking conspiracy."

But the Stalinists could not carry out their policy of collaboration between the classes without the participation of the socialists. The Chilean workers had learnt to distrust completely the 'liberal' politicians of the bourgeoisie. The creation of the SP was an expression of the instinctive desire of the working class for the necessity of an independent class policy. The declared policy of the Socialists was the workers' united front, which was fought for in the candidacy of Marmaduke Grove, a prominent leader of the labor movement who was jailed by the government and elected senator for Santiago with the slogan "From Jail to the Senate."

The revolutionary spirit of the movement at that time was expressed in the famous words of Grove: "When we get power there won't be enough lampposts from which to hang the oligarchy." These words reflected the mood of the masses of workers and the rest of the oppressed sectors of Chilean society who were seeking the road of the socialist revolution and not the one of collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

The radicalization of the masses and the crisis of capitalism forced the oligarchy to look for the 'final solution', just like in Germany and Italy, by organizing armed fascist bands. Under the Bonapartist government none of the problems of Chilean society had been solved. But the fascist movement met with the heroic resistance of the working class. The workers' militias of the Socialist Party and the Young Socialists, 'The Steel Shirts', fought against the fascists all over Chile. Frightened by this the same government of Alessandri was forced to act against the fascists when they attempted a coup d'etat.

The failure of the fascist attempt, the crisis of the Alessandri government, and the growing wave of radicalization of the masses created very favorable new conditions for an offensive of the working class. But here the Chilean Stalinists played a completely ignominious role. The leaders of the SP, unfortunately, were completely incapable of offering any alternative. The Stalinists took the initiative and strongly pressured the leadership of the SP to accept the idea of a Popular Front with the Radical Party. This idea went against all the principles of the party and met with a decisive opposition from the working class, which instinctively understood the

traitorous character of the liberal bourgeoisie and wanted a workers' government. In the words of Adonis Sepúlveda:

"When the changes in the strategy of the labor movement place on the table for discussion the formation of a Popular Front, the Socialist Party resists this alliance which surrenders the leading role of the labor movement to certain sections of the bourgeoisie. It has at this moment a profound popular attraction and a charismatic leader. There is a tremendous upsurge in its militancy. No socialist accepts the surrender of leadership to another force." ('Socialismo Chileno' page 20.)

Unfortunately the lack of experience on the part of the young cadres and the vacillations of the leadership of the party, which did not know how to resist the persistent pressures of the Stalinists, led to the fatal error of entering the Popular Front, despite the opposition of the rank and file and in complete contradiction to the principles and policy of the Party. In the extraordinary Congress held in 1938 the General Secretary, Oscar Schnake, needed five hours to convince the delegates to accept the withdrawal of the candidature of M Grove, which had been agitated for since 1936.

This tragically mistaken decision had disastrous consequences for Chilean socialism and for the working class as a whole. From the entry of the Socialists in the Popular Front government, which won the elections in 1938, Sepúlveda draws the following conclusions:

"The young party doesn't resist class collaboration. Its least mature and most opportunist sections 'grow fond' of the State apparatus and forget the objectives which motivated them to become a part of it. There is a flowering of the weakness and reformism of some leaders, which had remained permanently hidden during the hard battles of the early years. Those with the best Marxist understanding and firm class-consciousness firmly battle with the reformist wave that invades the party. The combative and revolutionary youth is at the forefront of the struggle internally for ideological recuperation.

"The rank and file reacts vehemently against the corruption and the deals with the powers-that-be which break out in the bureaucratic summit. The disagreement not only comes from the radicalized groups but from veteran working-class contingents. The expulsion of the Youth is the straw that breaks the camel's back; the most serious split in the 43 years of the life of socialism takes place." ('Socialismo Chileno, pages 20-21)

The Popular Front Collapses

In spite of all the agreements made by the party, the leadership of the government coalition passed into the hands of the bourgeois politicians of the Radical Party. Under the pressure of the masses, the Popular Front carried out certain reforms, but later on opted for a policy of counter-reforms, which provoked open confrontations with the workers' movement. An official document of the Socialist Party in Chile, published to commemorate the 45th anniversary of its

foundation recalls the workers' response to the January 1945 anti-working-class measures taken by the government:

"The working class of Santiago replied to the first decree with a vigorous mass mobilization, tragically repressed by the public forces. The massacre was followed by a general stoppage, and resignation of the cabinet and, as the first act in a senseless adventure between the leadership of the SP and certain sections of the armed forces, came the formation of a bastard coalition bereft of principles, program and popular base. At the general congress which took place in October 1946 those leaders were stripped of their positions." (45th Anniversary of the CSP, pp 4-5)

From the word go, the participation of the socialist leaders in a coalition with the bourgeoisie had been an unprincipled adventure which had catastrophic consequences for the party. There began a series of internal crises and splits. The party was only saved thanks to the Young Socialists and the Marxists, who fought against the class collaborationist policy of the leadership, in favor of a revolutionary policy of class independence. In the Presidential elections of 1946, the Chilean Stalinists once again supported a bourgeois candidate and entered the government of Gonzalez Videla with the Liberals and the Radicals. Two years later, they got their reward, being expelled from the government and illegalized until 1958.

Once again, the Videla government showed to the world the utterly reactionary character of the "liberal" Chilean bourgeoisie. This "radical", "Left-wing" government turned out to be the most servile tool in the hands of US imperialism and the Chilean oligarchy. Finally the PS split over the reformist leaders' cooperation into the reformist 'Socialists of Chile' and the left 'Popular Socialists'. In a conference on their program held in 1947, the Popular Socialists stressed "the lack of independence displayed by the bourgeoisie when it comes to standing up to imperialism and the criole of oligarchies," and reaffirmed the policy of the Workers' Front, as opposed to collaboration with the liberal bourgeoisie. At this point it would be interesting to quote a few lines from the program, which sum up the experience of the Chilean workers' movement in the previous decades and draw a series of very important conclusions:

Socialist Revolution

"At the present time, it is the task of the Socialist and like-minded parties in Latin America to carry out in our semi-colonial countries the economic achievements and legal changes which in other parts of the world have been propelled and directed by the bourgeoisie. The abnormal and contradictory conditions in which we find ourselves, determined by the belatedness of or social and economic evolution in the middle of what appears to be the definitive crisis of capitalism, demands a speeding-up of the process of collective life: we must cut short the stages by means of national effort and solidarity with a view to bringing about the utilization of the labor, technique and capital we have at our disposal."

"The material process, in better-off nations has been the effect of the spontaneous interplay of vital and social sources in creative tension. With us, it will have to be the result of collective

activity, realized with a technical criterion and directed to social ends. The turn taken by world events, and the urgency of internal problems do not permit us to wait. By the ineluctable imperative of historical circumstances, the great economic transformations of the bourgeois-democratic revolution – agrarian reform, industrialization, national liberation – will be brought about in our Latin American countries, through the socialist revolution.” (Our emphasis)

Class Independence

The experience of successive bourgeois governments showed this thesis to be correct. After the years of prosperity after the Second World War and for a while after, the price of copper began to fall once more, causing a crisis in the national economy. The level of unemployment in Chilean industry in 1949 fell below the level of 1947. Inflation kept on rising, and the Chilean capitalists made their fortunes speculating with the national currency. 75% of the cultivable land remained in the hands of 5% of the population, and US capital strengthened its grip on the national industry.

In the meanwhile the reunification of the trade union movement was achieved, after being broken in 1946. The CUT, formed in 1953 affirmed as its principle aim the organization of all workers of town and countryside “to fight against the exploitation of man by man until the achievements of complete socialism.”

In the '50s, the Chilean socialists came to the following conclusion, on the basis of all their previous experience:

“This situation hinged on the possibility or not of collaboration with governments not representing the workers, characteristic of the historical evolution of socialism, until, coming to terms with the poverty of its ideological possibilities, it decides to rediscover in its principles a policy which traces before it a perspective of ideological, class independence and which, fundamentally, represents the workers. It is for this reason that in August 1956, the so-called ‘Workers’ Front’ Thesis came to light, the first fundamental lesson of which is that the bourgeoisie in our countries is not a revolutionary class. On the other hand, the industrial and mining workers, the peasants, the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, the artisans and independent operatives, all sections of the population whose interests clash with the established order are [revolutionary classes – JM]. And within this whole the working class plays an increasingly decisive role. By its organization, its trade union and political experiences, its class sense, it is the most resolute nucleus of the social struggle.” (45th Anniversary of the CSP, p9, our emphasis).

The same document, published in April 1978, affirms: “Many objective details remain to be reached and must, therefore, be seen as vital aims for Chile, but we deny that our incipient and anemic bourgeoisie has the independence and capacity to attain them. Here it is a tributary class of imperialism, profoundly linked to the landowners, making illegitimate use of economic privileges, which now lack all justification. We conclude, then, that only the exploited classes,

the manual and intellectual workers, can take upon themselves that mission in terms of forming a new society, sustained by a modern and progressive structure.”

It also explains that “the task of our generation does not consist in bringing about the final stage of bourgeois democratic transformations, but to take the first step of the socialist revolution.” In reality, the basic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Chile can only be carried out by means of the seizure of power by the working class, at the head of the masses of poor peasants and the other oppressed sections of society. But a workers’ government in Chile could not limit itself to bourgeois democratic tasks, but the very situation would lead, uninterruptedly, to an attack on the capitalist system and the socialist transformation of society.”

In the 1958 Presidential elections, Salvador Allende, common candidate for the reunited SP and CP under the banner of the FRAP (Popular Action Front) got 356,000 votes, only 30,000 less than the candidate of the right, Alessandri. The right-wing government carried out an austerity program, which weighed heavily on the shoulders of the working class. The reply was a wave of strikes, met with bloody repression by the government.

Unfortunately, once again in the FRAP we see a tendency on the part of the SP leaders to back down under the pressure of the CP. In the common program there is a noticeable and fundamental change with respect to the Socialist Party program. As the document ‘45th Anniversary of the CSP’ says:

Once more it is difficult to identify the principles of socialism implemented in the line of the FRAP, which includes a nebulous mass of principles in which it is impossible to recognize those of the party ... 20 years later we have a correct national and international policy, an adequate social identification: the Workers’ Front, which is absolutely consistent with our principles, but we have become hopelessly implicated in the common path undertaken, in which every alliance has led to a softening-up and making us give way and for the third time again we decide, wrongly, to agree to a pact forgetting the working class, the class struggle, forgetting that the bourgeoisie is not revolutionary and although it is written in our principles, in our reports to the congresses, in the inter-party polemics, once again we establish a holy alliance which contradicts the basic postulates of our party and of the Workers’ Front. In this way is born a new coalition, the possibility of the popular unity.”

Once again the leaders of the so-called ‘Communist’ Party insist on their thesis of the bourgeois democratic character of the Chilean revolution and the need to seek pacts and alliances with the so-called ‘progressive’ bourgeois parties.

And yet again, the socialist leaders proved incapable of standing up to these pressures. Although, evidently, their intentions were good: to maintain at all costs the unity of the Chilean working class, the leaders of the SP paid too high a price, the results of which only became evident with the coup d’etat of the 11th of September, 1973.

What is clear here is that, in order to lead the working class to the seizure of power it is not enough to have more or less correct principles. Of course, without clear ideas, without a revolutionary program, without Marxist principles and without correct perspectives, it will never be possible to build the revolutionary party, nor to make the socialist revolution. But what is necessary is a revolutionary leadership, a Bolshevik leadership, which is not going to lose sight of the principal aim of the revolution, giving way on basic questions, under the guise of 'tactical agreements' or 'unity'.

In this respect, Lenin was always totally intransigent. More than once, he was accused of 'sectarianism' or 'dogmatism' for refusing to enter into agreements in principle, not only with the bourgeois (that was self-evident), but also with other working-class parties. The clearest example was his intransigent attitude in 1917 towards the Mensheviks who precisely accused him of 'sectarianism' and of 'seeking to break the unity of the revolutionary camp.' Such accusations must never frighten a revolutionary leadership. Lenin understood perfectly the need for temporary pacts and agreements with other workers' parties. But Lenin's slogan was always: 'March separately and strike together': never to confuse the different programs and different banners of these workers' parties when they reached agreement concerning some concrete action. The tragedy of Chilean socialism throughout its history has been that, after drawing a series of correct conclusions from the experience of struggle, its leaders always gave way on fundamental questions in the face of the demands of the Stalinists who on each occasion managed to dominate the united front in which both of the parties were united, imposing their ideas, their programs and their views. And this recipe has always led to the most resounding defeats for the working class.

The reactionary policy of the 1958-64 Alessandri government produced a wave of radicalization in the country, reflected in the strike movement. The annual rate of growth oscillated around 4.5%. Whilst inflation increased enormously, the real wages of the workers remained on practically the same level as in 1945. 60% of the population received only 20% of the national income. The situation in the countryside was so bad that in the richest agricultural provinces of Aconcagua and Santiago, for example, only 7% of the landlords held more than 90% of the land. In general, about 86% of all the cultivatable land of the country was concentrated in approximately 10% of agricultural entities. Despite all the promises of agrarian reform, the conditions of the poor peasants, the 'inquilinos' (tenants) and the 'afuerinos' (laborers) continued exactly as before: poverty, hunger, illiteracy, endemic sickness and alcoholism.

The Frei Government

Furthermore, the stranglehold on agriculture by the latifundists led to a situation in which Chile had to import agricultural produce to feed its people, although it has more cultivable land per head of population than many European countries. The reason is not difficult to find. The latifundists employ cheap labor instead of machinery and do not bother in the slightest to introduce new agricultural methods. In this way, the starvation wages of the Chilean peasantry are also the cause of the low level of productivity in Chilean agriculture. The urgent necessity of a profound agrarian reform in Chile has been evident for decades. But not one of the

'progressive' bourgeois governments was capable of tackling the problem seriously for reasons already outlined above.

On the eve of the presidential elections of 1964, the peasantry still represented about 30% of the active population. But in the previous decades the process of urbanization had intensified. According to the census of 1940, 52% of the population lived in the cities. This figure had reached 66% of the population in 1960.

The wave of strikes and the high level of consciousness of the Chilean working class was a warning to the bourgeoisie of what might happen in the presidential elections of 1964. The Alessandri government was totally discredited. The oligarchy needed a political alternative capable of stopping the advance of the workers' parties. This alternative was the Christian Democrat Party, formed in 1957.

The Christian Democracy

As the clearest symptom of the weakness of the Chilean bourgeoisie and the growing radicalization of society, both in the countryside and in the towns, the elections of 1964 were reduced to a struggle between the Christian Democrats, represented by Frei, and the FRAP, represented by Allende. Both sides fought under the banner of a radical reform of Chilean society.

The Christian Democrats, the most skillful representatives of the interests of the oligarchy, made use of a very 'leftist' demagogy to win the votes of the petty bourgeois masses of the towns and, above all, in the villages. The peasantry, and the middle class in general, is not a homogenous class like the working class and the bourgeoisie. There are rich peasants and poor peasants, as well as a whole series of intermediate layers. In their upper layers, the peasants draw close to the bourgeoisie, while the poor peasants, the 'inquilinos' and the 'afuerinos' are natural allies of the proletariat. 'Liberal' bourgeois parties like the Christian Democracy have influence among the masses of peasants and the middle class through the privileged layer of this class: the lawyers, teachers, intellectuals, doctors and, of course, priests, the men of village in whose presence the peasant is accustomed to remove his cap, from his earliest years; the gentlemen who 'knew how to speak.'

These elements are capable, on occasion, of using very radical, even 'revolutionary,' phraseology with a view to maintaining their influence among the masses. They present themselves to the peasants and small shopkeepers as the 'friends of the people,' the spokesmen and mediators between the people and the authorities, the defenders of the poor and humble folk.

But, once elected, these well-to-do elements invariably place themselves at the service of Capital in the most servile way. In reality, this is their true function: the transmission belt between the bankers and big monopolists on the one hand and the masses of the middle class on the other. The usefulness of these political exploiters of the middle class to Capital depends

on its ability to fool and confuse the millions of peasants, small shopkeepers and potentially backward workers, women, etc. The socialist revolution is only possible once the stranglehold of the liberals and 'Christian Democrats' over the middle class and the peasantry is broken. Nevertheless, the totally anti-Leninist policy of the 'Communist' Party of Chile has been based for a long time on the necessity of an alliance with these hardened enemies of socialism.

As a clear symptom of the social ferment and discontent of the masses, it is enough to recall the fact that the slogan of the Christian Democrats in 1964 was none other than 'Revolution in Freedom.' And indeed, the masses placed their confidence in Frei who received a decisive majority: 56% of the 2.5 million votes cast. The results of the elections of the Lower Chamber the following year confirmed the triumph of the Christian Democrats, who saw their seats go up from 23 to 82. On the other hand, the right-wing party suffered a total defeat. All the hopes of the majority of the population were placed on the 'Revolution in Freedom,' the agrarian reform and the 'Chileanization' of the economy.

The experience of the Frei government again showed up the inability of the bourgeois liberals to carry out the most urgent tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. Under Frei, the state got control of 51% of the shares of the big U.S. copper companies. But this did not eliminate in the slightest degree that suffocating control of U.S. imperialism over the Chilean economy. The agrarian reform crept forward at a snail's pace. Its results are summed up in the following words:

"From a qualitative point of view, the Christian Democratic government's action concerning the distribution of land, favored some 28,000 peasant families who were organized into agrarian reform settlements or cooperatives in 1,300 farms which were either expropriated or intended to be included in the agrarian reform, with a global surface of 3.4 million hectares. This represented 13% of the total cultivated land in Chile, or 14.5% of productive land, and the beneficiaries consisted of between 5% and 10% of the peasant families which were either landless or had insufficient land. The aim of the Christian Democratic government itself for its period of 6 years was to grant access to land to 100,000 peasant families, which means that it carries out one-third of its program on this point." ('Chile-America' No. 25-26-27 p16)

Other aspects of Frei's program, such as state intervention in banking, remained on paper. The masses of workers and peasants had passed through the school of Christian Democracy and understood it for what it was: a gigantic fraud. What they wanted was a deep-going transformation of society. What they had got was the continuation of the oligarchic and imperialist domination behind a new and 'more democratic' façade. The role of the Christian Democracy – that of the most faithful defender of the oligarchy – was shown by the brutal repression of workers and peasants. Among the victims of Mineral de El Salvador and Puerto Mott there were more than 20 socialists, murdered by the Frei government's 'forces of Order',

Failure of Christian Democracy

The electoral defeat of the leaders of the 'Communist' Party raised the possibility of collaboration with the Christian Democratic government. The disastrous consequences that this would have are self-evident. In the words of A Sepúlveda:

"What would have happened after the Presidential elections of 1964 if the Party would have reached agreement or oriented itself to a deal with the governmental party? Only the submission of the working class to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie for a long period of time...

"If this (the conduct of the SP towards the Christian Democracy, -JM) had been one of direct collaboration, of critical support or of a simply legislative opposition, we would not have weakened its social base of support and would not have opened the way to a popular alternative." ('Socialismo Chileno', pp 26-8)

The support of the Christian Democracy among the masses was fast disappearing. The discontent and ferment among the petty bourgeoisie found a reflection in the ranks of Frei's own party, which experienced the 1969 split-off of the left wing which formed the MAPU and evolved towards a radicalized position.

In these conditions there was a new attempt to reconstitute the electoral front of the SP and the CP. At the round table conference, when the idea of the Popular Unity was mooted, there was a discrepancy between the representatives of the SP and those of the CP. The latter saw the question of socialism in Chile as "a perspective put off for an indefinite period of time." ('Socialismo Chileno,' p31)

Whilst Allende, without doubt, believed sincerely in the possibility of the socialist transformation of society by the parliamentary road, for the Stalinist leaders, the question of socialism did not even come up. The result was an incoherent document, replete with ambiguities. As the document '45th Anniversary of the CSP' affirms:

"These round table conversations ended by calling themselves the 'Popular Unity.' This round table conference had as its result the governmental program of the Popular Unity, a program, which, in all its essentials, sums up the contradictory positions of two different political projections: the socialist character and the bourgeois-democratic character of the Chilean revolution, the latter defended by the CP, the former by the SP. This contradiction was to be present throughout the lifetime of the Popular Unity government." (page 16)

The Popular Unity

"The triumph of the 4th of September and the consequent broadening of the program unleashed a revolutionary process which placed the classes in a situation of historic tension: revolution or counterrevolution. It was not the actions carried out by the popular government, or the program itself, which the ruling classes were afraid of, but the revolutionary dynamic of the masses which objectively placed in jeopardy the capitalist system. Above all, they feared the working class

leadership of the process, expressed by the predominance of Socialists and Communists in the government, in the Popular Unity and in the mass movement.”

“Nevertheless, it was this latter subjective element – the leadership factor – which did not know how to respond to the new reality brought about by the march of the revolution, a reality which overstepped the bounds of the objectives set forth by the Popular Unity in 1969.” (Chilean Socialism’, page 85)

The Popular Unity coalition included not only the CP and SP but a whole series of small petty bourgeois parties and grouplets (MAPU, API, PSD and Radicals) with a very sparse base amongst the masses. The Radical Party, in the moment of its entry into the coalition was undoubtedly a bourgeois party, which later split under the pressure of the masses. As opposed to the Popular Front of the 1930s, in which the old Radical Party was the majority force, the Radicals of Alberto Baltra were a sect, while the workers’ parties, the SP and CP, were the dominant forces. Nevertheless, the Stalinist leaders had a vested interest in the presence of the Radicals in the government, not because of their electoral importance, but as an excuse for not carrying out a socialist program. “We cannot go too fast, because that could mean the break-up of the coalition.” The same tactic has been used by the CP and SP leaders in France, also with the miniscule Radical Party.

Against the Popular Unity stood the two parties of the bourgeoisie: the National Party of Alessandri, the open representatives of the oligarchy, and the Christian Democracy, represented by Tomic, who, in a desperate attempt to try to recover the image of a ‘left-wing’ party, advocated “the total nationalization of the copper industry” and the foreign banks and the “speeding up” of the Agrarian Reform. But this time the masses were not to be deceived by the fake promises of the Christian Democrats. The results of the elections were as follows:

Allende	1,075,616	36.3%
Alessandri	1,036,278	34.9%
Tomic	824,849	27.8%

The abysmal collapse of the Christian Democratic vote clearly shows the process of class polarization in Chilean society. In fact, the Christian Democrats had already lost their absolute majority in the elections in the Lower House (Congress) in March 1969. Out of a total of 150 seats in the Congress and 50 in the Senate there were the following results (the results of the 1965 elections are given in brackets):

	Congress	Senate	% of Votes
Christian Democracy	55 [82]	23 [13]	31.1
National Party	34 [12]	5 [8]	20.9
Communist Party	22 [18]	9 [3]	16.6
Radicals	24 [20]	6 [10]	13.9
Socialist Party	15 [15]	5 [7]	14.4
Other Left Groups	– [-]	2 [4]	

The results of the 1970 elections meant that the Popular Unity had won, but it did not have an absolute majority. This argument was used by the Right in order to impose conditions on Allende before allowing the formation of the government. The leaders of the Popular Unity had two alternatives: either reject the blackmail of the bourgeoisie and make an appeal to the masses, denouncing the dirty maneuvers to impede the people's will, organizing massive demonstrations all over the country, or give in to the pressures and accept the imposed conditions.

Many socialist militants were indignant at these maneuvers of the bourgeoisie. And undoubtedly, the indignation of the masses would have been greater still, had the Popular Unity leaders organized a campaign of mobilizations and explanation. Already in June 1970, the CUT were threatening a general strike. In those moments, the working class had become the decisive majority of society; 75% of the active population were wage-earners, fundamentally in the towns (in industry and services) and less than 25% of the active population was dedicated to agriculture. The power of the workers' movement in Chile had already been demonstrated in the wave of strikes under the Ibáñez and Alessandri governments. The workers knew that the election campaign had been characterized by all kinds of trickery and dirty manoeuvres against the Popular Unity, staged by imperialism and the oligarchy. The attempt to block Allende's entry into the government would have been the signal for an unprecedented movement, which would have had a radicalizing effect in every town and village in the land.

Moreover, for a Marxist, although election results have a great importance as a barometer of the degree of consciousness of the masses, they can never be the only factor, or even the determining factor in our strategy. Marxists are not anarchists. For that reason we participate in elections and are willing to use all the mechanisms of bourgeois democracy, and even attempt to change society by peaceful means, through parliamentary legislation, to the degree to which it is permitted us to do so. Nevertheless, the whole of history, and above all the history of Chile, shows that the ruling class is prepared to tolerate the existence of democracy only within certain clearly demarcated limits. In the moment when the bourgeoisie sees its power and privilege threatened, it does not hesitate to break unilaterally with the "rules of the game" (rules established by them in defense of the power and privileges) and destroy the democratic conquests of the working class. No, we Marxists are not anarchists. But we are realists, and have learned from history. In this respect, comrade Sepúlveda is absolutely right when he states that:

"On the question of power, it is not a question of the numerical correlation of forces, of having a majority. For example, if in March 1973, we had obtained 51% or 55%, would that have meant that imperialism and the big bourgeoisie would have ceased to prepare the coup, would not have continued to develop the forces to overthrow us? At least, historical experience shows that, even when in a minority, the reaction defends the class predominance by violent means." ('Socialismo Chileno,' p36)

Many Socialist comrades, and probably communists as well, foresaw the trap that the bourgeoisie was preparing with its famous conditions.

The main protagonist of this manoeuvre was, of course, the Christian Democracy, which once again revealed its real nature as the most cunning defenders of the interests of its masters, the big capitalist, bankers and US imperialism.

Under the insistent pressure of Corvalán and Co., Allende reached agreement with the Christian Democracy and accepted the so-called “constitutional guarantees pact” which formed “private militias” or the nomination of officers in the armed forces who had not been to military academy. On the other hand, no changes were to be made in the army, navy, air force or police force, except with the approval of the Congress, where the bourgeois parties still had a majority. In this way, Allende and the other leaders of the popular unity fell into trap from the very first, forgetting the fundamental principles of Marxism, and the words of the founding program of Chilean socialism: “Evolutionary transformation by means of the democratic system is not possible because the ruling class has organized itself in armed civil bodies and has erected its own dictatorship to maintain the workers in poverty and ignorance and prevent their emancipation.”

Theory of the State

Lenin had explained many times that the state consists fundamentally of “groups of armed men in defense of property.” The acceptance of the “constitutional guarantees pact” by the leaders of the Popular Unity meant a compromise, on their part, not to arm the working class and not to touch any part of the repressive apparatus erected by the bourgeoisie “to maintain the workers in poverty and ignorance and prevent their emancipation.”

But then, how could they possibly carry out a serious struggle against the oligarchy and imperialism? Throughout the life-time of the Popular Unity government, the leaders of the SP and, above all, those in the CP deceived themselves, and therefore deceived the masses of workers and peasants when they insisted upon the “patriotic” and impartial character of the military caste. In an entirely utopian manner, they thought to neutralize the generals and admirals by soothing words, medals and wage increases.

The state apparatus, and above all the military caste, is not something above class and society, but an organ of repression in the hands of the ruling class. The top layers of the army in Chile as in any other country, are linked closely, by thousands of ties (of class origin, family relation, education, economic interests etc.) to the big bourgeoisie, the bankers and landowners. All this is ABC for any Marxist. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie and its political representatives, the Christian Democrats, saw this perfectly clearly. This ‘pact’ was not a secondary question, a detail or whim. It was the essence of the matter, as became clear three years later, with catastrophic consequences for the working class and the whole Chilean people.

Nevertheless, the formation of the Popular Unity government opened up a new phase in the revolutionary process in Chile. Just as in Spain in 1936, the government’s initial program was

very rapidly left behind by the movement of the masses. As is explained in the document '45th Anniversary of the CSP':

"During the first year and a half of the government, the carrying out of bourgeois-democratic measures rapidly exhausted the scheme of reforms of the Popular Unity, and the masses began to demand the carrying out of a program of measures in fields such as the economy, health, education, housing. In this way these masses began to mobilize around aspirations such as the handing over of the big monopolies in the textile and wood industry to the workers, etc. Aspirations which the government could only partially satisfy, given the degree to which it was compromised with the opposition and the obstacles which the vociferous representatives of reformism in the ranks of the Popular Unity itself placed in the way of carting out these objectives. It was at this point that the reformist sections began to act in the sense of paralyzing each and every initiative which might have mobilized the masses behind socialist and revolutionary perspectives or objectives and brazenly imposed their representatives upon the leadership of the economic apparatus, utilizing the CUT for these ends. All this had as its consequences a divorce between the objectives of the masses and the objectives of the government." (p17, our emphasis)

Mass Pressure

Under the pressure of the masses, the Popular Unity government went much further than what many of the leaders had foreseen. The mechanistic schema of Stalinism of an artificial division between the bourgeois democratic tasks of the proletarian revolution were broken by the movement of the masses. The Allende government carried out important measures of nationalization, which represented a hard blow against the interests of the oligarchy.

The 'Chileanization' measures of the Frei government had left 49% of the control of the copper industry in the hands of the big US monopolies like Anaconda, Kennecott Copper, etc. Moreover, Frei had paid out enormous sums in compensation (\$80 million to Kennecott Copper between 1967 and 1969 for El Teniente alone). The masses of Chilean working people had to bear the brunt of this extra burden. In July, 1971, Allende explained that the US monopolies had invested between \$50m and \$80m in Chile and that their profits amounted to \$1.566 million. Therefore, the companies owed Chile about \$642 million.

The nationalization of copper in July 1971 was a great step forward. The coalmines, the iron and nitrate mines, the textile industry, ITT, INASA and other industries were also taken into public ownership. A series of social reforms in the interests of the working people also served to increase dramatically the popular support of the government: the free distribution of milk to schoolchildren, the freezing of rents and prices, wage and pension increases, etc.

In turn, these measures gave an enormous impetus to the movement of the masses. At long last, the most benighted, apolitical and apathetic elements of society could see a government that was acting on their behalf. The result was a growing wave of radicalization in town and village. The inability of the Frei government to carry through a serious agrarian reform was one

of the main reasons for Allende's victory at the polls. On the eve of the elections, the situation in the countryside was characterized, according to the words of the ex-minister of agriculture of the Allende government, Jacques Chonchol by a "growing frustration." The same writer explains how the initiation of the agrarian reform was set in motion under the strong pressure of the masses in the rural areas:

"The first aspect that had to be dealt with by the Popular Unity government in the agrarian policy... was the acceleration of the process of expropriations in order to meet the pressure and concern of the peasants. The latter, in effect, thought that, as the new government was of the working people, all their manifold aspirations to access to the land must be satisfied with the utmost rapidity." ('Chile-America,' No. 25-7, p27-8)

On the other hand, the latifundists began a systematic campaign of sabotage in the countryside, abandoning their estates and dismantling installations on their farms. Many of them were already giving money to armed ultra-right-wing groups with a view to resisting the agrarian reform. Pablo Goebbels, a big landowner of Cautín province made public statements to the effect that any government official who tried to expropriate his lands would be met with machine guns. According to an official police report "more than 2,000 men have been recruited into assault groups with a view to causing the breakdown of the transport system, interruptions in the gas electricity and water supply, and, in this manner, cause general discontent." ('Militant' 1/10/71)

From the very first, the Chilean ruling class was making its preparations for a counter-coup. As the same article in 'Militant' explained:

"While Allende preaches 'responsibility' and 'discipline' to the masses, the reaction is accumulating forces for a counter-stroke. Profoundly demoralized by the victory of Allende and frightened by the movement of the masses, the landlords and capitalists understand the impossibility of overthrowing Allende immediately. They are prepared to wait.

"Nevertheless, careful preparations are being made, arms are being stored, conspiracies are being hatched among the top levels of the general staff. The danger is very real." ('Militant' 1/10/71)

Bureaucratic Resistance

The only way of disarming the reaction and smashing the resistance of the big landowners would have been the arming of the poor peasants, organized committees of action for the occupation of the land, with government support. Faced by the powerful movement of the armed masses, the landowners and their armed gangs would have been defeated with a minimum loss of life. In fact, the only defense of the conquests of the masses under the Popular Unity consisted precisely in this. But the leaders of the Popular Unity lacked all confidence in the revolutionary initiative of the masses and were terrified of the idea of "provoking the reaction." For this reason, they stubbornly opposed every attempt by the poor peasant to carry out 'illegal

land occupations,' even sending 'forces of public order' to evict peasants who had carried out such actions. Nowadays, some of the former leaders of the Popular Unity attempt to justify themselves, alleging that these movements were organized by ultra-left groups and that, at times, the peasants 'went too far,' taking over not only the lands of the latifundists, but also those of the 'middle peasants.'

Undoubtedly, in every revolutionary movement, especially those that involve the most oppressed and backward layers of society, there is always a tendency to 'go too far' and these 'excesses' are inevitable, to a certain extent. It also may be true that some small ultra-left groups may have taken advantage of the spontaneous movement of the peasants to increase their influence. But the responsibility for this situation rests totally with the leaders of the Popular Unity, and in the first place, of the CP and SP.

The best way to avoid abuses and 'excesses,' to reduce violence and bloodshed to a minimum and to ensure the most peaceful and organized transfer possible of ownership of the lands of the big landowners to the poor peasants was if the workers' leaders, instead of denouncing these 'illegal actions' and sending the police to 'restore order' in the villages, would have put themselves at the head of the mass movement, giving it an organized character. Jacques Chonchol, in the above-mentioned article, tries to play down the importance of the peasant committees. Nevertheless, he himself explains the reasons that prevented the development of these organs of popular power in the countryside.

"Seeing to broaden these (committees) to allow the participation of these groups, there began, moreover, a political struggle between the Popular Unity and the Christian Democracy and between the parties of the Popular Unity themselves to try and take over the committees, a situation which subsequently led some parties of the Popular Unity to not support the organization of peasant committees." ('Chile-America,' p32)

An incredible admission! Some of the leaders of the Popular Unity were opposed to the setting up of peasant committees because of the existence of a struggle for control of these organizations carried on by the different parties... But does the same struggle not go on in the factory, in every workers' district, in every local and national election, in every trade union? And nevertheless, the Popular Unity leaders did not advocate the abandonment of the trade unions and parliament. The real reason was that "some leaders" of the Popular Unity did not trust the movement of the peasant masses and were afraid that this movement might escape their control. The elementary duty of the workers' leaders was to support each and every revolutionary initiative of the mass of poor peasants, actively pushing for the setting up of peasant committees, despite all the difficulties, and wage a struggle within the committees for a revolutionary socialist policy, against the poisonous influence of the Christian Democrats.

From the first moment, the Popular Unity leaders placed all their confidence in bourgeois legality and the possibility of carrying out the transformation of society leaving intact all the old state apparatus. This fact had disastrous consequences in the field of Agrarian Reform. As Jacques Chonchol himself admits: "In addition to all this, the judicial limitations of the government

prevented it from giving the peasant committees a legal status for their leaders and finances for their work, unless by the passing of a law which had no chance of getting through as the government was a minority in parliament.” (‘Chile-America,’ p32)

The utopian character of the idea of using the old bureaucratic apparatus of the bourgeois state to carry through the Agrarian Reform is implicitly, though reluctantly, recognized in the following words of Chonchol, which admits that the “peasant committees” frequently came into collision with the resistance of the bureaucratic state apparatus: “In the same way, one of the problems which the Popular Unity government proved unable to resolve in spite of all the efforts made, was the working of the bureaucratic state apparatus.

“For all the process of agrarian change, which included such diverse problems as expropriations, technical assistance and credits to the peasants, the reorganization of the economic system between agriculture and the rest of society etc., we needed to provide the bureaucratic apparatus, which have a considerable responsibility for all the process of change (!) a far superior dynamism, coherence and efficiency to what had been its transitional mode of behavior.

“Several attempts were made during the Popular Unity government to attain this objective, but finally legal limitations, the resistance of the bureaucracy to change its habits, the class differences between the bureaucrats and the peasants, the urban situation of a great part of this agrarian bureaucracy and party in-fighting prevented significant progress in the transformation of the more traditional bureaucracy into a more organic (?) and efficient body in the service of agrarian transformation.” (‘Chile-America,’ p33)

All of Jacques Chonchol’s arguments clearly show the impossibility of bringing about a radical and irreversible change in the social relations in the Chilean countryside unless as a result of the revolutionary struggle of the peasantry, armed against the counterrevolution and organized in peasant committees, closely linked to the landworkers’ unions and the organizations of the working class in the cities.

But in spite of everything, as a result of the pressure of the masses (already before the 1st of January 1971 there were between 250 and 300 “unlawful” occupations), the Popular Unity government carried through the most profound Agrarian Reform in the whole history of Chile. In the words of Jacques Chonchol: “Under these circumstances, the Popular Unity government fixed a target for 1971 of a thousand farms to be expropriated, which was almost as many as were taken over by the Christian Democratic government during its six years in office (1,139 farms) and which meant almost quadrupling the expropriations of 1970 (273 farms with 634 thousand hectares had been expropriated by the Frei government in 1970).

“This implied an enormous effort for the bureaucratic state system, given the complications and limitations of the expropriative process contemplated in the law no. 16,640. In spite of this, and under the pressure of the peasantry, the speeding-up of the process had to be still greater and at the end of 1971, 1,378 farms had been taken over, with 2 million, 600 thousand hectares.

This rhythm was speeded up still more in 1972, when 2,000 farms were taken over, with 2 million 800 thousand hectares, with which the big latifundia were practically finished in Chile. In 1973, up until the coup, a further 1,050 farms were taken over, particularly poorly worked medium-sized farms and the remaining latifundia with 1 million 200 thousand hectares.” (‘Chile-America,’ p28)

The measures taken by the Allende government in the interests of the workers and peasants gave rise to an enormous wave of popular enthusiasm, clearly reflected in the following results of the local elections of the 4th of April 1971.

Party	Vote	%	% '67
Socialists	631,939	22.4	13.9
Communists	479,206	17.9	14.8
Radicals	225,851	8.0	16.1
PSD	38,067	1.4	—
USOPO	29,132	1.0	—
DC	723,623	25.6	35.6
National	511,669	18.2	14.3
Radical-Dem.	108,192	3.8	—
Nat-Dem.	13,435	0.4	2.4
Independent	23,907	0.8	0.7
Invalid	38,772	1.4	2.2
TOTAL	2,823,784	100%	100%

Whilst in the presidential elections, Allende only got 36% of the votes, the Popular Unity parties now got 49.7% of the votes, and against 48.05% of the combined opposition. When the votes of Raúl Ampuero’s Popular Socialist Union (USOPO) are added in, the left had an overall majority.

The wave of radicalization in the country found its expression in the appearance of incipient organs of workers’ power in the factories and the workers’ districts. In the countryside there were attempts of the poor peasants to seize the lands. This ferment among the popular masses also shook the traditional parties of the middle class, provoking a whole series of convulsions and split in their ranks. Seven MPs broke away from the Christian Democratic Party to form a new party, the MIC (Movement of the Christian Left) to which 20% of the party’s youth wing joined up, declaring themselves in favor of “the construction of socialism jointly with the UP government.” The Radical Party suffered a split on the right after its 25th congress when the party formally declared in favor of “the class struggle and the need to end the exploitation of man by man.”

Alberto Baltra, who led the formation of the misnamed ‘Left’ Radical Party (PIR) “to represent the interests of the middle class” did not even dare to come out openly against the UP government straight away. The popular groundswell in favor of the government was too strong even among the masses of the petty bourgeoisie.

In fact, the correlation of forces on the parliamentary plane was no more than a pale reflection of the enormous strength of the workers' and peasants' movement at that moment. All the objective conditions were given for the peaceful transformation of Chilean society. The ruling class was demoralized and vacillating. The movement of the masses was in a moment of upswing and, in fact, had left far behind the reformist schemes of the labor leaders. The middle class and especially the peasantry, was looking hopefully towards the government. The socialist and communist leaders occupied key positions in the government and public administration. They had the advantage of being the legitimate government of the country, which facilitated the task of the socialist revolution in the eyes of the more backward masses of the middle class. Even in the armed forces, the Popular Unity had a lot of support, not only among the soldiers and sailors, but also among broad layers of NCO's and junior officers who supported the SP or the CP. The president of the Republic had the right to hold referendums on important issues. It is impossible to imagine a more favorable objective situation. Yet the leaderships of the SP and the CP failed to take advantage of the moment to strike the decisive blow and finish off the power of the oligarchy.

In this situation the elements of dual power emerged in Chilean society: "On this point it is very important to stress the fundamental contradiction which was given by the aspirations of the masses towards popular power expressed in the so-called communal commandos, 'cordones industriales,' popular assemblies, forms of control of food supplies, works' administrative councils, etc." ('45th Anniversary of the CSP,' p17)

Nevertheless, the leaders of the labor movement left all the levers of power in the hands of the ruling class. They did not dare to lay a hand on the army and the police. "The Popular Unity had the executive power," states Sepúlveda, "but the enemy controlled all the bourgeois institutionality and shielded itself behind it in order to make its counterrevolutionary preparations."

The government had legal powers to convoke plebiscites and new general elections, which, without the slightest doubt, would have meant a decisive victory for the workers' parties. But in a moment so favorable, the leaders of the UP wasted their opportunity, confiding blindly in the "good will" of the class enemy.

The Bourgeois Counter-Offensive

"The Popular Unity triumphed with 36% on the 4th of September. On the 5th of November after the assassination of the Commander-in-Chief of the army, general Rene Schneider, President Allende assumes office in the face of a terrified and divided bourgeoisie. The armed forces themselves were expecting a thorough thorough cleanout. Not a single person was moved from his post. The application of the general lines of the 40-point program was begun. Within five months of its term of office the mayoral elections were held: the UP won 51% of the votes."

In this way, the leaders of the UP lost the opportunity to bring about a relatively peaceful transformation of society: the calling of new elections, the winning of a solid majority which

would have robbed the bourgeois parties of their last legal pretext for blocking socialist legislation, and then an appeal from the government to the whole working class and peasantry to carry through the total elimination of the power of the landlords and capitalists in Chile: arming the workers, peasants, soldiers, housewives and small shopkeepers to organize production and oversee the maintenance of revolutionary order: the generalization of these councils to every corner of the country at all levels to constitute themselves finally into the real organs of power of the Chilean workers and peasants, democratically elected with the right of recall at any moment. Once confronted with a revolutionary movement with these characteristics, the ruling class, the class, the military caste and the state bureaucracy would have remained suspended in mid-air, without any kind of social base. But the leaders of the principal workers' parties, forgetting the most elementary principles of Marxism, wasted the opportunity, and the initiative passed into the hands of the reaction.

Making use of their control of the press, the Chilean oligarchy, with the active support of the CIA, began their counter-offensive in the pages of *El Mercurio*. The Christian Democracy intensified its campaign against the government in alliance with the Nationalist Party, demanding the "disarming of all armed groups." These people, logically, were only thinking about the left-wing groups, since the armed gangs of fascism were carrying on their terrorist provocations in the streets with total impunity. In this way there was established a convenient division of labor between the "respectable" opposition of the Christian Democracy which systematically blocked legislation, and the armed aggression of "Patria y Libertad" sowing terror and confusion on the streets.

The capitalists and landlords sabotaged the national economy. US imperialism cut off all economic aid to the Allende government and tried to organize a worldwide boycott of Chilean copper. The nationalizations, which had been carried out piece-meal and without overall planning of the economy, gave rise to convulsions. This provoked an enormous increase of inflation, which swiftly undid the advantages of the wage increases and seriously affected the middle class. Very rapidly, the sympathy of the middle classes towards the new government turned into a growing opposition.

The counterrevolutionary offensive began with the lorry-owners' strike in October 1972. The masses of the working class, understanding the danger, replied with massive mobilizations, which succeeded in frustrating the counterrevolutionary attempt. But how did the leaders react? With a government reshuffle which for the first time included representatives of the military caste in the cabinet. Once again, the triumph achieved by the mobilization and initiative of the working class was turned into a defeat as a result of the bankruptcy and reformist shortsightedness of their leaders.

"The Armed Forces were called in as arbitrators in a fight which had already been won," comments A. Sepúlveda bitterly. The Central Committee of the Chilean Socialist Party, giving voice to the indignation of the working class rank-and-file at the government's capitulation, protested against "that outcome which tricked us of victory in a decisive phase of the process." ('Socialismo Chileno' p40)

The Plotting of the Coup

Between the strike of October and the 4th of March there were four months of counterrevolutionary preparations: propaganda against the "shortages of supplies" and the "black market," artificially brought about by the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the reactionary conspiracies were stepped up in the barracks. In this situation the leaders of the Popular Unity, sticking stubbornly to their reformist schemes and blindly placing all their confidence in the "loyalty" of the "patriotic" generals, displayed their utter impotence to stop the right-wing offensive. Despite everything in the elections of March 1973, the Popular Unity got 44% of the votes. "In the first instance, the people regarded it as a triumph and the enemy was flabbergasted. This was the moment to go over onto the offensive ... This is what the Socialist Party put forward. But there was no offensive." ('Socialismo Chileno' pp40-41)

Without doubt, the working class rank-and-file, both of the Socialist and Communist parties wished to go over to the offensive. The workers were waiting for the word from their leaders to come out onto the streets and smash the reaction. The workers asked for arms. But they only received fine-sounding words, promises and appeals to discipline, responsibility, serenity ... Nonetheless, as Sepúlveda says, already by March 1973, the proletariat "did not want anymore processions, but was aspiring to power." ('Socialismo Chileno,' p41)

In the words of the document of the Sp cited previously: "The UP government, confronted by the insurrection of the bourgeoisie was not capable, because of its reformist positions, of resolving the situation in favor of the Chilean revolution, with organized mass actions to put an end to this offensive, and attempted by conciliation to postpone the final reckoning in a situation which was becoming ever more untenable." ('45th Anniversary of the CSP,' CSP p18)

The working class base of the Socialist Party, basing itself on its class instincts, firmly opposed the entry of the military into the government. In this way, the socialist workers showed that they understood much better than the leadership what was happening in the country. The capitulation of the UP leaders in November only stimulated the appetite of the reactionaries. The March election results only served to postpone the fatal reckoning. If it had depended only on the leadership, the counterrevolution in Chile would have triumphed almost one year earlier. Fortunately the enormous power of the workers movement and its great capacity for struggle caused the reactionary forces to hesitate. As the English journalist Laurence Whitehead wrote in an article in 'The Economist' (30/7/73): "If the Chilean army has hesitated up till now, the explanation is not to be looked for in any peculiar national tradition, but in the formidable power now accumulated by the workers' movement."

The proof of this enormous power was the complete failure of the "rising of the tanks" of the 29th of June. In a matter of hours, thousands of workers staged strikes, occupied the factories and, leaving pickets to guard the occupied workplaces, marched to government buildings, the Palacia la Moneda. "Yet another extraordinary chance to advance and to strike," states Sepúlveda. "The peasants were watching closely. The peasants were watching closely. The

movement having been altered, the right-wing MPs were trembling in the corridors of parliament.” (‘Socialismo Chileno,’ p41)

And what was the leadership’s reaction? Allende made an appeal to the workers to go back to work. The police were sent to disperse the masses who were wandering aimlessly, without direction or leadership, through the streets of the capital. This behavior of the government gave fresh heart to the forces of reaction who again launched a new lorry-owners’ strike. The workers replied with a 24-hour general strike on the 9th of August. As an article in the ‘Militant’ of 17 August commented: “There is no lack of courage or will to fight. What is lacking is leadership.” Nearly three years later the socialist leader Adonis Sepúlveda, looking back, arrives at the same conclusion: “The leadership of the movement would give no orientation whatsoever. Neither would the CUT.” (‘Socialismo Chileno,’ p41)

Lack of Leadership

Here was the tragedy of the Chilean working class. In spite of all the enormous power that rested in its hands, in spite of the fighting spirit and heroism of the working people, their leaderships let them down in the decisive moment. By contrast, the representatives of the capitalist class acted seriously. They couldn’t have cared less about “the rules of the game.” They knew that their class interests were at stake and acted in a decisive manner to defend them:

“The enemy always knew what it had to do,” adds Sepúlveda, “He retreated or advanced in order to attain his objectives according to the circumstances. In complete contrast to the Popular Unity, he did not lose any opportunity to gain ground. He organized the coup seriously and with determination and he dealt his blow at the most propitious moment, when the bewilderment and contradictions about what to do had virtually paralyzed the leadership.” (‘Socialismo Chileno,’ p42)

Perhaps Sepúlveda exaggerates the intelligence and foresightedness of the Chilean ruling class, but what is certainly true is that, if the leaders of the Chilean labor movement had acted with one quarter of the seriousness in defense of the interests of the working class which the bourgeois politicians had done in defense of theirs, the Chilean proletariat could have come to power not once, but three or four times during the lifetime of the Popular Unity. The conditions were there. The will to fight was present. What was lacking was a revolutionary leadership with a Marxist-Leninist policy and the will and ability to carry it into practice.

The attempts of Allende and the other leaders of the Popular Unity to reach agreement with the reaction by concluding a pact with the Christian Democrats and allowing the military into the government only served to disorientate the working class and encourage the counterrevolutionaries. A great part of the responsibility for this policy belongs to the Corvalán and the leaders of the “Communist” Party, who, from the word go, put pressure on Allende and the socialist leaders to follow this disastrous road. After the failure of the tank rising in June, Corvalán made a speech ironically reproduced in the journal of the British CP ‘Marxism Today’

in September 1973 in which he praised “the speedy and decisive action of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, the loyalty of the Armed Forces and the Police.”

Indignantly rejecting the idea that the CP was in favor of a workers’ militia, Corvalán answers: “No, gentlemen! We continue to support the absolutely professional character of the armed institutions. Their enemies are not in the ranks of the people, but in the camp of reaction.” But Allende and the SP leaders also had a large part of the responsibility for what happened, as they had accepted the same policy, for example, on the 24th of June, Allende “asked his supporters to undertake a dialogue with those groups of the opposition which also wanted the transformation of the country” (this refers to the very same Christian Democrats who precisely at that moment were supporting the fascist conspirators), and “warned against classifying the Armed Forces as ‘reactionaries’ and thus preventing the latter from becoming a dynamic force in the development of Chile.” And all this is only five days before the tank uprising of June 29th!

There can be no doubt that the intentions of Salvador Allende and the other leaders of the UP were honest. They sincerely desired a “peaceful change without traumas” of society. Unfortunately, to carry out the socialist revolution, good intentions are not enough. As was very well said by one of the leaders of the Chilean Socialist Party (Interior Leadership) in an article published in the Spanish Marxist paper ‘Nuevo Claridad’ (No. 24, April 1978): “If processes were measured by intentions, we would have to say that the intention of the UP was the construction of socialism in Chile. But nevertheless we have fascism and dictatorship.”

Nowadays, some of the leaders of the UP in exile try to justify themselves approximately along the following lines: “If we would have fought, that would have meant a bloody civil war, with thousands dead.” How ironical these words sound today! Thousands of workers and peasants, the cream of the working class, have been exterminated, tortured, imprisoned in concentration camps or simply “disappeared.” And still there are people who persist in the need of “avoiding violence at all costs.” Of course, no socialist wants violence. We all want a “peaceful change, without traumas,” but we also learned something from history: that no ruling class in the whole of history has ever given up its power and privileges without a fight with no holds barred.

The socialist and communist workers wanted to fight against reaction. This fact was clearly demonstrated on the 4th of September when 800,000 workers, many of them armed with staves, marched through the streets of Santiago. Sepúlveda describes the events in the following words:

“The backward layers of the poor suburbs, peasants, many housewives and the most poverty-stricken sectors of society were not formally members, but they were part of the social force of the Popular Unity. On the 29th of June, they responded to the attempted coup by a formidable demonstration of strength. The President of the Republic stood for more than five minutes on the balcony of the Moneda Palace before he could begin to speak amidst the deafening roar of the masses as they demanded the closing down of parliament. On the 4th of September, seven days before the coup, in every town and village in Chile massive concentrations took place in support of the government. In Santiago 800,000 people, in feverish

enthusiasm, demonstrated demanding: "Strike hard, strike hard, we want tough measures!" "Build people's power!" "Allende, Allende, the people will defend you!" ('Socialismo Chileno, pp36-37)

The Chilean workers had confidence in their leaders, from whom they requested arms and a plan of struggle. If, instead of sticks, these workers had arms, even though few in number and deficient in quality, the history of Chile today would have been radically different. The gigantic demonstrations of the 4th of September showed that the working class had not lost its will to fight, and was asking for weapons to resist. Unfortunately, their leaders, instead of weapons, offered them nice-sounding words and appeals to "serenity," to go home quietly, which only served to disarm them on the eve of the coup.

At this point the question of the army naturally comes in. According to some stories, Allende asked Altamirano: "And how many masses are required in order to stop a tank?"

However, this is a completely erroneous way of posing the question. If the question of the army could always be reduced to "so many generals controlling so many bayonets," no resolution would have been possible in the whole of history. But as King Frederick of Prussia once remarked: "When the bayonets begin to think, we are lost."

In the Chilean army there were many soldiers, NCOs, even officers who sympathized with the Popular Unity. Many of them even carried SP and CP cards. The attempted uprising by left-wing sailors on the 7th of August was an indication of what was possible if a serious appeal had been made by Allende to the working-class base of the armed forces.

Unfortunately, up to the very last moment, Allende was confident that the generals would not break with legality and even that they would defend his government. As a macabre irony of history, shortly before the coup, Allende himself nominated generals Guzmán and Pinochet as heads of the air-force and army respectively. Until the end, when the tanks were already on the streets, Allende asked the workers to remain "calm" and "serene" whilst vainly attempting to contact Pinochet by phone.

State Not Neutral

The fundamental error of the leaders of the UP was to imagine that the bourgeois state could adopt an "impartial" attitude in the development of the class struggle, and that Chile was an exceptional case because of the "democratic traditions" of its armed forces. These illusions were fostered up to the last moment by the generals. Shortly before the coup, after the nomination of Leigh Guzmán, the latter made a speech in which he affirmed that the armed forces "would never break with their tradition of respect for the legally constituted government." These self-same illusions were shared by the leaders of the UP, especially those of the so-called "Communist" Party. From the outset, Luis Corvalán never tired of insisting on the "professionalism" and "patriotism" of the Chilean military. In an article published in 'World Marxist Review' (Dec. 1970), Corvalán emphasized the special character of the Chilean armed forces which "maintained their

spirit of professionalism, their respect for the Constitution and the Law.” According to him, it would be incorrect to say that “they are the loyal servants of the imperialists and the upper classes.” Again, in November 1971, in the same journal, Corvalán insisted that “In spite of their diversity, the military men have common moral values: respect for the Constitution and the government.” The same Corvalán wrote in the ‘Morning Star’ (29/12/70): “To maintain the inevitability of an armed confrontation implies the formation of an armed people’s militia. In the present situation, this would be tantamount to a challenge to the army ... (this) must be won over to the cause of progress in Chile and not pushed towards the other side of the barricades.

How to Win the Soldiers

If the leaders of the UP had spent one tenth of the energies they had dedicated to win the energies they had dedicated to win the confidence and respect of the military caste in serious work to win over the rank and file of the army for the labor movement, the defeat of the 11th of September would have been totally impossible.

If Allende had used his enormous personal prestige and his legal authority as President of the Republic to make an appeal to the ranks of the army over the heads of the generals, the outcome of the situation would have been very different. The rank and file soldiers, once confronted with the movement of the masses, would have inevitably experienced a series of tensions and splits. Although in every army the apex of the pyramid of the military caste is connected by thousands of invisible threads to the ruling class, the “other ranks” are always close to the working class and the peasantry. The soldiers and sailors sympathized with the workers’ movement and with the UP government. But in order to produce an active movement of solidarity in the ranks of the army, it is necessary that the soldiers be convinced of the firm will of the workers to carry through the struggle to its ultimate consequences. In short, the soldiers must have faith in the possibility of success. Without this, fear of officers on the part of the troops will suffice to maintain discipline.

The fact that on the 11th of September only a minority of the soldiers participated actively in the coup, whilst the majority remained confined to barracks, indicates that Pinochet understood far better than Allende the tensions that existed in the ranks of the army. But in the absence of a massive and ferocious resistance, there was not the slightest possibility of winning over that part of the soldiers who, in a passive sort of way, sympathized with the workers’ cause. In this sense, the “pacifist” methods of reformism always lead to results that are diametrically opposed to those intended.

Now, in exile, many of the people who had a personal responsibility for the defeat, attempt to provide themselves with some sort of justification using all kinds of arguments. One of the arguments which has been used is that the working class, in the decisive moment, found itself “isolated.” In answer to this argument, Sepúlveda says: “The working class was not isolated. It is true that there were signs of tiredness. The class did not see the reward for its efforts in the showdown with the enemy. It was tired of parades. It wanted real actions to liquidate the social conflict and it did not perceive any will on the part of its political leadership. But it was ready to

fight the moment the order was given. On the 11th and in some cases, even on the 12th and 13th the workers remained in waiting.” (‘Socialismo Chileno,’ p37, our emphasis)

The Masses Abandoned

Both the SP and the CP had arms, and, in theory, a military policy. But in the moment of truth the weapons failed to materialize, the military policy proved worthless, and the majority of the leaders fled, leaving their members to save themselves as best they could.

It was an unworthy end to three years of heroic struggles carried out by the working class and peasantry of Chile. There are those who say that the death of Allende “saved the honor” of Chilean socialism. As if it were a question of “honor” and morality in the abstract, and not the victory or defeat of the socialist revolution. As if it were a question of the life or death of one man, on a day in which the flower of the working class was massacred without the least possibility of saving itself. Without doubt, the fact that Salvador Allende stayed behind to die in the ruins of the Moneda is one that compares favorably to the behavior of many of those who abandoned their membership to its fate, in order subsequently, from comfortable places of exile, to write lengthy articles about “the heroic resistance in Chile.” Salvador Allende has become a martyr of the labor movement, but all the sympathy in the world cannot change what took place on the 11th of September 1973, nor absolve Allende from his part of the responsibility for what occurred. The attempts to divert the attention of the workers from what really happened by means of all kinds of sentimentality and myths are unworthy of socialists and revolutionaries. If we really wish to pay homage to the memory of Allende, and the thousands of other men and women who were killed that day and afterwards for the cause of the working class, our first duty is to learn from the experience in order not to repeat it.

What Type of Regime?

All history shows that there is nothing worse for the working class than to surrender without a struggle. Seeing the paralysis of their organizations in the moment of truth, the masses fall into a profound demoralization. Even a defeat after a heroic struggle, like the Paris Commune or the Asturian uprising in Spain in 1934 have less harmful effects, leaving behind a tradition upon which the new generation can build.

The most terrible example of this process was in Germany in 1933. Using almost the same arguments as the leaders of the Chilean Popular Unity, the leaders of the German Social Democracy allowed Hitler to come to power “without breaking a window pane” as he himself later boasted. What were the results of the pacifist and conciliatory attitude of the labor leaders in Germany? The German labor movement, previously the strongest in the world, fell to pieces overnight, and practically disappeared from the face of the earth. The despair and disorientation of the German working class, as a result of the political blindness of its leaders, was the most fundamental explanation of its passivity under the Hitler tyranny and the practical absence of an organized resistance to the Nazis in Germany, in comparison to what existed in other countries.

After the coup of the 11th of September, there were many who characterized the Pinochet regime as “fascist.” And, in fact, the methods used against the working class by the Junta – murders, torture, concentration camps – are the same methods used in the past by Hitler, Mussolini and Franco.

Nevertheless, between the cases of Chile and Germany, there were fundamental differences. In the first place, the conditions in Chile on the eve of the coup were much more favorable for the working class than in Germany. The working class in Germany had suffered a series of very serious defeats between 1919 and 1933. On the contrary, in Chile, the workers had defeated various attempts at counterrevolution in the months before the coup and showed on the 4th of September, their willingness to fight.

But the fundamental difference was that Hitler based himself on a mass fascist movement, “national socialism,” which counted on the active support of millions of frustrated petty bourgeois and hundreds of thousands of armed lumpen proletarians organized in the SA. It is precisely this mass base that distinguished fascism from other forms of reaction, however violent and bloody they may be. The objective of fascism is the total destruction of the workers’ organizations, the complete eradication of the embryos of the new society within the womb of the old.

But the normal instruments of the bourgeois state are not sufficient for this work of destruction. The base of the state is too narrow to achieve the total atomization of the proletariat. In order to do this, a mass base within the population is necessary: for this reason, fascism is characterized in the first place as a mass movement of the petty bourgeoisie which “goes mad” as a result of the crisis of capitalism and, losing confidence in the ability of the working class to offer a viable alternative, seeks a way out in fascism, with its radical demagoguery and its “national socialism.” It is this mass base which gives a fascist regime and permits the total destruction of the labor movement. (In Germany, even the workers’ chess clubs were closed down). Fascism in Germany lasted 12 years, in Italy 20, in Spain, almost 40 years, although it is true that, in its later stages, the last-named regime had become transformed into a military-police dictatorship resting on the temporary inertia of the masses.

The Pinochet regime never had a mass base comparable to the traditional fascist regimes. Fascist groups like “Patria y Libertad” sowed terror and confusion but were always in a small minority. They did not play the slightest independent role, but acted as the jackals of reaction, preparing the way for the intervention of the generals. They were neither more nor less than an auxiliary arm of the bourgeois state. They did not even reach the same level of support as the Spanish Falange of the ’30s.

It is true that, when the coup took place, a certain section of the middle classes, hard hit by a rate of inflation (more than 300%) and demoralized by the policies of the UP government, looked upon the generals with a certain amount of sympathy in the hope of finding a solution to their economic problems. But in no way could this passive support be compared to the fascist movements of Italy or Germany in the 1930s. Pinochet’s coup was a military coup with the same

characteristics as many other coup d'états in Latin America, but with one terrible difference. The particularly savage and bloody characteristic of this coup was something new even for Latin America. The explanation of this fact consists in the fear which the ruling class had experienced under the Allende government which, under the pressure of the masses, had gone much further than what had gone much further than what had been foreseen. The capitalists and landlords took a terrible revenge with the aim of "teaching them a good lesson." On the other hand, the very strength of the workers' movement meant that the reaction had to resort to a more large scale and bloodier repression than in other countries.

A Bonapartist Regime

A military-police dictatorship that bases itself on the "rule of the sword" is a bonapartist regime. But the bonapartist regime in Chile, for reasons already mentioned, necessarily had a particularly virulent character. It is a bonapartist regime that tries to imitate the methods of fascism. But Pinochet does not have, and never has had, the mass social base that would be necessary to carry out the central task of fascism: the total destruction of the labor movement and the atomization of the working class. Despite the extraordinarily repressive nature of the Junta, it is an intrinsically unstable regime that has not the slightest possibility of lasting as long as the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini. Rather, it is a type of regime similar to the dictatorship of the colonels in Greece, which hung on for seven years, unable to solve anything for Greek capitalism, and finally collapsed, opening up the way to a new wave of radicalization and social convulsions.

What has, in the short term, given a false appearance of stability and solidity to the Junta is the profound disappointment of the masses in Chile and their feeling of powerlessness before the triumphant reaction, after the collapse of the workers' organizations of the 11th of September. The terrible massacre of labor activists, the disarticulation of their parties and trade unions created an atmosphere of generalized disorientation. In this situation, the economic crisis, unemployment and hunger, far from stimulating the struggle, only served to dampen still further the spirit of the workers. It is this disappointment and the inertia that flows from it that explains how the dictatorship has prolonged its life, in spite of all its problems and internal contradictions.

It is ironical to see, in the months following the 11th of September, how the same leaders who had systematically refused to arm the workers and peasants when this would have led to victory now, on many occasions, dedicated themselves to write articles, from the most distant and secure places, about the need for armed struggle against the dictatorship.

More than a year after the coup, a spokesman of the CP made a series of declarations in the Italian paper 'La Stampa,' affirming that "the organizations of the Chilean left still possess considerable quantities of arms" and that "a struggle is being waged to overthrow the military regime." What a world of dreams these heroes of the exile lived in!

Of course, the last thing that ought to have been suggested under these conditions was armed struggle, guerilla war or individual terrorism. The only results achieved by those minority groups

which were pushing these ideas in Chile have been totally negative: the senseless and unnecessary loss of a series of young and heroic comrades, with completely mistaken ideas, and the wholesale breakup of the groups in question.

Nonetheless, the small nuclei of working class cadres, both socialists and communists, began, slowly and painfully, to undertake serious work in the underground.

These comrades, unlike the leaders in exile, have never attempted to conceal a terrible situation with fine words, but speak honestly of the reality of “a subjugated, oppressed, starving and terrorized people.” The best elements of the working class, in the prisons, in the underground, in the concentration camps, are trying to fulfill their elementary duty: to draw correct conclusions from their terrible experience. Unfortunately, it seems that many of the old leaders are incapable, or unwilling, to do the same.

Economic Crisis

The misfortune of the Chilean dictatorship was that the coup d'état took place on the eve of the most serious recession since the end of World War Two. The Chilean economy, which has always been dependent on its exports, suffered very serious effects as a result of the falling-off of demand in outside markets, which brought about a steep fall in the price of copper.

In the years before the 1974-75 recession, the exports of copper represented almost 75% of the total exports of the country. The value of copper exports in 1975 was 45% lower than in 1974, and 34% lower than the average of 1973-4. The external deficit stood at around \$400 million (436 million SDRs). Only the generosity of world imperialism saved the Junta from bankruptcy. In June 1976, the IMF approved a figure of 79 million SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) in aid to make up for the trade deficit of 1975. In December of the same year, the World Bank, at the instigation of the USA and West Germany, approved two loans of a total of \$60 million for Chile – the fourth and fifth loans since the coup d'état.

In May 1976, a group of 16 banks based on the USA and Canada gave Chile a loan of \$125 million for 3-5 years. In July of the same year, the Inter American Development Bank approved a further loan of \$20 million for a period of 20 years. Just in the first four years after the 11th of September, the Junta received approximately 1 billion dollars in loans from private banks in the USA. All this contrasts with the systematic boycott of the Allende government by world imperialism.

The attitude of imperialism is not difficult to understand. No sooner in power, the Junta began the systematic destruction of the conquests of the working class, handing back the nationalized factories to their former owners and the land to the latifundists. The Junta's economic policies are those of the notorious “Chicago school of economics” of Milton Friedman, which, among other things, stands for the policy of the “open door” for foreign investments. Once more, Chile is subjugated to the humiliation of a double exploitation: that of the Chilean capitalists and latifundists and that of the big U.S. monopolies.

After the military takeover, Friedman visited Chile and coldly recommended a 20% cut in state expenditure and the sacking of large numbers of state employees. There was a devaluation of the escudo against the U.S. dollar. Nevertheless, in 1975, the cost of living went up by 340%.

The “open door” policy and the efforts to attract foreign investments led to an open conflict with other countries of the Andes Pact. This represented an attempt on behalf of a series of countries to protect themselves against imperialist exploitation. Chile walked out of the Pact in October 1976.

The “austerity program” of April 1975 led to a really catastrophic situation. According to official statistics published in 1976, there was a fall in the Gross National Product of 16.2% in 1975, and a fall in industrial production of 25%. Inflation stood at 340.7% as against 380% in 1974. By the end of 1976, the figure for inflation had fallen to 174.3%. But this relative improvement was due, more than anything, to the fall in demand and the completely depressed condition of the economy.

Unbearable Conditions

Towards the middle of 1976, according to official calculations, the level of unemployment was more than 23% (in some sectors, 50%). The unemployment figures continue very high, despite the “economic recovery” of the last few years. In a report dated July 6th 1978, the president of the Central Bank of Chile, Alvaro Bardon, tries to show that there has been a certain improvement in this field. He gives the figures of unemployment for Santiago in the last few years, as follows:

June 1972	2.3%
June 1973	2.3%
June 1974	7.5%
June 1975	12.0%
June 1976	13.4%
June 1977	10.2%
June 1978	9.4%

And he adds the following breakdown of activities of workers and unemployment in greater Santiago in June 1978:

Trade	Unemployed	Working
Industry	84,900	325,000
Building	25,900	77,500
Others	3,500	20,000
Services	61,400	725,000
Others	8,500	95,300

This conservative banker states triumphantly that “we are drawing close to normal levels such as those of the year 1969.” According to figures published in a survey of a department of the University of Chile, comparing date of 1974 and 1977, the level of unemployment went up from 9.7% to 13.2% and lay-offs increased from 6.1% to 9.9%. Nevertheless, the official figures are a distortion of the real state of affairs. According to a group of members of the West German SPD's parliamentary group that visited Chile recently, the real level of unemployment at this moment in time could be around 30% and not the 12-13% put out by the government.

One thing is beyond any doubt. The Chilean working class continues to live in absolutely unbearable conditions of poverty, hunger, unemployment and misery. The reduction of sections of the populations to sub-proletarian conditions is shown by the increase of prostitution and begging in all the cities and towns of the country. All the economic and social conquests of the Popular Unity were destroyed after the 11th of September. The constant rise of inflation (although at a lesser rate, for reasons already explained) makes the cost of living unbearable for the working class.

Despite all the economic measures taken by the government, the Chilean economy remains in a blind alley. In fact, the methods of the “Chicago school” have served to increase the unemployment and misery, laying waste the domestic market and undermining the base of the nation's industry.

The perspectives for Chilean capitalism at present are by no means hopeful. The external trade deficit was still \$196 million in the first half of 1978, with an increase in imports and a decrease in exports. The most important markets for Chilean exports are Brazil, the USA, and Argentina. At this moment in time, Chile is in conflict with all these countries. In the case of Argentina, tensions have reached the point of breaking-off of political and economic relations. The instability of the Junta is translated into a crisis of confidence in the Chilean bourgeoisie, the clearest expression of which was the fall of values on the stock exchange by 2% in one week in June of this year. The president of the Santiago Stock market, in an interview with ‘La Segunda,’ confessed that the fall in share prices was “a reflection of the external and internal situation of our country.” All this shows the nervousness of the Chilean capitalists, their lack of confidence and their pessimism as regards the future.

The bonapartist regime of Peron in Argentina lasted for many years and managed to get a base of support among the masses through the Peronist trade unions thanks to the post-war economic upswing which stimulated the demand for Argentine products on world markets (beef). But the Pinochet regime emerged precisely at the same time as the international recession and the collapse of the price of copper. The years 1972-74 were record years for the price of this product. But copper prices fell headlong in 1974-75. In the last two years there has been a slight recovery, but prices still have not reached their previous levels. The Times (4/4/78) commented:

“In real terms, the returns from copper are at their lowest level and the first real evidence of massive cutbacks in production are now coming to light.”

The main copper-producing countries, organized in the CIPEC are in favor of a 15% cutback in copper production to keep prices up. But in Chile, the country that exports most copper, refused to enter CIPEC. It is clear that the Junta is afraid of a drastic reduction of copper production because of the social effects this could have. The USA is still the most important market for Chilean copper. Paradoxically, the USA, as well as being the biggest copper-importing country, is also the biggest copper producer. The problem is that US-produced copper is expensive and non-competitive. The U.S.-based copper monopolies are putting pressure on Carter to restrict imports from Third-World countries. These protectionist tendencies will have catastrophic consequences for Chile. The devaluation of the dollar in recent months represents a disguised protectionist measure, which will have serious repercussions for Chilean exports, and for the Chilean economy in general, in the coming months.

The Junta in Crisis

Every bonapartist regime necessarily tends to express itself through the medium of the personal power of one man, the “strong man” who represents “the Nation” above “class or party interests.” The criticisms by Leigh Guzman of the “leaderism” of Pinochet are to be explained, in the first place, by the discontent of a particular section of the military caste, which feels it has been kept away from the centers of power. Their share of the cake does not correspond to their prior aspirations. But this clique in-fighting between different groups of gangsters extends far beyond the personal “pique” of one or another element of the Junta.

The discontented elements grouped around Leigh try to seek out points of support in society, taking advantage of the general discontent and trying to create the impression that their opposition to Pinochet represents, so to speak, a more “liberal” opposition within the Junta. The growing isolation of Pinochet, surrounded by his camarilla of vulgar military careerists, fervently applauded by the large numbers of well-subsidized youths, has given rise to illusions of grandeur in the head of the Chilean Bonaparte. Pinochet lives in a completely unreal world, like a Roman emperor, with his dreams of a “new institutionality” and a “technified, integrationist, protected, authoritarian democracy of genuine participation.” According to the new “Pinochet Constitution,” the return to “normality will have three stages:

- 1) Recuperation (1973-80)
- 2) Transition (1980-84)
- 3) Normality or Consolidation (1985)

According to this scheme, there will be no presidential elections by popular vote until 1991! And even so, the real power would remain in the hands of the generals, the “Marxist” parties would remain banned and the activities of the rest would be very restricted.

The enormous danger for Chilean capitalism represented by the cretinous dreams of Pinochet is perfectly understood by the cleverest representatives of the bourgeoisie. Economic crisis, growing social tensions, the slow but sure recovery of the working class and the total absence

of a mass social base of the Junta causes the more intelligent bourgeoisie deep concern, above all in Washington.

The strategists of U.S. imperialism are coldly calculating the possibilities of survival of the present government in Santiago and the possibilities of its downfall, with all that would mean for the US investments in the country, which, since the coup, have recovered their former importance. Washington is concerned by the situation in the whole continent of Latin America. The imperialists have their agents infiltrated at all levels, up to and including the government itself, and are perfectly aware of the situation in the country. They know that, at the present time, the dictatorship does not have any support in any important section of society. It is only maintained by the temporary inertia of the masses. But the prolongation of the methods of repression can provoke a revolutionary explosion at one moment or another, which could place in jeopardy, not only the dictatorship, but the existence of capitalism in Chile, with grave repercussions in all the other countries of Latin America. This is the genuine explanation of the change in the foreign policy of the USA and its unexpected interest in "Human rights."

The assassination of O Letelier served as an excuse for Washington to put pressure on the regime in Santiago with the aim of obliging it to modify its policies. Without a doubt, DINA had gone too far. It is one thing to massacre thousands of workers and peasants in Chile, but quite another to cause problems for the Carter Administration, assassinating a former Chilean diplomat in broad daylight in the center of Washington, who had, moreover, good relations with the U.S. government.

With great hopes of support from Washington, and from certain sections of the Chilean oligarchy and the military caste, Leigh opened the struggle on the 18th of July in the Italian paper *Corriere de la Sera*. Reading between the lines of this article and other declarations of Leigh, one sees clearly the fear of the most intelligent sections of the bourgeoisie of an explosion in Chile, when he warns that "there is a risk that the people may look to violent solutions to the present situation," and affirms that "It is necessary to work out a program for the return to normality, indicating time-scale, methods and everything." And Leigh poses a transition period of five years ("it is not possible to have a rapid handover to civilian power") advocating the legalization of the bourgeois parties like the Christian Democracy and those workers' parties that "act in the Scandinavian manner." (!)

The miserable failure of this attempt at a "palace revolution" was not long in the making. Leigh's stupidity gave Pinochet the pretext required to get rid of him and carry out a purge of the officialdom of the armed forces. "I am firm, very firm, in government," affirmed Pinochet, later on. But the Leigh episode had laid bare the divisions and stresses in the ranks of the Junta. The nervousness of the military was shown by the fact that the armed forces and the policy were strictly confined to the barracks and a strong military cordon was thrown around the Defense Military.

Alarmed by the rows in the ranks of the Junta, the reactionary press (*El Mercuria* and *La Tercera*) made desperate appeals to "national unity" insisting on the need for a "conciliations of

options within the governmental Junta.” The sense of panic in reactionary circles was perfectly reflected in the pages of ‘La Tercera’: “If unity is not maintained – they know it better than anyone – dark hours await Chile. All the efforts which have been raised will have been lost.”

However, the spectacle of a struggle within the Junta was a clear sign of the instability of the present regime. Tomorrow, inevitably, new crises, new tensions and new splits will emerge, under the intolerable pressure of the accumulated contradictions of Chilean society.

The spokesmen of the Junta insist tirelessly on the “absolute tranquility that exists in the country.”

The repression has lessened somewhat in recent months. The DINA has now been re-baptized with another name, the CNI (according to its director, general Odlavier Mena, “basically, in that respect, they are not different...!”) but it is not necessary to go very far to see the first symptoms of a recovery of the masses, five years after the traumatic experience of the 11th of September.

Slow Recovery of Masses

The ferment in student circles, the increasingly open civil rights movement, of the families of the “missing persons,” the growing gap separating the Junta and the Church, are all clear symptoms of a generalized discontent among the masses. The effect of terror and repression grows less every day. Although it is true that there is still fear, it is not what it was before. What does exist, is the inertia of the masses, depressed by the effects of the economic crisis, hunger and misery. But this situation can change with unexpected suddenness. And in fact there are symptoms – no more than symptoms for the time being – that a change is afoot.

The bonapartist regime of Pinochet, which is based fundamentally on the state apparatus, tries to gain a certain independence by balancing between the classes. In this way, Pinochet thought he could gain points of support among the masses, leaning on the services of certain strata of the trade union bureaucracy. After the military takeover, the old trade union organizations of the working class were placed outside the law and their leaders arrested or murdered. Nevertheless, the trade union movement continued in existence under the Junta. The mere fact of the existence of trade unions, although with leaders hand-picked by the generals, is one more indication of the bonapartist nature of the regime.

Pinochet had the idea of establishing a “tame” trade union movement, but in the present situation of economic crisis that the country is suffering the attempt has turned against its authors. The trade union bureaucracy, apart from acting as the agents of the Junta within the labor movement also have their own interests which do not always correspond to those of the regime. In conditions of crisis, subjected to the pressure of the rank-and-file, some of those elements, beginning as the “intermediaries” or “go-betweens” of the government, bosses and workers, can go over to positions of semi-opposition, or even of open opposition.

One very significant fact in the Chilean context is the high level of trade union organization that exists in spite of everything, still exists. According to official figures, in the summer of 1978 there were more than one million workers organized in 7,047 trade unions (819 industrial unions, 877 agricultural unions, 4,144 professional unions and 207 'agricultural employees') with the following breakdown:

235,000 in industrial unions
293,000, in agricultural unions
495,000 in professional unions
13,000 in unions of 'agricultural employees'

The unitary organization of the workers, the CUT ceased to exist on the day of the coup, except as a bureaucratic apparatus. The Junta nominated a series of right-wing leaders, who defended the Junta and its trade union policies before the ILO and the worldwide trade union movement. But the control of the trade union bureaucracy, and thus of the Christian Democracy only existed at the top. The Junta was not capable of destroying the workers' organizations at local level. And, in spite of everything, the level of trade union membership has not been significantly reduced. Before the coup, the CUT had 1,800,000 members. It is estimated now that, between different trade union organizations, there may be as many as 1,200,000 members. The enormous danger that this fact could represent for the Junta in a given moment in time was expressed by the former minister of labor Nicanor when he commented that 'the workers have not got anything to eat, and there are a million trade unionists.'

Labor Discontent

A clear symptom of the recovery of the class spirit was the mobilizations that took place on the first of May 1978. The trade unions managed to gather 30,000 workers in Santiago despite a government prohibition. Meetings were held in the factories and other activities took place in other parts of the country.

In spite of the enormous difficulty of organizing a strike in Chile, there is agitation inside the factories. There have been stoppages of five or ten minutes to put pressure on the employers. Little by little, the fears are being dissipated. The workers are getting bolder. New forms of struggle and protest are being invented. In the mine of Chichiquemata in the North, a "hunger strike" was organized. The workers refused to eat in the work's canteen. This form of protest has been extended to El Teniente. In this key mine, for months, there has been ferment among the workers. According to the journal Hoy, "there is economic concern in El Teniente ... because we have been five and a half years without a wage agreement." "On Wednesday 2nd November 1977, one thousand two hundred out of four thousand workers at the copper mine of El Teniente did not turn up for work. Days before leaflets had been handed out and were seen stuck up on the walls calling on the workers not to work on the 2nd." ('Revista de America Contemporanea' Dec. 1977 No. 7 p21) This action forced the employers to agree to bring forward the payment of a production bonus due in December. At the same time, 49 miners were sacked "without any reaction of the part of the Copper Workers' Confederation."

The same source reported that: "In a mass meeting of three thousand workers of the union at Sevell y Minas, which was held in mid-November, the men demanded the resignation of the Union's president for his declarations justifying the employers actions."

These facts clearly show the beginnings of a process of reactivation within the trade union movement. The unbearable conditions of the working class, with a rate of inflation that officially exceeded 60% in 1977, cause the union bureaucracy to take an increasingly critical stand. Many working class families can only afford to eat once a day. The workers and their families keep going on bread and tea. Desperation became transformed into rebellion, as the case of El Teniente shows. In vain, the copper union bureaucrats (whose leader, Guillermo Medina is a member of the Council of State) opposed the stoppage, alleging that "what took place on the 2nd is the result of politically motivated men taking advantage of the miners' discontent." In vain reprisals are taken against the workers' local leaders, with sackings and internal exiling to remote districts.

The workers' discontent spread to other sections such as the dockers who, practically at the same time, organized a "go-slow" which succeeded in reducing the productivity of the port of Valparaiso by 50%.

The ferment in the rank-and-file workers begins to have repercussions within the bureaucracy itself. In a meeting in the Caupolican theatre in Santiago at a commemoration ceremony, the leaders of the Building, Construction and Woodworking Federation gave voice to the discontent of the ranks: "With 1,411 pesos, which is the laborer's minimum wage, we get enough money for two kilograms of bread a day: in a family of five to seven people half the wages would have to go just on bread." ('Revista de America Contemporanea,' p21)

On the other hand, the harsh conditions of the workers are shown by the fact that 10% of the deaths in the country are caused by accidents at work, or going to and from work, or in the home. This level is one of the highest in Latin America. The discontent of the masses even finds an echo in the pages of the bourgeois press. On the 17th of July 1978 the tabloid paper La Tercera denounced the persecution of the workers of the El Salvador mine in the north of the country. According to Barnadino Castillo, president of the Copperworkers' Confederation: "Not only the lower management, but senior managers are systematically persecuting the copperworkers, humiliating them, carrying out arbitrary sackings, violating legal regulations and refusing to accept just labor demands."

Fear of the Bourgeoisie

Castillo adds that "...he had decided to defend the rights of the Confederation's members(!), and face all the consequences. The measures that may be taken against me do not worry me. For the time being, the workers are keeping calm, but they daily demonstrate their unrest and discontent."

In these few words are to be seen all the pressures of the working class base on the trade union bureaucracy which, at the same time it is compelled to put an increasing distance between itself and the Junta and employers, makes a series of warnings about the present situation. As in El Teniente, so too in El Salvador (the third most important copper mine in the country, with 5,634 workers) there was a strike in November 1977, disguised as "absenteeism" over questions of pay and bad treatment by the foreman. La Tercera "sympathized" with the workers, declaring that the foremen "are directly defying the position of the authorities (!) on these matters. With their ill-considered attitudes they only contribute to the generation of social unrest."

Such 'benevolent interest' in the problems of the miners indicates the growing fear of the bourgeoisie of the possible resurgence of the workers' movement. The thing is worse still in the case of copper, which accounts for the production of 60% of the income in foreign currency that goes to the national budget. This is the reason for the requests of the capitalist press to the governments to "look into labor complaints" to avoid all possibilities of conflict.

The fear of the capitalist class spills over into the Junta. It is no accident that Leigh Guzman centered his criticism of the government from the outset on its economic policies. As early as August 1975, Leigh complained that the Junta's economic policy was "causing intense suffering in the most deprived classes ... The social cost of this policy has been far greater than what was foreseen, and the poorest classes are suffering most intensely."

Of course, the crocodile tears of this reactionary general are not the result of any qualms of conscience, but of fear of the social consequences that this can give rise to. Pinochet himself has held meetings with union bureaucrats on repeated occasions this year, in order to find out what is going and try to find a way out.

For its part, the trade union bureaucracy would be delighted to be able to reach an agreement with the government and the employers. But the catastrophic situation of Chilean capitalism does not allow them a sufficient margin to manoeuvre. The employers are not prepared to make concessions. The workers and their families cannot take much more. It is a finished recipe for a social explosion.

The union leaders of the public employees described a wage adjustment of 10% as "insufficient" and insist that their "request" be treated as a matter of urgency because "the economic situation of the state employees is difficult." The president of Fentema (National Federation of Carworkers and Electrical and Metal Operatives) in a letter sent to La Tercera (10/7/78) attributes the fall in purchasing power to "the lack of collective bargaining with the employers and the facilities for sacking people." In this letter, Castro also explains graphically the effects of the "open door" policy of the Chicago economic school when he points out that:

"Massive imports to the detriment of the national industry and the deterioration of purchasing power are the basic factors behind unemployment and the economic recession. Fentema has been one of the most affected, going from 12,000 members in 1973 to only 7,000 in June of '78.

Unemployment in the trade is due to the reduction of shop-repairing firms (from 14 to 3) and because of the lowering of tariffs on the importation of electrical equipment.”

Agreement Impossible

On the 28th of June, the National Federation of Commerce (Fenatrobeco) sent Pinochet a letter requesting the re-introduction of the “gains made by labor after long years of struggle.” Abolished by a decree published shortly before, which, as the letter naively points out: “does not comply with what you have repeated on various occasions, that all the rights acquired by working people would be respected.”

The problem for the trade union bureaucracy is that it is not possible to reach agreement with the government and the capitalists in the present situation of crisis. The union leaders are compelled to enter into conflict with the dictatorship, in part under pressure from the working class, which is beginning to awaken to the struggle, in part in defense of its own interests. For instance, the use of decree laws in trade union affairs renders illusory and unnecessary the existence of the trade union bureaucracy: it deprives them of their role as the “intermediaries.” This is another of the reasons for the wave of protests sent to Pinochet by the union leaders in the past few months. For this reason, the National Trade Union Coordinating Committee (CNS), which previously had a privileged relationship with the Junta, and which “represented” more than a million trade union members at a national level, was obliged to reject the modifications introduced by decree law No. 2,200 of the 15th of June, signed, among others by the president of the one printworkers’ union, the ‘workers and peasants unity’ confederation, the metalworkers and the miners, which says textually: “We categorically reject these norms, since they constitute proof of the falseness of the promises to respect the rights acquired by the workers... We cannot accept the elimination of the immobility of employment, since this leaves the workers tied hand and foot, having to accept the most barefaced exploitation or be sacked without more ado...”

“In this way the Kelly plan on unemployment is being introduced, which the government proposed some time back, and which was rejected by all sections of the trade union movement, even those that are akin to the government.”

They likewise expressed the view that with the elimination of collective labor contracts “we lose everything which had been conquered over the years” and that, in order to weaken trade union organization, “the legal rights of the leaders are being limited in such a way as to make them illusory, the same as in the case with maternity rights.”

Referring to the 10% wage adjustment in June, mentioned before:

“We reiterate that the adjustments do not compensate for the real rise in the cost of living and the working people cannot carry on dragging out an existence on the starvation wages we earn, which undermine our dignity as human beings.”

And finally:

“Because the situation is becoming unbearable...in a short space of time we shall present a document to the government containing the requests, which we consider indispensable for the working class to be able to live, among others, a substantial rise in the wages of the workers, employees and professional people whom we represent.”

The crisis that has now opened up between Pinochet and the ‘respectable’ Christian Democratic union leaders, who not long ago counted themselves among the most fervent adherents of the military government, is a clear symptom of the growing isolation of the Junta. The economic crisis, unemployment, hunger and misery, aggravated by the rigorous application of the mad ideas of Milton Friedman has served to polarize the whole working class, the peasantry and big sections of the middle class against the government. Only the temporary inertia of the masses keeps Pinochet in power. But it is quite apparent that the molecular process of the development of working class consciousness is gathering force under the superficial appearance of “calm and tranquility.” The ever-increasing gap between the Junta and elements like the union bureaucracy, the church and the Christian Democrats is a clear symptom of the process, which threatens, at a given moment of time, to produce a new eruption of widespread protest.

The Christian Democracy

If the situation of the workers is bad, that of the peasants and their families is a thousand times worse. The Agrarian Reform has been systematically undermined by the Junta, which has handed back the best of the expropriated land to the old latifundists. According to the journal ‘Chile-America’ (Nov. 1976-Jan. 1977):

“Up to the 31st of July 1976, out of 5,809 expropriated farms, with a total surface area of 9,965,868 hectares, equivalent to 895,752 hectares with basic irrigation, 1,415 farms with 1,992,217 hectares, equivalent to 117,775 hectares with basic irrigation had been handed back in their entirety to their former owners, and a further 2,109 farms with 649,159 hectares equivalent to 104,959 hectares partially handed back: as a consequence, up to the 31st of July 1976, a total surface area of 2,641,377 hectares with basic irrigation, or a little more than 25% of all the land taken over by the agrarian reform during the Frei and Allende governments, have been handed back.”

According to Enrique Medallo, president of the “Peasants’ Triumph” Confederation, of Christian Democratic tendencies, even those peasants who still have land, live badly:

“They are left with the bare husk, without animals, without machinery. They scarcely have enough to obtain fertilizer, seed, manure, pesticides and their daily means of subsistence. There are people who say that nobody dies of hunger in the countryside, because there is everything there. The truth is that only one or two products are harvested and nobody can live on potatoes and beans all the year.”

Asked about the situation for the rural wage earners, Medallo replies: "I would say that they are the worst off section of society. They earn the minimum wage laid down by the law: 600 pesos, roughly."

And on unemployment in the countryside: "In the official surveys of unemployment, agriculture appears together with other sectors and it is therefore impossible to say exactly what degree of unemployment exists among the laborers. Is there unemployment in the villages? Of course there is, and the sector that has suffered the worst hammering is the sector reformed by the property system that is being pushed by the government. The land that is being divided up is necessarily insufficient for the people who work it, 25% of farm laborers, as a minimum, are left without a job when a farm is assigned.

"And what does an unemployed peasant do? He is left without work and without a home. He works in what little jobs he can find and sponges off his relatives who live nearest..."
(*'Chile-America'* p36)

And later on, this Christian Democratic peasant leader makes a very significant observation:

"What is happening is that the bosses got themselves back in the saddle and the government did nothing to prevent it. Then for what and for who was the military takeover? For me it meant justice for everyone."

The economic policy of the government has also failed in agriculture. According to the journal *Ercilla* (20/9/76), which quotes different experts, agricultural production has fallen off drastically since the military takeover:

"Taking 100 as a base for 1971, the figure for 1974 would be 81.6; for 1975, 83.4, and for 1976 it falls to 73.8, so that agricultural production per inhabitant for the year 1976 would be 10.4 % less than in 1975 and 26.4% less than in 1971. This, in a 'pacified' country of 'law and order' without 'class conflict' and without lorry-owners strikes." (*'Chile-America'* p37)

The attempt to apply the methods of "free enterprise and the "open door" has meant the pauperization of broad layers of the working class and the peasantry, and even spelt ruin for certain sectors of the bourgeoisie itself. The inability of the Chilean capitalists to compete, and the flood of foreign imports has caused a wave of factory closures. Even certain sectors of big farmers have suffered from the effects of the policy. Domingo Duran, leader of the landowners of southern Chile said that the policy of the Ministry of the Economy "would lead to the ruin of the nation's agriculture," and stated that "the permitting of the import of Argentine wine by the Central Bank means the opening up of a policy that will lead to a serious collapse of our agriculture."

The deep discontent of the masses of workers, peasants and small property owners is reflected in the change of attitude of the hierarchy of the Church and the Christian Democracy towards the regime. Before, during and after the coup d'état, the Church hierarchy openly placed itself

on the side of reaction. On the 28th of September 1974, one year after the coup, when the repression, the tortures and massacres were in full swing, the permanent committee of the Episcopate of Chile, led by cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, offered the Junta its "cooperation in the spiritual and material development of Chile" and expressing willingness of the Chilean Church to participate in the "spiritual pacification" of the country. But under the pressure of the masses of workers, peasants and the middle classes, the Church has been compelled to put an ever-increasing distance between itself and the dictatorship, making criticisms now, not only concerning the "missing persons" and the arrests but also the economic policies of the government. The "Vicariate of Solidarity" has been accused of collecting funds to finance strikes. The heroic campaign carried out by the families of the "missing persons" is yet another symptom that the fear of repression is slowly but surely lessening. On the 19th of July 1978, a peaceful demonstration was held in the middle of Santiago in favor of human rights, democracy and freedom. The demonstration of about a hundred young students, swiftly dissolved itself without there being any intervention on the part of the carabineros.

The growing opposition of the masses, the ferment in the middle classes and the clear symptoms of division and weakness within the Junta, permits the bourgeois liberals to raise a timid and tremulous voice against the "excesses" of the dictatorship. In a speech made by the president of the National Press Association (1st of July 1978), he permitted himself the luxury of making a lukewarm protest against censorship:

"The press ought not to be controlled by special laws," he affirmed, "the situation through which the country is passing at present does not justify the existence of certain restrictive dispositions."

The situation also explains the change in the position of the Christian Democracy. This party of the political exploiters of the middle class in "normal" times tries to situate itself in between the "conservatives" on the one hand, and the "Marxists" on the other hand. As we saw earlier, its role is to deceive and confuse the millions of peasants, small shopkeepers and politically backward workers, in order to keep them under the dominance of big Capital.

The totally counterrevolutionary role of the Christian Democracy was sufficiently proven by its behavior towards the Allende government. In its first stages, the Christian Democratic parliamentarians acted as a "respectable" counterpart to the armed groups of "Patria y Libertad" on the streets, systematically sabotaging the work of the Popular Unity government. The vote of no confidence in the Congress against the Allende government enormously facilitated the task of the counterrevolution, giving Pinochet the green light, in the form of a "constitutional" pretext to intervene.

After the 11th of September, the Christian Democratic leaders hoped that the generals would reward them for their help. Unfortunately for them, there is very little gratitude in politics. With the old equilibrium destroyed, and a ferocious military dictatorship installed in power, the services of the Christian Democratic "middlemen" were no longer of any interest. In spite of their attempts to draw close to the Junta, Pinochet openly ridiculed them, describing them, not

without reason, as “politicians displaced from power who are now attempting to keep their noses above water.”

Little by little, the repression began to affect the Christian Democrats also, of course, not in the same way as the workers and peasants. These gentlemen were neither tortured nor shot. Simply “displaced from power.” They lost their parliamentary seats and their privileged position in political life. At most, some of them suffered a relatively comfortable exile in the interior of the country.

The indignation of these men against the regime that had deprived them of their privilege and careers is doubtless sincere. Once their services were rejected, the common obsession of all the CS leaders was to return as quickly as possible to “normality,” that is, to have their snouts back in the pig-trough, temporarily occupied by others.

Furthermore, these cunning politicians realized that the Pinochet regime could not last forever, and that any element compromised with it would lose all the credibility for the masses. An old fox like Frei understood that, although today his services were superfluous to the requirements of the bourgeoisie, tomorrow, after the fall of Pinochet, they would be more necessary than ever. That is why professional cynics like Frei are looking for their new “certificate of good democratic conduct” with an eye to the future.

On the 13th of July 1978 Frei sallied forth in the pages of the weekly Hoy, with an article entitled, “The Return to Democracy,” in which he warned the ruling class of the dangers that the continuation of the dictatorship would mean for them. Analyzing the experience of Portugal, Germany, Italy and Spain, he arrives at the conclusion that:

“All efforts to destroy or annihilate political forces have turned out to be sterile” and that “the more (these efforts) are prolonged, the more vigorously the antagonistic democratic forces, or those that work better in the underground, renew themselves.”

With these words, the CD leader wishes to warn the capitalists and landowners that the continuation of the dictatorship has not served to destroy the labor movement but to radicalize it increasingly, driving the masses towards “antagonist democratic forces” (?) or “those that work better in the underground,” which are not exactly the “moderate” leaders of the Christian Democracy or the Social Democracy.

In the same article Frei takes up his customary position of the “middleman between the classes.”

Frei’s “Sound Advice”

“The return to democracy,” he states in the article, “is not only resisted by its self-confessed enemies, but also by sections of the country who, believing in the democratic regime, fear that this would mean a return to the past and a repetition of the basic errors that led to its fall...on

the other hand, sectors that belong to the government fear that its end would give rise to a climate of persecutions, revanchism and hatred against them.”

With all this, Frei intends to tranquilize the nerves of the capitalist class which, whilst it would not mind disposing of the services of Pinochet, which are of increasingly less value to them, is terrified by the idea of a new edition of the Allende government, with new nationalizations and land takeovers, with the resulting radicalization of the masses. On the other hand, the great representative of Christian morality gives assurances to the torturers, rapists and murderers of the Junta, that there is not the slightest intention of creating a climate of “persecutions, revanchism and hatred against them.” In other words, the return to “democracy” proposed by the Christian Democracy means, in the first place, a firm guarantee of respect for the property of the big monopolies and latifundists and a general pardon for all the fascist beasts who during the past five years have turned Chile into a hell for the masses of workers and peasants, their wives and children.

While Frei and his “sound advice” to the oligarchy and the Junta, his party preaches to the oppressed masses in the authentic spirit of Pontius Pilate: “The Christian Democracy, inspired in the principles of non-violence (On the 11th of September as well?), towards the restitution of basic democratic institutions (in the first place, the “daily bread” of the Christian Democratic parliamentary group), and towards the working out of a perspective of living together without hate and vengeance (That is to say: they arrest us, they torture us, they kill us with bullets and with hunger, and we must “turn the other cheek”).”

This kind of declaration ought to fill any worker with a deep sense of outrage. Nevertheless, it seems there are certain leaders of the labor movement who take the words of Frei and Co. very seriously. The leaders of the “Communist” Party of Chile, unbelievably, have as a fundamental point in their strategy for Chile, an alliance...with the Christian Democracy. The leaders of the CP and their friends in the Kremlin have an enormous interest in refurbishing the “democratic” image of the Christian Democrats. In the last five years, they have made use of their considerable means of propaganda to prevent the labor movement, both in Chile and internationally, from drawing the correct conclusions from the experience of the UP government. Radio Moscow, in its program “Listen, Chile” makes tremendous efforts to paint up the Christian Democrats in the most attractive colors.

Thanks to these elements, the Christian Democrats obtained key positions in the trade union movement in Chile after the 11th of September. The CP leadership considers these gentlemen as “democratic allies” in the fight against Pinochet. But what type of concrete action do these people carry out? Frei holds interviews with the UN commission on human rights: This type of action is something that does not represent too many problems for a “responsible” man of politics. The socialist and communist militants suffer in the concentration camps; the workers and peasants die of hunger, and the miners struggle heroically against the government and bosses. And Frei sits down in a comfortable office in Santiago to have a chat with the gentlemen from the UN. And this is the “division of labor” that is proposed between the working class and the liberal politicians of the bourgeoisie!

From Venezuela, the Christian Democracy makes appeals for the creation of a “national movement for the restoration of democracy.” But at the same time they propose a gradual transition, without “armed conspiratorial or clandestine methods.” And this is the general tone of the CD propaganda.

One thing is quite clear. If it depended only on these gentlemen, the Pinochet dictatorship would last until the year 2000. And nevertheless, a great part of the former leaders of the Popular Unity insists upon an alliance with the CD as the only way of overthrowing the dictatorship. Above all, the leaders of the so-called “Communist” Party have drawn all the most erroneous conclusions from the experience of the UP government. They are like the Bourbons in France, who learned nothing and forgot nothing. If the line that they propose prevails – a policy a thousand times worse than the previous one – it would only lead to new setbacks and new and bloody defeats for the Chilean working class.

A Social Democratic Alternative?

One very positive fact in the present situation in Chile is that the Socialist Party, which has emerged renovated in the interior of the country since 11th September, has seen the necessity of a policy of class independence, based on the best traditions of the CSP and summed up in the central slogan of the Party: “Faith in Ourselves.”

Although nobody can foresee exactly what is going to happen, the fall of Pinochet and a new period of mass mobilization are inevitable. It is precisely because they understand this that the strategists of imperialism, who for the last five years have maintained their domination by means of the fascist methods of Pinochet, are preparing an alternative in the person of Frei and the Christian Democracy whose role will be to maintain the power and privileges of the landlords, bankers and capitalists with other methods.

The present leadership of the SP insists, correctly, on the need for a workers’ united front on the only means of carrying through a socialist transformation of society. In contrast, the leaders of the CP and some of the former leaders of the SP closely linked to the CP insist that, because the immediate task of the Chilean labor movement is the conquest of democratic freedoms and not the socialist revolution, it is necessary to form alliances with the “progressive” sections of the bourgeoisie and, in the first place, with the Christian Democrats. As if it were possible to erect a “Great Wall of China” between the fight against the dictatorship and the fight against the oligarchy that sustains it! All the history of Chile proves that the fight against the Junta, for the conquest of democratic freedoms, if it is carried out to its final consequences, necessarily implies a fight, not only against Pinochet, but also against the economic interests that keep him in power: against the landlords, the bankers and the big monopolists. In other words, a revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

The confused notion of alliances with the “good” capitalists against the “bad” capitalists stems from a failure to understand the class nature of society. It is not a question here of what the

leaders of different political parties say, but of the class interests that are behind them. Despite the confrontation between them, Frei and Pinochet serve the same master, big capital and imperialism. The bourgeoisie has no prejudices about which system of government is best. It is very flexible in the way it dominates the working class. At times "democracy is convenient for it and that is why it keeps its "democratic" hirelings. At other times, dictatorship suits it better and for that reason we have the Pinochets and the Videlas. The bankers and capitalists are not particularly concerned about such changes always provided that they maintain their power and privilege.

The attitude of the Chilean socialists towards the question of pacts with the "democratic" parties of capital is a vital issue for the future of the Chilean labor movement. Any ambiguity or lack of clarity on the question at this time will be paid for later on in blood and tears.

It is evident that in a country such as Chile, the proletariat not only has the possibility, but also the duty to form fronts of common action with other oppressed sections of society, fundamentally with the poor peasants and the oppressed masses of the petty bourgeoisie. But from this to the suggestion of alliances, even "conjuncturally," with a non-existent "progressive bourgeoisie," there is an enormous distance. The immense majority of the peasants and small shopkeepers suffer beneath the exploitation and oppression of the banks and big monopolies. Precisely for this reason, these sections are the natural allies of the working class. In contrast, the so-called "progressive" sections of the capitalist class, that is the liberals and Christian Democrats represent neither more nor less than the left boot of big business.

By entering into allegiances, even "conjunctural" ones, with these elements, would be tantamount to saying to the peasants and small tradesmen: "These people are now are allies. You can forget what they did before. All that was only a slight misunderstanding. But now they are on the right road and you can have confidence in them."

But what we ought to be saying is exactly the opposite: These are the men who helped Pinochet into power: their hands are stained by the blood of workers and peasants. Now they want to deceive us yet again. They are the most cunning, the most demagogic and therefore, the most treacherous representatives of the banks and the monopolies. If you want to fight for bread and freedom, reject the offers of these gentlemen and trust only in your own strength."

Only by these means, the Chilean socialists will be able to assist the workers and peasants to understand the real role of the Christian Democracy. The only way to fight for the leadership of the middle class is to fight tooth and nail against the attempts of the liberals to seduce the masses of the petty bourgeoisie with their hypocritical and treacherous propaganda.

The present regime is much more unstable than what may seem to be the case at first sight. Precisely this is the explanation for the attempt of Washington to put a certain distance between itself and Pinochet. The strategists of imperialism do not have the slightest confidence in the ability of the Junta to survive. The present conflict between Chile and Argentina over the Beagle canal is a further sign of this instability. Pinochet is trying to divert attention away from the

enormous contradictions inside Chilean society by means of a confrontation with the military government in Buenos Aires.

Undoubtedly, the area in question holds a considerable interest for both sides. But it is also true that Pinochet is interested in using the issue in the same way that Franco used the question of Gibraltar, as a convenient means of distracting people's attention from the internal crisis and foment a false sense of "national solidarity against the external aggressor." On the other hand, both these regimes must be trembling at the thought of the possibility of this warlike confrontation turning into a real military conflict. Given the correlation of forces, there is no doubt that a war between Chile and Argentina (which cannot be excluded as a theoretical possibility, although it appears most unlikely, unless in a highly critical situation in Santiago), it would not last long, and the result would be a defeat for Chile. As 'El País,' the Spanish daily, pointed out (13/12/78):

"In terms of manpower the difference in favor of Argentina is striking:

Argentina	Chile
Army 80,000 men	50,000 men
Navy 32,000 men	24,000 men
Air Force 17,000 men	11,000 men
Total 129,000 men	85,000 men

Tensions between the two countries have increased considerably, with a sort of trade war already underway. But as well as its conflict with Buenos Aires, Chile has other territorial problems with Peru and Bolivia (which broke off diplomatic relations with Chile, alleging that the government in Santiago had not shown "sufficient flexibility" over the question of giving Bolivia access to the Pacific), and even with Brazil over the High Parará. For all these reasons, the Junta is playing with fire in the conflict with Argentina, as is shown by the following declarations made by one of the Junta's spokesmen: "I can assure you that it would be madness, because nobody would win. It would mean the destruction of the people without any advantage. So neither Argentina nor Chile would win."

A war between Chile and Argentina, with the possibility of armed intervention by Peru and Bolivia to recover their lost territories would indeed be an act of madness, or, more correctly, a catastrophe with very grave repercussions for all of Latin America that must make Washington tremble. US imperialism will do everything in its power to prevent it. However, we should not forget that a similar "act of madness," the intervention of the Greek colonels in Cyprus, caused the downfall of the Junta in Athens. In the recent months, Argentina and Chile have spent about \$2,000 million in war preparations, according to the American magazine 'Business World.' It may be that both sides are interested in maintaining an atmosphere of permanent tension, both for political reasons and as a pretext to justify the enormous sums of money squandered by the armed forces both in Chile and in Argentina. At all events, an armed conflict, no matter how brief, would signify the collapse of the Pinochet government.

For all of these reasons, the Carter Administration is stepping up its attempt to find a “democratic” alternative to Pinochet that would safeguard the interests of US imperialism in Chile. The CP leaders and even some of the old leaders of the UP are looking to Washington to solve their problems. For example, Benjamin Teplizki of the Radical Party, the secretary of ‘Democratic Chile,’ told the press that “he believed that the Junta was seeing the possibility of a negotiated withdrawal with intermediaries in the Chilean bourgeoisie, and sections, of course, (!) of the USA.” (Our emphasis)

It seems there are some people who never learn. Pinochet will only consider the possibility of a “withdrawal” – negotiated or otherwise – when the movement of the masses forces him out. For its part, despite its rising preoccupation, Washington is not in any hurry to remove Pinochet, even supposing it was able to do so. But it does doubt the possibility of keeping the situation under control with the earlier brutal methods. Within a certain time – one, two or three years, depending on how the situation in the country develops, an upswing of the labor movement, a split in the ranks of the Junta, a military adventure – will make a change necessary. For this reason, all the “liberal” and “social-democratic” politicians are making a dash for Washington to proffer their services.

Here is where an enormous danger exists for the labor movement in Chile. The idea of strategists of imperialism and of the bourgeoisie is the formation of a coalition government after the fall of Pinochet, made up of the Chilean Democrats and representatives of the working class. Un exile, the idea is being actively canvassed of a collaboration between the Popular Unity and the Christian Democrats in a “broad front” against the dictatorship. The main protagonists of this idea are (who else?) the leaders of the “Communist” Party and the Russian bureaucracy.

On the other hand, the reformist bureaucracy of the Second International is showing an increasing interest in Africa and Latin America, precisely at a time when revolutionary and pre-revolutionary situations are emerging in both continents. It is interesting to see how the tactics of the social democrats and the strategy of US imperialism develop in a parallel way in this context. It is clear that there exists a series of pressures on certain leaders of the Second International “from outside” the labor movement. It is no accident that the so-called “social democratic project” in Latin America is coming to light precisely at this moment with the approval of Bonn and Washington.

The miniscule Radical Party, with little or no support in the Chilean working class, does not count upon a sufficient base to form a coalition with the Christian Democracy which, at present, is showing reluctance to form a coalition with the CP, which, for its own reasons, is openly anxious to form one.

The Socialist Party is, therefore, a key factor in the situation. Without the presence of the socialists a government of class collaboration would be a non-starter. For this reason enormous pressures are being brought to bear upon the Party to participate in this new anti-working-class conspiracy in Chile.

Unfortunately, there is a section of the former leaders of the SP, who have fallen under the influence and the strong pressures exercised in various ways by the Stalinists who possess very powerful material means, above all in exile. The confrontation between the pro-Stalinist elements who openly favor a class collaborationist policy and the socialist activities inside Chile who are fighting for the revolutionary renovation of the Party in the interior, has led to a break between the forces of Chilean socialism.

CP's Organizational Strength

In the first place, the socialists who defend a line of class independence in accordance with the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and the past principles of the Chilean SP itself, although making a decisive majority of the socialist forces in Chile today, have a series of disadvantages as against their political adversaries.

The CP, which before the coups had less support than the SP, now, in the underground, is the workers' party with the most strength. While it is impossible to calculate exactly the numerical force of each party in the underground, the CP would not have less than 8,000 active members. Moreover, they can count on a much more powerful infrastructure and are better equipped than other parties and groups: a printing press, many full-time party workers, an active youth organization, businesses, a three-hour daily program on Radio Moscow as well as programs on Radio East Berlin, Radio Prague, etc.

Re-Building the SP in the Interior

There was never any comparison between the apparatus of the SP and the CP. While formally based on Marxist-Leninist ideas, the SP never really assimilated the organizational methods of Bolshevism, without which the most Marxist program in the world is worthless. Despite their numerical superiority, and their crushing majority of votes, they did not have the same level of active members as the CP (even before the 11th of September, they scarcely had a serious infrastructure with full-timers, etc.). Therefore, the SP was in the worst possible state to confront the problems of clandestine work. Nevertheless, the best cadres of Chilean socialism managed to regroup themselves, painfully, in the interior, and set about the slow and difficult task of reconstructing the party among the working class and the peasants.

Today the Socialist Party, although numerically smaller than the CP is the second working class force in the underground working in the factories and the workers' districts, helping the families of the prisoners and the "missing persons." In spite of the total lack of aid from the exterior (canalized exclusively to the pro-Moscow section), the SP comrades manage to publish four journals inside the country: 'Arauco,' the theoretical journal of the party (monthly), 'We the Workers,' ('Nosotros, los Trabajadores'), the bi-monthly trade union paper, 'Brigada,' the student magazine (non-periodical), and 'Solidarity' (monthly). In the trade union field, the party has a base among the mechanics, the footwear workers, bakers, copper workers and the agricultural confederations. It also has a youth and a women's group.

The problem of the socialists working in Chile is that the apparatus of the party in the exterior is totally dominated by the pro-Stalinist section. These elements managed to get control of the party in 1971, by lining up with the social democratic wing of the party (Rodriguez). But now they can only count on a minority of the socialist forces in the interior. Nevertheless, it has been precisely this minority section that has received all the economic aid sent by the "official" leadership from exile.

The differences within the socialist camp have caused a growing separation between the different tendencies with the split-off of the so-called Coordinating Committees of the regional groups who, forming a new party, tended towards pro-guerrilla positions. In 1975-6 this group managed to gather together a considerable number of socialist activists in the interior who were discontented with the opportunist and pro-Stalinist leadership in exile. But, inevitably, with a totally incorrect orientation and a confused political line, this tendency suffered a series of internal crises, internal fights and splits that have led to the disintegration of this group, whose most serious activists have seen the need to return to the socialist party in order to struggle from within against the opportunist current, in favor of a genuine Marxist-Leninist policy and not the guerrillaist caricature of Mao and Castro.

Today, the socialist forces inside Chile, although they have made serious gains in the face of difficult and perilous underground conditions, are a minority in comparison with the forces of the CP, which possesses much more serious means and therefore, is able to develop more efficient work among the working class. Even the pro-Stalinist section of the party, although it does not have half the base in the labor movement that the socialists have, possesses greater means. But all this can change drastically in the next few years, provided that the comrades of the SP do not give way to the pressures of the Stalinists and the social democrats and maintain a clear revolutionary line of class independence.

For a Marxist-Leninist party the question of organization and economic means is a vital one, but it is not the decisive question. With the most impressive apparatus in the world, a party with an incorrect policy is condemned to defeat. This is a lesson we have seen repeated more than once in the history of Chile, as well as in other countries. On the other hand, with a correct strategy and correct tactics and with Bolshevik methods of work, the necessary organizational means will always be found.

Bolshevism and Menshevism

The differences between Bolshevism and Menshevism in Russia did not only occur on political questions (reform or revolution; collaboration with the liberals or class independence) but also were concerned with different methods of work and organization. Before 1917, the Mensheviks always had greater economic means than the Bolsheviks. The Russian opportunists, just like their Chilean counterparts today, received large amounts of aid from abroad, owing to the personal prestige of leaders like Plekhanov. They also received important amounts of money from a whole series of bourgeois "progressives," petty bourgeois, professors, lawyers, etc. Lenin

was very proud of the fact that the Bolshevik party and its daily paper, 'Pravda,' was financed by small contributions, the "kopeks" of the Russian workers.

In spite of all the problems and all the deficiencies, the Chilean comrades can also feel proud of the fact that for five years, and under the most difficult conditions imaginable, they have managed to build an organization without assistance from outside, with the money of the Chilean workers and on the basis of the personal sacrifices of the activists and leading cadres. In the last analysis, every cent that is raised in the factories and workers' districts in Chile is worth more than the \$1,000s raised by the opportunists in the exterior. Because the work of raising funds in Chile is political work, which is laying the basis of the organization within the working class itself.

There is nothing to hope for from the opportunists, social democrats and "pro-Stalinist" elements. Save for a certain number of honest workers who have been taken in by the prestige of the old leaders whom they support, probably for sentimental reasons, the great majority of these people are incorrigible. Sometimes it is a mistake to imagine that "if there are more of us, we are stronger." Sometimes, one more can add up to nil, instead of two. Unity is something we all desire and advocate. But unity can be bought at too high a cost. Any attempt to mix up a revolutionary policy with an opportunist policy by means of a "consensus" for the sake of unity is like an attempt to mix oil and water. The comrades of the interior themselves have had occasion to prove to themselves the failure of all the efforts to arrive at unity with the opportunists for the last five years. And one must not think of this "failure" as something wholly negative. We are in favor of unity, yes. And everyone is aware of who is responsible for the division that exists at present. But the only unity that is in the interests of socialism is unity on a principled basis. On any other basis, unification of a series of factories, each one pulling in the opposite direction to all the others, would lead to impotence. The entire history of the Socialist Party proves this.

What is the use of having a revolutionary program and principles if, in the moment of decision, the leadership shows itself to be incapable of carrying it out in practice because it has got itself enmeshed in a series of deals, compromises and consensuses with pro-capitalist elements? No. A complete break with opportunists of all kinds is the precondition for the renovation of the socialist party. It is precisely in conditions of adversity when one learns to distinguish one's true friends and enemies. If the Chilean socialists are not capable of drawing all the necessary conclusions from the terrible experience of the last few years, all the deaths will have been in vain.

It is true that tomorrow the present situation can change radically. After the terrible experience of the dictatorship, the long years of hunger, misery, death and repression, many workers and peasants will think of the years of the Popular Unity as a kind of Golden Age. Paradoxically, the illusions in popular frontism might surge up once more in the hearts of the masses after the fall of Pinochet. In this sense, the dictatorship has acted like an enormous brake on the consciousness of the working class and still more so on the backward masses of the peasantry and the middle class.

Today, in the underground, the workers and peasants identify as “the socialists” those comrades they see at their sides, fighting shoulder to shoulder against the bosses and the dictatorship. Above all for many of the activists, the former leaders of the Popular Unity in exile have been practically discredited. In this sense, those “generals without an army” who are patiently waiting in Berlin, Paris, Moscow and Algiers for the fall of Pinochet, when they will return in triumph, with everything nicely sewn up, to repeat the same mistakes as before, may well have a very disagreeable surprise, especially if the comrades of the Socialist Party of Chile succeed in building a strong party, stronger than at present, not only in numbers, but above all practically, educating the socialist cadres in a spirit of implacable opposition to any pact or alliance with the bourgeoisie and to the slightest concession to the opportunists.

The cadres of the SP in Chile have made great strides forward. But there are still gaps, not only in terms of the apparatus, but also in their policies which, in spite of the totally necessary and correct insistence on a policy of class independence, still contains a series of ambiguities and omissions which, while for the moment they do not appear very important, if they are not sorted out, tomorrow may cause enormous problems, internal crises, convulsions and splits.

At a given moment in time, with the fall of the Pinochet regime and the reemergence of the movement of the masses, the Socialist Party will find itself under enormous pressure from all sides. The capitalist press, the Stalinist, and social democratic press, “public opinion,” and even natural and understandable instincts of the workers themselves in favor of “unity” will weigh heavily upon the SP, pressurizing it to enter once more into a “common front” with the Stalinists, social democrats, and this time, probably, the Christian Democrats, in a “government of national concentration.” If the party has not defined itself very clearly on this issue beforehand, it is very likely that it will prove unable to withstand these pressures. In spite of the slogan “Faith in Ourselves” there will be certain comrades, even in the leadership of the party, who will tend to give in to the pressures. “We will be isolated.” “We cannot break unity.” “It’s only a question of conjunctural agreement.” “We are going to fight against the bourgeoisie within the government.” There is never any lack of arguments to justify the abandonment of a revolutionary Marxist policy. This has been the experience of Chilean socialism throughout its entire history, and always with the same results.

In point of fact, it is possible that the SP, if it refuses to enter the coalition government, might see itself isolated, in the short run, from the majority of the working class. It would be attacked on all sides for “sectarianism,” “dogmatism” and “maximalism,” or worse things still. But if a Marxist-Leninist party, and above all its leadership, is not capable of resting these kinds of pressure, what good is the party and the leadership?

In reality, an intransigent attitude towards a coalition government with the bourgeoisie would represent the only way of winning the masses for the Socialist Party and the socialist revolution.

The masses learn from their experience. Very rapidly, they would realize that the policy of the new government is a policy dictated by the new government is a policy dictated by the capitalist class through the medium of the Christian Democratic ministers. Even if they are a minority,

these cynical representatives of the bourgeoisie will impose their veto against any anti-capitalist legislation proposed by the workers' parties, threatening to resign if the latter insist on carrying out policies in the interests of the working class.

All the articles of Frei and all the declarations made by the Christian Democrats indicate that the new coalition government would not even carry out the measures taken by the UP government, unless compelled to do so by a new wave of mass mobilizations.

In any event, a new coalition government, under conditions of capitalist crisis, would solve nothing for the working class. The illusions in an alleged "social democratic project" for Chile would be rapidly dispelled by the economic crisis. As the original program of the Popular Unity, in its day, explained: "In Chile, the 'reformist' and 'developmental' recipes peddled by the Alliance for Progress and taken up by the Frei government have not managed to change anything important. In fundamentals, it has been a new government of the bourgeoisie at the service of national and foreign capitalism, whose feeble attempts at social change suffered inglorious shipwreck amidst economic stagnation, the high cost of living and violent repression against the people. With this, once again, it has been proved that reformism is incapable of solving the problems of the people." (The last sentence is underlined in the original)

And if all this was true during the period of Frei's Christian Democratic government before the beginning of the world capitalist recession, will it not be a thousand times truer now, with 17 million unemployed in the developed capitalist countries of the OECD, generalized stagnation of the productive forces and world trade, scarce markets and falling demand and falling prices for Chilean goods abroad?

Today, Chilean capitalism is in no fit state to give the working class and peasantry profound and lasting concessions. Even if a coalition government, in its first few months, were to be compelled by the pressure of the masses, to grant a series of reforms, inevitably, under the pressure of the oligarchy and imperialism, it would go over to a second phase of counter-reforms. The masses of workers and peasants would see their wage rises eaten away by inflation, and the rise of unemployment. A new process of disappointment and demoralization would set in. But this time, inevitably, an opposition would arise in the ranks of the workers' parties and trade unions. The masses would understand the role of the capitalist ministers as a "Trojan horse" placed in the governmental coalition to sabotage it from the inside. The movement would grow in favor of the ejection of the Christian Democratic ministers, the agents of big business, and the formation of a government of workers' parties with a socialist program.

If the CSP were to commit the fatal error of entering the government, it would be identified by the masses with the anti-working-class policies carried out. But if the Chilean socialists maintain themselves firm, they will win support very quickly in opposition, attracting broad layers of the rank and file of the CP if, as seems inevitable, the latter enters into the government. The slogan of "An SP-CP government, with a socialist program and without the Christian Democrats" would have an enormous echo in the ranks of the CP.

One thing is clear. For Chile there are only two alternatives: either the socialist revolution, which will smash once and for all the power of the landlords, capitalists and imperialists, or a new series of bloody defeats. In order to solve the pressing problems of the workers and peasants it is necessary to carry out the expropriation of the bankers, landowners and big monopolists and begin the planned organization of the productive forces in the interests of all. A considerable increase in the rate of economic growth is needed to raise the living standards of the masses. This is only possible when the state, in the hands of the working people, mobilizes all the resources of the country. For this to take place, it is first necessary to break the resistance of the capitalists and landowners.

What is the alternative? The Christian Democrats, social democrats and Stalinists have the illusion that it is possible to build in Chile a "consumer society" like Western Germany, Britain or the USA. But precisely in these countries, the capitalist system is no longer capable of maintaining, as in the past, either living standards or the right to work. There we have the 8 million unemployed in the USA, the 7 million unemployed in the Common Market. There we have the attacks on living standards and the austerity programs in all these countries. And there we have the strike waves in France, Italy, Britain, Germany, the USA etc.

The existence of a bourgeois democracy and social reforms in Chile in the past was possible thanks to the privileged position of the Chilean economy and the demand for its goods in foreign markets for a long period of time. With the disappearance of these factors, all the contradictions of Chilean society are now rising to the surface. The "reformist Frei government was incapable of solving them. The Allende government attempted to make "half a revolution," leaving key points of the state power in the hands of the capitalist class, with the results we have seen. Nor has the Junta, with all its killings and concentration camps, been capable of solving the problems of Chilean society. It has made them worse. And there is not the slightest doubt that a Chilean government with the bourgeois liberals will not solve anything, either. The alternative before the Chilean working class under capitalism is not that of the "consumer society" but the constant increase of unemployment, misery, economic stagnation, hunger...

There is No "Middle Way"

The socialist revolution in Chile would be an example for the working class and all the oppressed peoples of Latin America. With a workers' government in Chile, how long would the military dictatorships in Argentina, Uruguay, etc. last? The extension of the socialist revolution to all the countries of the continent would have as its result of the Socialist United States of Latin America, unifying all the peoples in a common effort to realize the vast economic potential of the continent. The common planning of the immense inhuman and material resources of Latin America would permit us to transform the lives of all the peoples in a couple of five-year plans. The Socialist United States of Latin America would be the first step towards the triumph of socialism on an international scale and the creation of the world socialist federation, which would do away once and for all with the nightmare of capitalism and fascism and open up a new stage in the history of mankind: socialism.

Madrid, January 1979