

CHILE

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**THE
CONTINUING
CLASS WAR**



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**a
big flame
pamphlet**



THIS PAMPHLET IS DEDICATED TO THE HEROIC PEOPLE OF CHILE, WHOSE STRUGGLE FOR REVOLUTION AND FOR A COMMUNIST LIFE CONTINUES.

It was put together by comrades from the Big Flame groups, along with comrades from a local organisation in Brixton. At times there are differences in emphasis in the text and this reflects the way the different Big Flame groups are developing their ideas and practice. In this way, this document is a contribution to the ongoing process of political development that all of us in Big Flame are engaged in, along with the revolutionary movement as a whole.

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CANCION DEL PODER POPULAR

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Si nuestra tierra nos pide
tenemos que ser nosotros
los que levantemos Chile
asi es que, a poner el hombre
Vamos a llevar las riendas
de todos nuestra asuntos
y que de una vez se entienda
hombre y mujer todos juntos

If our country should ask it of us
it shall be us
who will lift up Chile
and this is what man must do.
Let us free ourselves of the reins
of all our problems
so that finally men and women all united
can understand one another

Porque esta vez no se trata
de cambiar un Presidente
sera el pueblo quien construya
un Chile bien diferente

Because this time it's not a matter
of changing a president
it will be the people who build
a different Chile!

Todos venganse a juntar
tenemos la puerta abierta
y la Unidad Popular
es para todo el que quiera.
Echaremos fuera al yanki
y su lenguaje siniestro
con la Unidad Popular
ahora somos Gobierno.

Let everyone come together united
hold the door open
for the Popular Unity
is for all those who want it.
Let us throw out the Yankees
with their perverse tongues
with Popular Unity
now we are the Government.

Porque esta vez...

Because...

La Patria se vera grande
con su tierra liberada
porque tenemos la llave
ahora la cosa marcha

Our country will seem enormous
with its freed soil
because it is we who hold the key
and now everything is right

Ya nadie puede quitarnos
el derecho de se libres
y como seres humanos
podremos vivir en Chile.

Now nobody can take away from us
the right to be free men and
like real human beings
we can now live in Chile.

Porque esta vez...

6



THREE YEARS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

1. CHILE BEFORE ALLENDE

The election of Salvador Allende to the Chilean presidency in 1970, opened up a new phase in the class struggle in that country.

The 6 years leading up to 1970 had seen a real sharpening in the class struggle in Chile. They were the years of the Christian-Democratic government of Eduardo Frei. A govt that came to power in 1964 on a programme of reforms, under the populist slogan of 'Revolution in Liberty'. Frei represented the new turn in bourgeois strategy for Latin America. After the Cuban revolution, the more 'progressive' sections of Latin American and imperialist capitalism realised that to prevent the spread of social revolution, they themselves would have to undertake certain transformations in society. So in 1961 the US and the various LA states launched what they called the 'Alliance for Progress', where the US would sponsor and control a carefully planned reformism in each of the countries.

For the Frei administration in Chile after 1964, this meant three main things: chileanisation of the copper mines, where the state would acquire 51% ownership; redistribution of land to the peasants; and a social welfare programme, particularly in education. These measures were clearly all modifications within the structure and in the interests of bourgeois society. The redistribution of land for instance, was meant to create a conservative layer of small farmers, both as a barrier to further radicalisation in the rural areas, and as a means to increase the productivity of agriculture: this latter it was hoped would widen the internal market and help the growth of a home based manufacturing industry; reduce the amount of food imports into the country; and bring lower food prices to the towns which could mean the lowering of wages for the working class.

Despite this, the Frei government did raise expectations of social change inside the proletariat and this was to become its unsolvable problem: because under pressure from the traditional landed oligarchy, the agrarian reform was barely implemented; the chileanisation of copper was soon seen to mean nothing, neither to the copper companies who only lost a fraction of the profit rate, nor the miner's lives, whose working conditions and living standards carried on the same; and in 1966 when the miners went into struggle, 8 of them were shot dead by the police. And so with the social welfare plans: any benefits in fact went to the middle-classes and social inequality only widened over the 6 years. So in the 6 years, Frei achieved *stagnation* not *revolution* in liberty, but this was to be very important from the point of view of the class struggle. The Christian-Democracy cleared the way 'truly popular conquests; underlining and legitimising by its own tortuous inconsistency and lack of will, the necessity of adopting truly radical measures.'

(Debray, 'Introduction to Conversations with Allende')

And thirdly, Frei's policies divided the ruling-class. His attempt at agrarian reform had genuinely upset the big landowners and had separated the Chilean oligarchy from the more progressive fraction of the bourgeoisie. It was this division that meant that the bourgeoisie presented two candidates for the 1970 election and let in the UP man Allende. (Allende got more votes in 1964 than in 1970, but he lost in 64 because there was a single bourgeois opponent.

2. THE PROGRAMME OF THE UP FOR THE 1970 ELECTION.

On winning the election, the UP had a programme based on two main ideas. Firstly that the bourgeois constitution in Chile could be used to take the first steps towards socialism. Two things are important here. Firstly, we have to see Allende as a sincere socialist; his was a working-class, not bourgeois reformism. Secondly, Allende and the UP did recognise that the bourgeois constitution did need changing. Their programme spoke--though vaguely--about replacing the parliament with a 'people's assembly'. The point was that any changes would follow the winning of an outright parliamentary majority; or would come after the UP had found the necessary alliances within the parliament, agreed to modify the constitution.

Secondly, the UP was based on the idea that through control of the principal motors of industry and finance, and through an acceleration in the agrarian reform, they could

- * reorganise the whole economy and break its dependence on imperialism and lift it out of its stagnation, which has always been Chile's most chronic disease.

- * Obtain an economic surplus for the state through which it could undertake a truly popular welfare programme, raise all salaries and wages, and without that meaning an even greater rate of inflation.

the only truly popular alternative..... that of the government of the people have before it, is to end the domination of the imperialists, the monopolists and the landed oligarchy and to begin the construction of socialism in Chile..... Supporting the candidate of the UP does not mean however voting for one man; but also of declaring oneself in favour of an immediate replacement of the present society which rests on the dominion of great national and foreign capitalists.'

(Extract from the UP programme 1970)

Allende was elected on September 4th, with a relative majority in 36.3% of the vote. Tomic for the CD received 27.4% and Alessandri for the National Party, 34.9%. This began the 50 day period before the congress sat to ratify the results of the election. During this first period there was a very tense and excited situation in Chile, in which the extreme right-wing tried to provoke a military take-over. The fascist group, Fatherland and Freedom, assassinated the army C-in-C in the hope that the military would blame this on the 'communist chaos' and be moved to depose Allende's assumption of office. And in this the fascists got the support of various national and international capitalist groups. But in fact the Chilean bourgeoisie was divided in its response to the UP victory and in the context, the fascists were only isolated. First of all the CD, under the influence of its left-wing, gave Allende their critical support. They themselves had presented the left 'radical' Tomic for the election, and were still in favour of the reformist project for the bourgeoisie--they blamed Frei for a lack of will in not carrying it out in the previous administration. So despite apprehensions, they were prepared to try and use Allende to carry out their own programme. On a guarantee of the preservation of parliament and the army, the bourgeois reformists would try and link up with the reformism of the workers movement.

Secondly, even the right-wing of the CD was inconclusive in its opposition to UP. They feared (prophetically) that a coup would be dominated by the ultra-right and the military, and might even dispense with the CD and its parliamentary traditions. So even they were inclined to accept Allende for the time being and wait to see him fall through the election box after they had done all they could to disfavour his government with the Chilean people.

Allende was officially inaugurated on November 3rd 1970.

3. THE FIRST ACHIEVEMENTS .

At the beginning things moved quickly. Allende put to parliament the main items of the UP programme, and within 9 months had nationalised most of the textile, auto, iron and copper industries as well as over 60% of the national banking system. In the first 6 months he expropriated 3.5 million acres of land. Wages and salaries went up by around 60% and in the first 6 months of 1971 inflation was kept down to 7.5%. Family allowances for the lower paid were doubled, and the UP began its much publicised free distribution of half a litre of milk to all children. 45 political prisoners were released and the special riot squad, the Grupo Movil, was disbanded.

These moves stirred up enormous popular enthusiasm in Chile, which was quickly reflected in the municipal elections of April 71, when the UP received nearly 50% of the vote. But just as immediately, things were developing outside of the chambers of the congress. For instance the UP nationalisation scheme encouraged workers themselves to go onto the offensive, and take their own initiatives. Strikes and occupations soon forced the new government to intervene in the running of certain enterprises that it had not intended to: for instance workers made

This conflict even took violent forms at this stage, on occasions. In December 71, a comrade of the MIR was shot dead in Concepcion by CP militants, for putting up posters on the need to extend the struggle beyond the confines of the UP programme.

Nevertheless it was the bourgeoisie who was suffering the real set backs and confusions at this stage. The plan to use the UP in the interests of bourgeois reformism had clearly backfired. The bourgeois left had failed to recognise that 'the UP gov't cannot accomplish its programme without giving space to the initiative of the masses'. The gov't was a catalyst to the mass movement and 'cannot, like Frei, impose some reforms from above and then use the violence of the state against the masses everytime they directly intervene and take over the reforms by enlarging their content and consequences..... So while the class movement developed its own autonomy from the government, the gov't was unable to be autonomous from the movement to the point of counterposing it frontally.'

(Lotta Continua..... The Chilean Lesson.)

So as 1971 developed the bourgeoisie was forced to re-organise itself around a much harder right-wing position. In August the CD purged itself of certain 'leftist' tendencies, and resumed contact with the National Party. Frei was back as their topman after a prolonged absence in the USA. In parliament they made more and more efforts to obstruct the UP, and accuse it of unconstitutionality. But their most important move was in the September with the demonstration of the 'Empty pots.' This was a street demonstration by middle-class women and stewarded by the thugs from the fascist party. They were protesting against the growing scarcity of food and consumer goods in Chile, and this was the first important anti-Allende mobilisation, on the issue that was central to the right-wing strategy: the failure of the Chilean economy.



Allende nationalized 14 textile mills and the Ford workers forced him to take over Fords after they had occupied the plant in response to management closing down the assembly line and laying off 400 workers.

In the countryside as well there were a stream of land occupations by agricultural labourers, dispossessed tenants and the Mapuche Indians, who were not satisfied with the official limit that only estates of more than 80 hectares should be expropriated. They extended this to take in estates over 40 hectares so that the landowners could not get away with the best land, and they also fought over the question of who should get the animals and the agricultural machinery. The most militant sections of the rural proletariat was heavily influenced by the revolutionary left, in particular the MIR. *And already an important contradiction was coming into play:—between the UP intention to channel the struggle of the masses, and the dynamic of mass struggle that the UP set in motion despite itself.*

Goods were scarce in Chile already by this time. This was partly due to the increase in the buying power of the working class (which in itself made the bourgeoisie squirm), but more importantly it was a result of deliberate bourgeois strategy. Both in the towns and the countryside they were sabotaging production and investment. Imperialism was already upto its tricks with the 'invisible' blockade of credit and goods to Chile, which meant for instance a shortage of spare parts for autos and machinery that was crippling to the Chilean economy. In particular the copper monopolies—whom Allende had expropriated without compensation—were forcing down the world price of copper which was Chile's main export.

All these manoeuvres were aimed at one thing: the political and economic harassment of Chilean society, with the objective of winning over the middle-classes and petit-bourgeoisie, and possibly sections of the proletariat, to the reactionary front. On that basis, the CD at least thought that they could return to gov't after Allende's inevitable decline in popular support

4. DIVISIONS IN THE UP, AND THE DEBATE AT LO CURRO

The difficulties facing the UP did begin to lead to this fall-back in its popular support, and this led to a serious political struggle within the coalition itself. We can understand this division better if we move forward to June 72, to the famous meeting of the UP at Lo Curro. By then the right-wing offensive had been stepped up: in the parliament the CD was demanding (and sometimes getting) the resignation of various UP personnel for 'violating the constitution'. The ITT scandal had broken, and the imperialist blockade was really hurting. By the August of that year, most credit supplies would have been cut off from Chile and the copper monopolies would be trying to organise a total boycott of Chilean copper. Inside Chile itself the black market flourished and the bourgeoisie was freely manipulating ever higher rates of inflation.

At Lo Curro, the division in the UP came down to two opposing strategies, summed up in the slogans 'Consolidate to advance' and 'Advance to consolidate'. The first describes the position of the CP and the second, the position of the MAPU. In fact these slogans almost sum up the continuing debate between the reformist and revolutionary left in Chile, but at Lo Curro the most articulated confrontation was between the CP on the right hand and the MAPU on the left. The SP, typically, was less unanimous and provided major spokesmen for both sides. Allende was with the CP.

The CP proposed that the UP needed to consolidate its position before advancing any further. Though in practice this meant a 'tactical retreat'. *"The characteristic element of the present situation is that the balance of forces has modified to the advantage to the bourgeoisie..... This has happened because we've gone too far beyond the programme. It would be disastrous to broaden the number of our enemies and we must make concessions."* (Orlando Millas, CP) The CP thus proposed the halting of any further nationalisations, so that investment and production could pick up on the basis of a renewed confidence of the private capitalists; it wanted to attack the problem of inflation by all-round restraint on wages and salaries; and it wanted to consolidate these economic moves through a dialogue/alliance with the CD at a parliamentary level. It criticised as 'ultra-left' all attempts to develop popular power, and instead urged the proletariat to be 'responsible' and 'struggle for production.'

Inside this programme the CP claimed that it could preserve the socialist line through the already nationalised sector; through using this sector of the economy to give the economy as a whole an overall socialist management and direction.

This position was severely criticised at Lo Curro by the UP left. At all levels what the CP was offering was a serious defeat for the working-class. Even in its own terms for instance:—the UP could not hope to manage the economy via such a small state sector. Management of the textile industry for instance was useless iff at the same time the petro-chemicals industry was in the hands of Dow Chemicals or Monsanto—both big US monopolies

But the faults of the UP strategy were more comprehensive. Their attitude to the economy was purely technical. Inflation for instance was meant to be solved by restraining consumption: consumption in general. But as the MAPU said

"It is necessary to drastically reduce consumption, of the 7% of the population who buy more than 5% of all that there is to buy in Chile. The problem of inflation must be approached with class criterion, with a proletarian criterion and not with technocratic criterion"

(Glauser. Tactical Unity, Struggle over strategic perspectives.)

So for instance the MAPU proposed a class salary restraint which hit only the better paid; or a scheme that would stock up all working class and proletarian shops at the expense of those used by the bourgeoisie etc etc. And more than this: what was needed was the extension of real economic power for the workers

Not just planning, but real and active control by the workers and peasants themselves of all areas of the economy and material life. This was far from CP minds. Even in the state sector they offered only the most bureaucratic forms of workers participation and the development of workers and proletarian power was what the CP feared the most. For them the task was to slow down and avoid scaring off the middle strata. Their whole position was a total misunderstanding of the realities of the class struggle, and was idealistically trying to pacify the developing conflicts. For the MAPU, the alliance between the proletariat and the middle strata.....

'Will never take place through class collaboration. But through showing clearly to the small and medium businessmen what role each will have in the future organisation of society, which will express their interests as workers. This is the attitude that will get rid of suspicions, uncertainties and useless resistance and will force them to choose between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Not all of them will choose this alliance; but those which do will be real allies, allowing us to advance and create a balance of forces favourable to the proletariat.'



The CP position in essence was a refusal to recognise the impending clash between the class forces in Chile. The bourgeoisie was building up its forces to defeat Chilean socialism. And the point was: would the proletariat reply in kind? Or would it go with the CP and concede even more space to the bosses. Space through which it could increase its political confidence, and have the means to win over the middle strata to the reactionary front? The class enemy was 'advancing', the proletariat could not afford to 'consolidate'.

Economic strategy, as debated at LO CURRO, could not be made separate from the overall question of political power. And this is what the Chilean CP never came to grips with.

'The question of power is thought to be solved by the fact that the proletariat can count on the control of a decisive sector of the economy and thus manage the whole society. Inside this scheme; the problem of the state is simply suppressed..... The distinctive character of the proletarian revolution particularly in relation to the bourgeois one, is that the proletariat cannot win command over economics first and then proceed to take political power. This is not understood in the Chilean way.'

(Lotta Continua .The Chilean Lesson.)

The CP won the day at Lo Curro. Millas soon became finance minister and launched the new slogan "GET RICH" aimed at the petit-bourgeoisie and the 'hardworking' proletariat. The re-opening of the dialogue with the CD became official policy, and so-called 'ultra-leftism' became enemy number 1 of the UP process.

The CD was triumphant. There was to be no dialogue from their side, but they knew how to use the CP's sympathetic ear. For instance they pushed the CP into a direct confrontation with the MIR, when the MIR tried to oppose a joint demonstration of the CD and the National Party in Concepcion. But it was with the NP that the CD was negotiating with. Together they realised a 'Front Of Anti-Marxist Opposition'. By September 72 there were constant provocations, sabotage of left-wing headquarters, the continued economic harassment and even an attempted coup d'etat. But things had only just begun.

5. POPULAR UNITY AND THE MASS MOVEMENT

The CP line at this time was an attempt to redirect - against the course of history - both the classes to their 'real interests'. The CP becomes the magician conjuring away the reality of class struggle. But the implications of this are different in the two cases: to the bourgeoisie the UP offers compromise and retreat; to the proletariat it offers opposition. As 1972 developed there was a growing rift between the government and the mass movement, and the question of a reformist or a revolutionary road to socialism was posed at a more mass and concrete level.

Two incidents stand out. Lo Hermida and Pevlak. Lo Hermida was a shanty town, Pevlak a factory, where the revolutionary left, especially the MIR was influential. In both places the proletariat was developing forms of self-organisation and revolutionary awareness that were a direct challenge to and affront to UP policy. At Lo Hermida this led to one of the most degenerate incidents of the whole three years. At 4.00 am one morning the shanty town was brutally raided by the police, led by officers from the Socialist and Communist Parties, and sanctioned by the leaderships of both organisations. One MIR comrade was machine-gunned to death and 40 others were badly injured.

At Pevlak the workers were occupying the factory, demanding its expropriation under workers control. The Communist Minister of Employment ordered the workers to stop. but the workers of the whole region answered by blocking the roads around the factory and organising permanent pickets. Still the Government gave the workers a deadline (June 30th) to be out by. But on that morning the workers - with trade union leaders amongst them - organised a 50,000 - strong demonstration and headed towards Allende's Moneda Palace. Even before they got there, the UP backed down and issued a possession order for the factory.

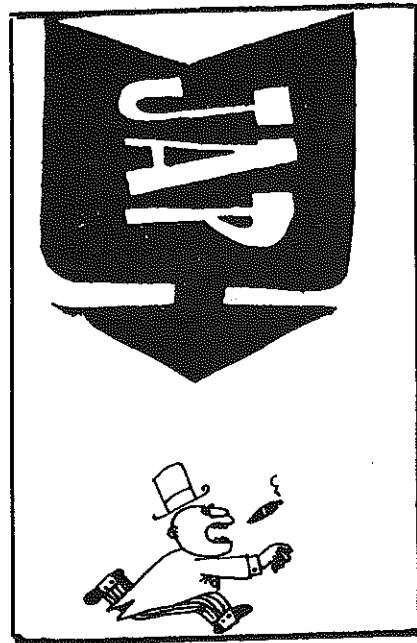
This victory was important and showed the lasting weakness of the UP in the face of the mass movement. Even when the movement became openly autonomous from it, the Government was always vulnerable and could never, with ease or stability, oppose it. Even at Lo Hermida the comrades were not beaten into submission and prepared a massive response to the police actions. Allende himself was forced to go down to

the shanty town to pacify the situation, and there no attack on Lo Hermida again. In fact, what happened in the middle part of 1972 was that the revolutionary left was able to take the first steps inside the mass movement towards the development of actual organs of mass revolutionary power. In Concepcion for instance, the MIR, backed up initially by other groups, initiated a 'popular assembly'. This was attacked by leaders of the UP parties, and it did suffer from a real penetration inside the popular masses. Nevertheless, it was a landmark that cleared some ground for what would come after October 1972.

Similarly, after Pevlak the victory spurred on the workers to build the first 'workers cordon' - the Cordon Cerillos. This is how a comrade from the MAPU describes it:

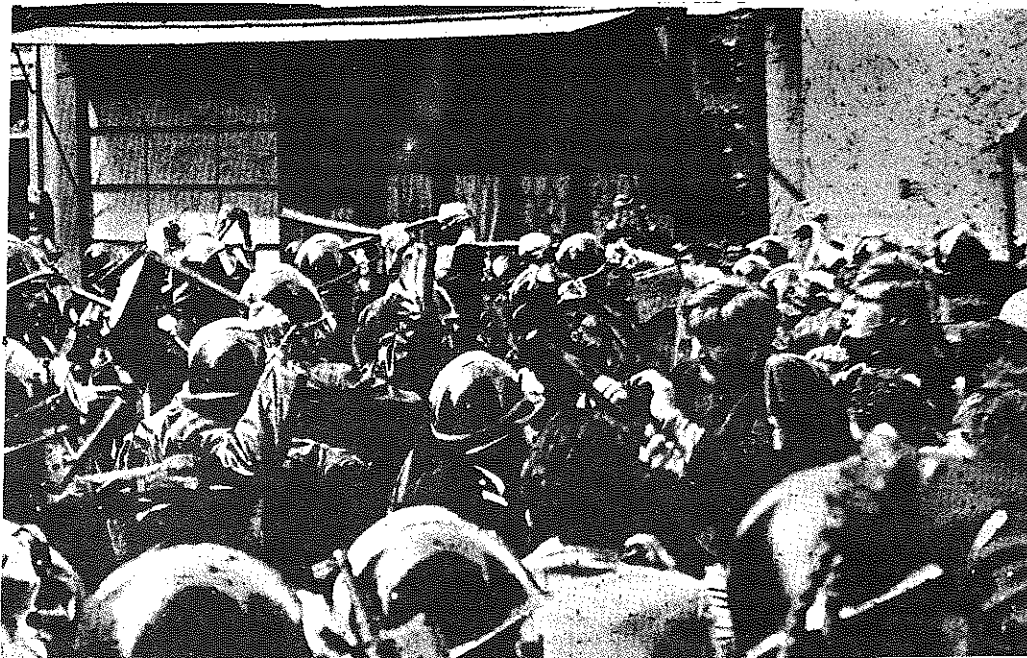
"It was an attempt to create a united political leadership for the workers organisations that had been established in the area. The initiative came from the militants of Bandiera Roja (who later joined the MAPU), the MIR and the left socialists. The CP dominated organisations refused to participate. Despite limited support, the workers co-ordinating committee drew up a platform which went beyond the main themes of the revolutionary left: support for the Government, in so far as it represented the struggles of the workers; expropriation of all enterprises with a capital of more than 14 million escudos; workers control on the basis of direct workers democracy in the factory; replacement of parliament and the judiciary by a popular assembly; expropriations of all land-holdings over 40 hectares, under peasant control; the creation of a 'state construction enterprise', and automatic adjustment of wages every time the cost of living went up by 5%.

These demands in fact conformed to the UP programme. Though of course the CP and the CUT criticised the form of the mobilisation, whilst the SP gave it only limited support."



6. OCTOBER 72: THE BOSSES STRIKE

By October 72, the rate of inflation in Chile was running at 20% a month. The bourgeoisie, and increasingly large sections of the middle-strata knew how to use the economic space that the UP had given them. The black market flourished in a context of an increasing shortage of goods on the market. On October 12th, this crisis erupted into a full-scale bosses strike



The strike began with the lorry-owners who just took their vehicles off the road, but then it spread to shop-keepers, factory owners and even groups like lawyers and doctors. The aim was very openly to bring down the govt., and for the extreme right this meant another major opportunity to provoke a military take-over. But as it happened it was not the military who took over.

The lock-out provoked the wholesale mobilisation of the working class and the Chilean proletariat. That class initiative that the UP had tried for so long to restrain, now broke out-----and even the UP govt added to the call for the workers to take over the factories and organise production themselves. And this is what happened, and why the bosses strike was defeated and failed to cripple the Chilean economy, and weaken the determination of the proletariat. The workers took over the factories requisitioned the lorries and very quickly had an effective system of production and distribution. Organisations such as the JAP's---which had long-time held a token responsibility for prices and food distribution---were now infused with real energy and power. And alongside them there grew up new organisations: the workers cordons through which factories in a given area were able to join up and link themselves at the base to carry out the struggle; or the 'commandos comunales' which tried to group together in a single co-ordination all the different proletarian sectors in a given area---the working-class, the students, the peasants, the housewives, the unemployed etc.

These developments will be described more fully in a later article. The key point here is that they marked a decisive turning point in the Chilean class struggle. October 72 was the moment when the mass movement itself threw up its first, tentative forms of an alternative to the bourgeois state apparatus. It established on a mass level what the revolutionaries had been trying to develop through the Cordon Cerillos and the Concepcion assembly. And the first experience of this was clearly a victory.

But victories are short-lived unless they are seized on and used. And in this sense the bourgeoisie was still able to come out well from the October situation. The bosses learnt the lessons of their strike. They knew that they would have to be stronger next time; and this particularly meant that they had to step up their preparation of the armed forces. In October the army had stayed quite out of it. And they knew that they had to stop the momentum of the proletarian movement, and they put pressure on the reformists to do that for them. This meant pushing for Allende to bring military generals into his cabinet.

Unfortunately the proletarian movement did not draw its own conclusions as regards its class interests. For the still dominant CP, the new organisations thrown up in the October struggle, were organs of defense in an 'exceptional period' when the bosses had left a vacuum in the sphere of the economy. For them there was no long-term vindication of the need for mass mobilisation and power. After October they either boycotted the cordons and commandos, or tried to take them over and use them simply as bases for the forthcoming electoral battle. Linked to this, the CP and the UP right-wing supported and even initiated moves to restore all the factories to the owners who had deserted them. It wanted little to do with occupations and workers control.

But even more grotesque was the CP attitude to the Chilean bourgeois military apparatus. They and Allende accepted all the right-wing pressure to accept certain generals into the cabinet, the famous cabinet of military generals and trade-union leaders no less. From that point on, the right-wing of the UP embarked on a course of building up a strong, bureaucratic state---based on 'constitutionality'---that could deal with "civil disorder and disruption".

"If before there was a theory of the neutrality of the state and the army, now this theory seems to be substituted by a theory according to which the military apparatus, because of its role in society, forms an elite which are above classes; which will follow that class which expresses the 'national and general interest' i.e. the working-class, against the sectional and particular pushes of the reactionary fringes of the bourgeoisie in the service of foreign imperialism."

(Lotta Continua: The Chilean Lesson.)

So here was the beginning of the absurd end of the UP. For the next year it would be colluding with a force that in fact was preparing to overthrow it. The govt would refuse all attempts to build up a workers and peasants militia, and instead looked towards a bourgeois apparatus to defend the working-class. And all the time this apparatus was openly fraternising with US imperialism, counter-revolution itself. The US had cut off all civil aid to Chile, but in December 72 gave over 10 million dollars in military aid.

The price the UP had to pay to get the generals into the cabinet was very high. On October 21, the parliament passed a bill presented by the C-D, on the control of arms. No one---with the exception of the MIR---saw the significance of this bill at that time, but in the following year it would be crucial to the army

and the bourgeoisie in the attempt to crush all resistance to their coup. Allende had threatened to use his presidential veto against the bill. But when the time came, for some reason, a bureaucratic error, meant the veto arrived too late!

Against all these moves of the UP reformism, the MIR and sections of the UP left fought very hard. The MIR in particular argued that an armed confrontation was inevitable with the capitalist class and the bourgeois state. For them the task was to prepare to win this confrontation, and that could never be done by turning to the bourgeois armed forces themselves. The organisations that for the MIR had to be relied on were the cordones, and in particular the commandos comunales "becoming mass organisations, independent of the bourgeois state, capable of moving towards a dual power situation". (Miguel Enriquez, MIR leader, Jan 73). And on the question of the working-class giving back the factories to their previous owners, the MIR perspectives were very clear:

"The working-class cannot accept giving back the large factories....and it should not renounce its duty of putting them in the service of the people--either by expropriating them once and for all, or placing them under workers control. Faced with this problem there is no half-way position: either you keep in the hands of the people the gains it has conquered, or you stand for and reinforce the bourgeois offensive. You are either for or against the people.

"We call on all workers, labourers, slum dwellers, peasants and students to refuse these measures, to denounce the retreat and to mobilise itself actively on all fronts to stop it, and to defend the enterprises that have been conquered.

"For the working-class, the people and the revolutionaries, its not only a question of struggling to block the road of the putschists, or stopping a bosses strike. Its not only a matter of struggling against the monopolies and imperialism, or of pushing through certain economic reforms: its a matter of struggling for a socialist revolution, through transforming the economic structures in society, and constituting forms of popular power, the summit of which will be a workers and peasants revolutionary government.

National Secretariat of the MIR, 8 Nov.



This contradiction however, between the reformists and the revolutionaries did go in favour of the reformists. The revolutionary pole inside the Chilean left was still relatively small and divided into different organizations that were unable to stand up to the strong homogeneity and unity of the CP. After October, the proletariat lost the momentum of its mobilizations— though not all gains were lost; revolutionaries were extending their base quite considerably, and inside the MAPU an important step forward was made when the CP-oriented leadership was disposed and replaced by the party's left-wing. The SP was incapable of offering any independent leadership to the mass movement if that meant crossing the CP majority. Perhaps they could raise the general tasks of the situation, but never of going and trying to organize them. The SP was always in the trap of being only a pressure group.

After October, the mass movement was not fully demobilized workers did not return all the factories they had taken over. And in Jan. 73, this conflict came to a head. The UP tried to work out a compromise with the 'progressive' sectors of the bourgeoisie in the CD. It presented to Parliament the Millas-Prats scheme whereby the govt. would keep some of the occupied factories and hand back others. But at this point, the working-class intervened very directly. The MIR and left-wing militants of the UP—including rank and file members of the CP—revitalized the cordones; the answer was totally uncompromising—not a single factory to be returned to the bosses. And they won. The plan had to be dropped. It was meant to work out a compromise, but had ended up provoking an upswing in the proletarian offensive.

7. THE ELECTIONS AND THE APRIL-MAY OFFENSIVE

The elections of March '73 for the congress had a great importance. Revolutionary support for the UP govt was by now only of the most critical kind, but a defeat for the UP would have given the bourgeoisie an immediate and large boost in confidence to step up its offensive.. And for this reason the UP vote of 44% was of major importance. By now it had lost almost all of its middle-class vote, but the proletariat was solidly behind it at the polls.

Though as we've mentioned before, victories are quickly made into nothing unless they are seized upon and used. After the March elections the bourgeoisie as a whole made up its mind: Allende was not going to fall through the ballot box—or at least they could no longer bank on that and they certainly couldn't wait—and they became united on the need for the coup. And yet again, it was inside the proletarian class that the confusions and hesitations remained.

The UP though has to be understood clearly at this point. It did not in fact tread water or go onto the defensive after the election victory. It felt strong enough to allow the military men to leave the cabinet, and it came up with what was called the

"April- May Offensive " against the bourgeoisie. The point was that it completely failed to see which forces in Chile were capable of making and sustaining that offensive, and what that offensive should consist of.

'In April-May 73 there was an agreement between the CP and SP which meant a renewal of the organisations of October 72, with a perspective of a mass offensive in order to create the most favourable conditions for a UP/left military government which would be prepared to break with bourgeois legality. The main effort for them was to get going the industrial cordons. The organisation of the urban and peasant movements getting much less attention from the two main parties. The preference for the cordons can be explained by the strategy for defending the govt that the UP had.

...Y A PREPARARTE A DIRIGIR LA INDUSTRIA



Prepare yourselves to run the industries.

'At that time it was obvious that a confrontation was possible and the UP plan was to lean on the 'democratic' officers, led by General Prats, and the head of the Carabinieri, as well as on the workers organisations. They thought that a conflict, provoked by subversion in the army, would see the 'constitutionalist' officers lead the loyal troops in the UP defence, backed up by the workers in the cordons. The confrontation was conceived of as a very short conflict, out of which the presidential authority would be restored, fascism defeated, and the UP in a position to negotiate with the 'non-fascist' sectors of the opposition.

Such a perspective obviously excluded the preparation and participation of the urban and peasant masses for a peoples war. Only the MIR, MAPU and sections of the Socialist Left insisted on the necessity for a military-political preparation of the masses and took the initiative in recharging the commandos comunales.....

..... The UP offensive however stopped towards the middle of June, when the balance of forces in the army was judged unfavourable to the plan.

(Francois Delcourt p18-19)

8. PREPARING THE COUP: THE 'TANCAZO'.

As 1973 wore on the class polarisation in Chile became acute and there was an unceasing political crisis. At the end of June there was an assassination attempt on the life of General Prats - the leading "loyal" army general, and a state of emergency was declared. Almost immediately afterwards, there was the famous Tancazo: the mutiny of an armoured tank regiment which on June 29th attacked the Presidential Palace. The mutiny was quickly suppressed by loyal troops under Prats himself. At the same time the CUT called on the workers to occupy their factories and on the evening of the 29th there was a million strong demonstration outside Allendes Moneda Palace. At this moment even the CP began to step up its preparations for arming the masses.

But the Tancazo was less of a failed coup than a practice run. It enabled the right-wing to assess their forces and to identify the the "loyalists" in the armed forces. A few days later on August 4th, the navy 'discovered' a plot to "conspire against the unity of the armed forces, and 100 junior naval officers, suspected of

being pro-UP were arrested and brutally tortured. The govt totally failed to defend these officers which dealt a serious blow to the morale and strength of any of the military who were opposed to the coup. Once more, though now at suicidal proportions, the UP was accepting the so-called "constitutionalism" of the armed forces. There was even something fatalistic in this, as Allende certainly knew about much that was going on inside the military apparatus. But still, the UP leaders were capable of the most ironic analysis. Luis Corvalan in particular was falling over himself in an attempt to accommodate the armed forces.

"They (the bourgeois parties) are claiming that we have an orientation of replacing the professional army. No Sir. We continue and will continue to support keeping our armed forces strictly professional."

(Chile Hoy July 31st.)

No sir, the Communist Party was going to lead the proletariat to the very end of the garden path! Respecting the institution of the bourgeois military apparatus, the UP was paralysed as those institutions prepared to carry out their historical task: the crushing of the working class and proletarian revolution. Against what was happening in the Chilean armed forces, the 'loyal' generals were helpless. In fact they were silently acquiescing to the fascist build-up, and by the end of August were forced to resign from the UP cabinet.

The paralysis of the UP was contrasted with the confidence and bravado of the bourgeoisie and the fascists. Their main wall slogan at this time was 'DJARKARTA' the capital of Indonesia where in 1965, hundreds of thousands of communists were slaughtered in a bloody purge. And the right-wing press was equally honest:

' Travelling through anti-communist countries like Brazil offers the most profound satisfaction to those of us who have had to put up with the communists for almost three years. In the first place you find the communists in their proper place, in hiding.'

(El Mercurio)

Against the right-wing build up, the working-class movement was increasingly helpless. The feeling and mobilisation that had followed June 29 had been frittered away by the still dominating strategy of the UP. The mass movement was still unable to fully free itself from the reformists and make the break for the seizure of power. Even the left-wing of the SP, which did talk about the 'impending clash', was still capable of coming out with confusions

such as *"Never has the unity between the people, the armed forces and the carabinieri been so strong as it is today. And this unity will become stronger with every new battle in the historical war we are waging."* (Altamirano, Speech in reaction to the Tancazo.)

In these last two months the revolutionary left still had an uphill task. After the Tancazo, the MIR and the MAPU put forward the plan for a general offensive of popular power, in which the proletariat should occupy all the major factories and estates; should step up the organisation of the communal commands to unify and spread this action; and should prepare its own militia's of self-defence to confront the army of the bourgeoisie. Though on this last point the MIR seem alone in bringing it to the fore, and developing it into serious work to split the bourgeois army. It was the only group in Chile that had serious experience of this over the 3 years.

"The people must struggle to incorporate into the JAPS, the popular organisations and the communal commands, the soldiers and the petty-officers of the armed forces and the carabinieri. We must develop a people's surveillance over the reactionary officers and demand their dismissal and imprisonment. We must mobilise the working-class and the people to keep watch on the reactionaries."

And today more than ever, it is necessary to mount a huge defense of the people, defense of the factories, the agricultural holdings and the neighbourhoods. This means multiplying the Committees of Defense in the localities, especially the armed militias of the mass movement, and co-ordinate all these organisms through the Committee of Defense and the communal commands."

(MIR July 73)

It is on this question that the Chilean revolution ultimately faltered. In the months after the Tancazo the proletariat was not demobilised in the strict sense. In fact their struggle had never been as active and rapid. The problem was that they were unable to **seriously attack the bourgeoisie**. Both classes were building themselves up in that period, but unlike the bourgeoisie, the proletariat did not go "behind the enemy lines" and get in the first blows. The mass organisations were growing all the time, but they were not 'killing the coup'. The proletariat was finding no answers to the fascist gangs carrying out assassinations, and sabotage; to the fascist purge in the army; to the semi-insurrectional strike of the lorry-owners; to the fascist doctors who let working-class kids die in the hospitals; to the search for arms carried out in the factories by the armed forces. *"The masses defended themselves by attacking on their own terrain, but they did not go beyond that terrain and go inside the home of the enemy"*. (Lotta Continua The Chilean Lesson.) The strength was there but in isolation from dismantling the strength of the bourgeoisie.

So as the days wore on the initiative moved resolutely over to the right-wing. The armed forces (using that bill passed by the UP the previous October) were carrying out ever more brutal arms raids on the factories and estates. The balance of forces was becoming more and more impossible. A French observer wrote:

"On August 4th we were in Lanera Austral, a textile factory occupied by the workers as were hundreds of others at the end of June..... The parachutists carried out the operation.... calling each other by code names. They really made an assault on the factory. They then searched the workers lined up along the wall, swore at them, threatened and hit them. They then carried out a brutal interrogation demanding information about the political and trade union activities in the factory, the leaders where the meetings took place, at what intervals....."

The result: one dead and several wounded. And it was a remarkable training for the military, especially as the operation will be repeated hundreds of times over the country"

(J-P Beauvais, Le Monde 16-17 September 73)

Similar and at times more brutal raids took place against the peasants and the Mapuche Indians. But still the UP vacillated. The CP pushed for new negotiations with the CD, which officially opened on September 7th. Allende announced a referendum ironically chosen for September 11th.

But by now the die was cast. At the beginning of September the MIR renewed its call for a general strike and a full mobilisation of all sections of the proletariat. The proletariat did in fact mobilise; on Sept 4th, the 3rd anniversary of Allende's election, nearly a million people demonstrated in Santiago----but without the power and possibility to defeat the coup.

There was some resistance. At the SUMAR factory for instance, when armed detachments from the Air-Force came to carry out a search, they were fought off by the workers, and had to retreat completely as they were in danger of being surrounded by the whole community around the factory. But after September 11th the Sumar factory was raised to the ground and all the workers found in it were shot or burnt alive. A phase in the Chilean revolution had come to an end, and a new one begun.

