



LEARNING FROM CHILE

PREFACE.

Most analyses of the Chilean experience that have been made in this country, start off from the coup and the dire lessons to be learnt from that. And for us in *Big Flame* that is one very important focus for any reflection on what went on in Chile. No one understands that experience unless they recognise that "legal" roads to socialism are strategies for defeat and only defeat.

But our starting point for this article is something that has received little attention: that is, the remarkable level of class mobilisation that brought the Chilean proletariat to a near-revolutionary seizure of power by the middle of 1973. In Chile there was not only a sudden escalation of class struggle; but over the 3 years, an open, protracted and ever-deepening struggle against capitalism and for a new, communist society. We want to look at how and why this developed; which social forces were responsible; how they organised; and even, how the UP itself aided this process as well as preparing its tragic defeat last September.

We want to ask these questions particularly to see what can be learnt for the struggle here. With Chile, we are dealing with a revolutionary process based on an urban, working-class mass movement, as well as on the movement in the countryside and amongst the peasants. This movement had components— a long tradition of workers political and trade union organisation— which have important similarities with the situation in Britain. Without minimising the great differences that exist between '3rd world' Chile and 'imperialist' Britain, the Chilean struggle resembles our own in a way that the Cuban or Vietnamese revolutions, for instance, do not.

In making this analysis, and in the pamphlet as a whole, we hope we approach the Chilean experience for what is really was: a dynamic real-life struggle. We think that the British left has tended to look at Chile like an old textbook that can be discarded as soon as one or two timeless formulas have been extracted: eg 'build the party', 'Smash the state'. This has led to two things. Firstly that new lessons have gone unnoticed. No one for example—with the possible exception of the IMG—has tried to come to grips with what was original and important in the UP government. Secondly, even the 'truths' have been left at such a vague and timeless level, that they have little use. There has been little appreciation by the British left of the difficulties under which the Chilean comrades had to organise. And so slogans are raised, but hardly ever in a way that helps us understand what to do in an actual situation. Particularly in a fast moving situation like Chile, when the first thing the comrades had to do whilst they were 'building the party' or 'smashing the state' was to make sure that they didn't get shot.

We hope that this article and the pamphlet as a whole avoids that trap, even though in this article we are trying to draw together some 'lessons.'

POPULAR POWER, THE MASS MOVEMENT, AND REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION.

The Chilean revolution, between 1970-73, was based on the growth of the direct self-organisation and mass initiative of, the Chilean proletariat. This is the first key point. The UP tried to use the masses like a tap, to be turned on or off as the sit-

uation required; a reserve force providing the pressure to back up the institutions of the government. But through the needs of class struggle, and the intervention of revolutionaries the cordons, the comandos and the peasant councils emerged as organs through which the mass of the people could take on the initiative and make themselves the conscious motors of the class struggle. And there was a continual battle between the UP (the CP in particular) and these new mass organisations. Because the organisations had to be independent, if not separate, from the traditional institutions of the working-class: the unions and the reformist parties.

The creativity and mobilisation that could come out of the mass organisations was essential for building up the class power that always comes from class unity. A unity of two sorts: firstly the unity between individual militants of different political parties, that could develop at the base and through direct action, much faster than it ever could through a process of formal, ideological agreement. There is a famous interview that shows this so clearly: just after the Tancazo of June 29 1973, a journalist asked a worker in an occupied factory, which party he belonged to. The reply came. "Christian-Democracy." But you are here", said the journalist. "Certainly I'm here as a militant of the CD". "But your party is opposed to factory occupations." "Oh, that's a political problem. To defend your factory is a class problem and the whole working-class is here to defend their factories." (From Politique Hebdo no 96. Sept 27th 1973.)

And secondly there developed the unity between different sectors of Chilean society. Between the industrial workers, the unemployed, the peasants, the agricultural labourers, the housewives, the students etc. After the Bosses strike, the involvement of all these sectors became crucial to keep society going for the working-classes. And from then on, this unity was consolidated and could grow through the comandos comunales (area assemblies)---on which the revolutionaries put a lot of emphasis for just this very reason. In Chile, the industrial working class was no more than 25% of the workforce, and to just have organised with them---whatever leading role they could give at times---would have been disastrous. This is an important reminder for revolutionaries in this country, who face a long tradition of male, industrial, worker-ism. It is important to draw all anti-capitalist struggle into the revolutionary front.

The growth of the mass movement was what determined the opposition of the bourgeoisie to the UP. The government itself, with its desire to channel and stabilise the growing class conflict in Chile, was not the main problem. What the bosses saw and feared was the mass of the proletariat, becoming politically active and putting themselves in a position to break with the reformists. And that's what began to happen, and what was decisive about Chile. Inside the mass movement the struggle and awareness of the need for the revolutionary seizure of power. The extent to which that was generalised and prepared in practice, is what makes Chile so unique and rich in recent experience. Where else since World War 2, has the mass of the proletariat been organised in anything like comandos or cordons; organising so much of industry and agriculture; organising its own communities, health and even legal systems; and crucially, becoming so aware of the need for revolution?

"The industrial columns, the voices of the proletarian bases, say that in the process of achieving socialism, it is first necessary to destroy capitalism that exploits people.

The means of production and distribution must be placed under workers control. We will never give up the factories that we have taken over. We will not negotiate

with the hesitating reformists who betray their class in the defense of their own interests. Here there is class war between the exploited and exploiters. Them or us. For or against the working-class.

(EL CORDONAZA, paper of the Mackenna Industrial column. August 73.)

If nothing else we should learn the potential for revolutionary anti-capitalist struggle that comes out of the mass movement when it breaks through the harness of passivity that is imposed on it by the reformist organisations. We can learn for our own country that the working-class can and does go beyond 'trade-union' or reformist struggle. That it is capable of breaking from reformist or sectional expressions of its class interests.

Unlike Chile, we in Britain have not yet reached the question of the seizure of power: the revolution itself. But in the demands of car-workers for a guaranteed wage, work or no work; in the demands for across the board wage increases free of productivity strings; in the fight in the hospitals where the different groups of workers are forming united offensives over their individual claims, here are real developments towards a class struggle that is beginning to express itself in anti-capitalist, and no longer reformist, ways. This is the decisive point in the mass struggle. "The revolutionary character of the new united organisations does not lie in their form, but in the content expressed in these new forms". (Lotta Continua. The Chilean Lesson.)

tarea urgente
organo de expresion de los cordones
industriales y comandos comunales

PRECIO \$ 10

15

HACIA LA VICTORIA

**CON SACRIFICIO Y DECISION REVOLUCIONARIA
CONTRA EL REFORMISMO Y LA SEDICION**

1 TAREA URGENTE ES: DESARROLLAR MOVILIZACIONES COMBATIVAS
Basta de atacar a los trabajadores como reaccionarios para defender intereses reformistas y corporativistas con el ejemplo del "CERCA" de Chile.

2 FORTALECER LOS COMITES DE DEFENSA Y VIGILANCIA
El Comite de Defensa y Vigilancia es el organo de defensa y vigilancia de los trabajadores en sus lugares de trabajo. Su tarea es la de defender el canal 9.

3 DEFENDER EL CANAL 9
Los trabajadores no permitirán la destrucción del Canal 9 con el ejemplo de la SEDICION y del "CERCA" de Chile.

6 September

Forward to Victory with revolutionary sacrifice and decision against reformism and sedition

The urgent tasks are:

- 1) Develop combative mobilisations
- 2) Strengthen the defence and patrol committees
- 3) Defend Channel 9 (TV channel held by workers)

We're determined....

....never to support a coup....

....because the people in uniform are also exploited

Yet, in stressing the level of struggle that the Chilean people had reached, one glaring fact remains. That the movement as a whole was still, in the end, disorganised and confused by the reformism of the UP. There was always a gap between the level and extent of their mobilisation; and the level and extent to which that mobilisation was understood and transformed into a mass revolutionary programme for the seizure of power. The example of the CD worker that we quoted so favourably before, in this context can be seen as a real weakness. As long as he and other militants were tied to parties like the CD, or more usually the UP, then this was a continual break on the possibility for a revolutionary victory in Chile. The class enemy in Chile could succeed because, quicker than the proletariat, it became united and clear of its own interests.

Put at its simplest: the development of the mass struggle in Chile did not, of itself, solve the problem and the conflict between reform and revolution. And this confronted the Chilean revolutionaries with a very important political and organisational responsibility. This is the question of revolutionary vanguard organisation.

Chile poses this question in very clear ways. It dispels the idea of some comrades, that there is 'a pure working-class, which spontaneously breaks free of all reformist illusions and allegiances. But at the same time, it stresses the organic relationship between revolutionary organisation and the class movement as a whole. For the Chilean comrades, building vanguard political organisation was the battle to consolidate, strengthen and clarify the revolutionary and autonomous tendencies inside the mass struggle. The battle to organise all those militants who saw the necessity for the revolutionary road, into a unified and coherent force. A force that would not be dispersed and which could, together, find the power and cohesion to counter all the reformist influence inside the mass movement. For them to have renounced this task, would have been a matter of renouncing revolution. A defeatist position, refusing to take seriously the problem of reformism, which was organised and had long traditions that tied it to the mass movement.

(We emphasise the organic relationship between vanguard organisation and the mass struggle. In Chile, there was not only the necessity, but also the possibility of a revolutionary vanguard organisation. It is only out of the mass movement, which itself is active in posing the question of revolutionary struggle, that an organisation can be built as an authentic vanguard of the proletariat. It is the struggle, and not the subjective intentions of a few 'marxists' which makes it possible. The claims of THE Workers Revolutionary Party, or THE Communist Party of Britain (marxist-leninist) are pathetic when compared to the reality offered by the Chilean experience.)

Some comrades have blamed the defeat of the Chilean revolution on the failure of the left groups to build the 'party'. And the MIR itself, for instance, has made a self-criticism that it did not take seriously enough its own organisational growth as an alternative to the UP.

We have to avoid crude attitudes on this point. In the last months before the coup, the revolutionary groups, who were increasingly united in action, underwent a massive growth in influence. The programme for a revolutionary seizure of power was being spread among ever deeper layers of the mass movement. It was precisely at this moment that the bourgeoisie prepared and launched the coup. The bosses don't wait until reformism has been thrown out by the proletariat. And we cannot reduce the defeat to the mistakes made by revolutionaries. The military problem is uppermost (see Lotta Continua, The Chilean Lesson). The 'people's strength' needs guns as well as consciousness; and has at least a protracted armed struggle ahead of it, against napalm, tanks, laser beams and all the other imperialist war technology.

Though there is one major lesson that we can learn about revolutionary organisation from the failure of the Chilean comrades — comrades of the socialist left. For them, their party was more of a revolutionary grouping which acted as a sort of pressure group on the reformist leadership. After the Tancazo, for instance, their leader, Altomirano, went to Allende

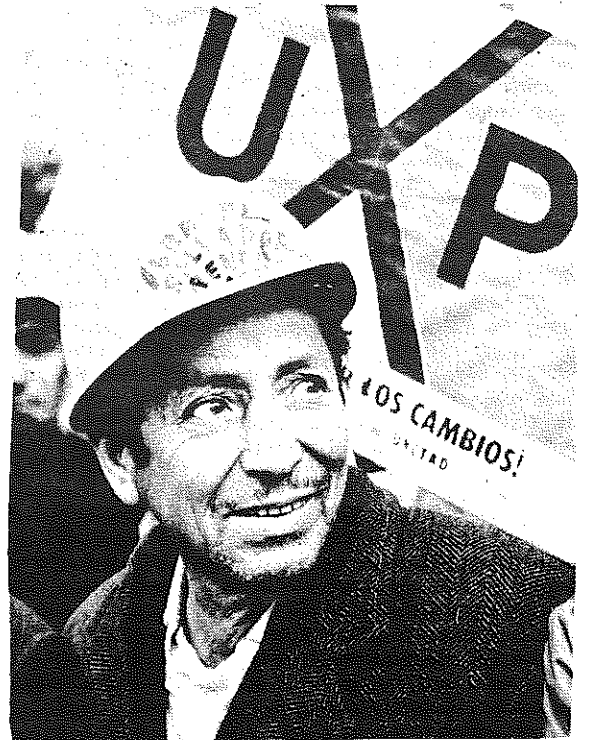
with a plan to deal with the fascists and mobilise the masses to impose a firm proletarian solution on the Chilean crisis. But that plan was based on the UP to carry it out. It was not based on the Socialist Party giving the lead to the mass movement. So, of course, when Allende refused the SP as an organisation was paralysed, and mounted no sustained offensive in those crucial months. They had tried to delegate the revolution to the reformists.

It's from the MIR and the MAPU, after October 1972, that we see the necessity to build an organisation, unified in its strategy and coordinated in its practice, able to take the initiative itself and be at the head of organising the revolution. (The assembly at Concepcion; the mobilisation to defeat the Millas plan; and, for the MIR, their programme of work inside the armed forces and their attempt to draw in the rank and file soldiers to the popular organisation.)

REFORMISM AND POPULAR UNITY

Throughout this pamphlet, our overall attitude to UP reformism should be clear. The strategy of constitutional reform, with which the UP replaced the marxist strategy of the proletarian dictatorship, served as an enormous betrayal of the interests of the Chilean proletariat. Allende not only ignored the revolutionary road, but when it appeared as a tendency within the mass struggle, he worked to disarm and demobilise it. The possibility for a successful revolution was frittered away, in the search for an alliance, a compromise with the democratic sectors of the bourgeoisie.

A very old lesson, this. We see the response of the world Communist Parties and we see how far they are from understanding it. They still manage to drag out the excuses to justify their own



parliamentary cretinism. In Britain, there is no evidence that the CP leadership has even seriously reflected on the implications of Chile for them. The CP is loud in condemning the barbaric acts of imperialism in Chile, but unable to admit to the explanation for that barbarity: that if the working class ever attempts to overthrow capitalism, it will face the full armed might of the bourgeois state and the imperialist military apparatus. And that apparatus does not sit back until the CP has peacefully won over 95% of the population to its side.



The problem: We invest in buying what the country does not produce.

The CPGB does try and answer these criticisms, or at least, soak them up. It claims that it **does** understand the role of the bourgeois state; that it **does** know how to combine extra-parliamentary with parliamentary struggle. But it cannot ever face up to the reality of Chile, because there the questions are concrete; what does the CP think of the **exact** combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle put forward by its sister party in Chile? Or, if they do understand the role of the bourgeois state, how do the comrades explain away the gall needed to sell the issue of *Marxism Today*, that in the same week as the coup could propagate such political mistakes as 'they [the bourgeois parties] claim we have an orientation to replacing the professional army. No, Sir! We continue and will continue to support keeping our armed institutions strictly professional. (quote from Luis Corvalan, General Secretary of the Chilean CP).

The comrades of the CPGB have a fine record of solidarity work in this country. Solidarity is inseparable from learning the lessons that Chile forces on us. We cannot afford to burden foreign comrades in a few years time with the need to build 'Britain Solidarity Campaign'.

WHAT SORT OF REFORMISM?

The question of the UP cannot be left here. The level of struggle reached in Chile by 1973 cannot be disassociated from the existence of the Allende Government. And so the Government requires a much fuller, all-round analysis. Here it's the British revolutionary left which has been unsatisfactory in its analysis.

The reformism of the UP cannot be likened to the reformism that we know in the British Labour Party. (Although there are points of similarity.) The BLP, while traditionally a party of the working class, is a **bourgeois** reformist party (at best); a party thoroughly integrated in the bourgeois political system. In as much as it is still capable of initiating reforms, these are based solely in the perspective of what the BLP sees as a healthy capitalist development. Allende's UP represented a **working class** reformism: a reformism based on the perspective for an anti-imperialist, socialist transformation of society.

Many comrades have compared the UP to the Popular Front governments of the '30's, in Spain, France and Chile itself. It is true that the UP shares with the Popular Front governments the record of having demobilised and confused the working class at critical times; of having helped to restore the firm political rule of the bourgeoisie, but we think that there are important differences between UP and the Popular Fronts, and these differences are crucial for revolutionaries.

To begin with, there are formal differences. Unlike most of the Popular Fronts the UP was always dominated by working class parties. It was not a coalition of the major working class and bourgeois parties. Second, as we've seen, the UP was formed to fight for socialism. The Popular Fronts' programmatic aims were to fight fascism and to protect the existing level of bourgeois democracy.

But these differences don't hold for much on their own. We have to look at the vital link; **the relationship between the Government, its programme and the mass movement.** It's only in this context that a comparison between Chile and Spain, for instance, is very useful.

Soon after the July 1936 military uprising in Spain, a Popular Front government was formed. This government was very similar to the UP in that it was dominated by the working class parties— the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the anarchists — but the key point to be made about this government is it was in **direct conflict with the actual level of struggle already reached by the Spanish working class and peasantry.** After July 1936, the Spanish workers had armed themselves and were organised in militias to fight Franco's invading army; and the factories had been taken over from where base committees were organising production and distribution. In other words, by September 1936, the Spanish proletariat already had the first forms of a new workers' state. And the task of the Popular Front government was to set about dismantling that state, and to restore the political power of the political bourgeoisie. In the first few months alone, they began to dissolve the base committees; halt the organisation of the militias; and call in all arms in the hands of the factory workers. Its programme of anti-fascism and the defence of bourgeois democracy necessarily dragged back the working class from the positions it had already gained.

The UP in Chile had a different relation to the mass struggle when it entered office. At that time, the new government was an initiative a step forward on the part of the Chilean proletariat. The UP's initial influence on the mass movement was one of catalyst in which it helped to enlarge and extend the socialist struggle. *The electoral victory gives the masses the feeling of victory and the right to govern.* (MIR) We cannot look back on those three years in Chile and see the extent of the mass mobilisation, without recognising the way in which the UP—because of and despite itself—was a major boost to that mobilisation. The peasant land seizures and the organisation of peasant councils; workers seizures of the factories and the growing awareness of the need for workers control.....cannot be separated from the momentum that is set up by Allende's land reform and nationalisation policies. In this first period of the UP, it serves to articulate and nurture the movement for socialism, as well as reinforcing the false and disastrous strategy for eventually achieving it. The UP can not be taken as offering any authentic road to socialism. But neither can it just be counterposed to the developments of the mass movement for proletarian revolution. Its relationship to the masses was a dialectical one which Chilean revolutionaries had to face upto and use.



Even as the 3 years developed and the UP moved further away from the mass movement, important things remained: the original UP programme was there as a lever that the left and the working-class could utilise. For example, that the govt. programme spoke of the need for a 'Popular Assembly', was helpful to the revolutionaries who were actually trying to create those assemblies. And secondly even the UP could be used, because of the ambiguity of its relation to the class movement. For instance, the left demanded successfully that the UP govt add to the call for the workers to take over their factories, to smash the bosses strike.

There is a second angle to all this. The programme and composition of the UP—the fact that it had a very militant left-wing—had important effects on the extent to which the govt could ever repress the proletariat whenever the latter did move autonomously. *The "UP could never, like Frei, impose some reforms from above and then use the violence of the state against the masses every time they directly intervened, took over the reforms and enlarged their content and consequences".* (Lotta Continua, *The Chilean Lesson*.) Allende had to give and take with the mass struggle. In Spring 71 for instance it was the workers who forced on the UP the nationalisation of certain factories; the peasants who forced in practice the UP's toleration of the expropriation of all estates over 40 hectares; and even as late as Jan 73, the Millas plan had to be dropped very quickly when the working-class refused to hand back any of the factories it had occupied.

All governments suffer defeats from the proletariat; all have things forced on them. But with the UP, that was not because the proletariat would win head-on clashes, plain and simple; but because the mass movement, even when its programme was for socialism, had an organic relationship to the UP. And this meant that when the govt did go as far as outright repression, eg Lo Hermida, its instability in the face of that was overwhelming.

From this second angle we can define the other main characteristic of the UP: a disorganiser of the bourgeois state. For the bourgeoisie it was like having an army with a general chosen by the other side. The UP not only divided and confused the bourgeoisie, it also upset the smooth functioning of the apparatus of its political control. And it took them time, valuable time, to recompose themselves around the military and the plans for the coup.

So we would see the UP as a contradictory government from the point of view of the class struggle. Certainly a government that leads the proletariat nowhere on its own—except to disaster; and nowhere, unless the revolutionary programme and organisation of the mass movement is strong enough to use the government as a tactic, and not fall in behind it believing it offers the strategy.

But this duality to the UP, has not been widely appreciated or understood. The standard response from the revolutionary left in this country has been to call the UP reformist and to leave it at that. (Though there is one current that goes as far as comparing Allende to Pinochet.) They would defend it from the right, from the fascists, but that is about all.

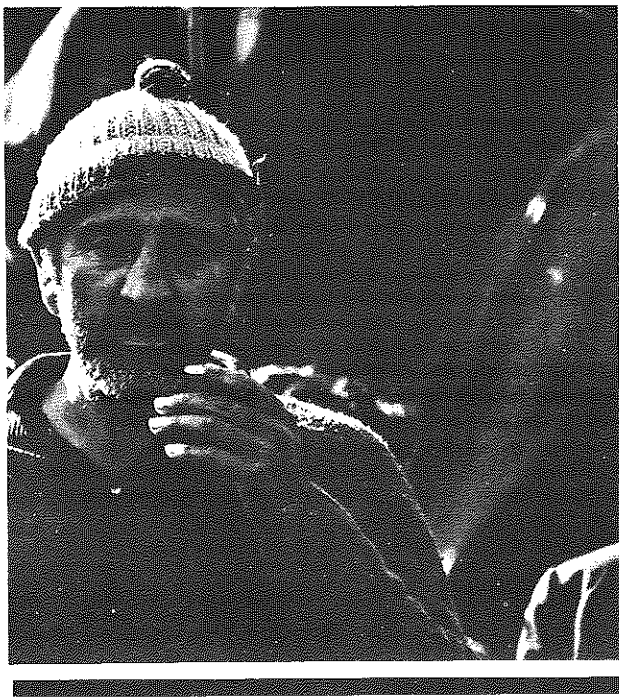
From our point of view that is a mistake that would mean failing to utilise every condition, every force, that can be utilised for revolution. This is not just a question of what is past in Chile, but more importantly now, how organisations of the revolutionary left should orientate themselves to future UP-type governments. The comrades in Italy and France, in particular, where the Communist Party is very strong, have to face up to this question as a pressing reality.

In Italy, our comrades in Lotta Continua have conducted a major political campaign inside the working class on the Chilean lessons. They have recognised that what is missing in Chile before the coup is the strength of the revolutionary programme inside the proletariat, and they have fought to clarify these issues for the Italian working class: and they have taken seriously the need to build an organisation capable of leading and consolidating a revolutionary mobilisation. And it's on this basis that Lotta Continua stresses the importance of a correct tactical approach to the Communist Party and any potential 'popular' government

Of course, there can be no simplistic equations between Chile and other countries, partly because it isn't only the revolutionaries who have learned from the past. The Italian CP has thought a lot about the Chilean experience and has evolved a strategy — the historic compromise — that explicitly renounces the immediate fight for socialism and instead posits the building of an 'advanced democracy', a developed form of social capitalism. The Italian CP has backed away from a UP-type programme and has returned to a traditional Popular Front stance: defending democracy from the fascists and the right. In practice, it will have difficulty convincing its base about the need for the historic compromise. The economic situation does not allow capital to grant the masses any advancement, and this is the case even if the government in office is nominally a popular one.

A major plank of Lotta Continua strategy is to force the CP, through the pressure of the mass struggle, to renounce the historic compromise. There is no illusion about the Party's ability or desire to lead an Italian revolution, but the aim is to push the Party to adopt a more radical platform. In other words, Lotta Continua wants to push the CP closer to a UP than a Popular Front position. Necessarily, their perspective must include the possibility that the CP will form a government. If this happens, Lotta Continua should — if it fulfils its revolutionary responsibilities — be able to

- 1 widen the contradiction between the leadership and the base of the CP.
- 2 drive a wedge into the unity and plans of the bourgeoisie; ie, since the crisis does not allow the bourgeoisie room to advance a programme of reforms, the CP would be forced on the progressive bourgeoisie by the strength of the working class, in complete contradiction to the strategy of the right-wing, *golpista* faction of Italian capital and the state.
- 3 use the time to prepare themselves and the proletariat for the inevitable armed clash that is already warming up in Italy. The Communist Party in the government should give more space for the revolutionaries.



What about us in Britain? One point stands out: the Labour Party offers us nothing like the same possibilities, yet (at least in the present situation) it is the least efficient government from the point of view of the bourgeoisie. It does not present the same threat to the state as UP did, but it does raise some problems for the bourgeoisie.

The crisis for British capital, as in the world generally, calls for a determined anti-working class government. Not exclusively a repressive government, but a government that can harness and restrict the power and autonomous activity of the working class. In this role, the Labour Party is clearly deficient, for how can it both attack workers' living standards and at the same time retain its electoral support and its popular image—as well as retain the support of its rank and file activists, who tend to be on the left of the Party.

For Big Flame, this means that we have to use this contradiction in the Labour Party. This is the underlying meaning of our slogan, 'Labour — our weakest enemy'. At the same time, we maintain the position that there can be no illusions in the Party being able to initiate a programme of the working class. So, it is vital to avoid posing demands which confuse this question, for example, 'Labour to Power on a Socialist Programme'. And it is also important to avoid the abstentionist position or the point of view that calls for support for Labour because it is the lesser evil. We have to encourage an active working class to impose through struggle policies on the Labour Party which are unfavorable to the bourgeoisie and which disrupt its plans for a coordinated offensive against the working class.

AND IN BRITAIN

Like May 1968 or Vietnam, Chile is really exciting for many of us because it shows the possibility for socialist revolution. As the highest point of struggle reached in the western world in the last 25 years, Chile is not an exotic accident, but bears some fundamental similarities with our situation here.

For us the meaning of Chile becomes significant as we apply its lessons in our own movement. Solidarity with the Chilean resistance should be synonymous with the best of internationalism, continuing the struggle here with a wealth of ideas and experiences gained from Chile. A solidarity campaign should not be seen as a timely and sensational opportunity to put across the same tired old clichés about the Party. Nor should it become the platform for outraged denunciations of the evils of imperialism, unless at the same time there can be some understanding of the bankruptcy of the peaceful road to socialism.

In summary, we want to point out three important lessons of Chile.

The first is the revolutionary content of popular power in the three years before the coup. We cannot over emphasise the high level reached by the Chilean proletariat in organising for their demands and needs and with forms of struggle which more and more separated themselves from the interests of capitalist development. For us in Britain, where sections of the working class have been fighting in the same sorts of ways, we can gain two insights from what happened in Chile.

Firstly, that the mass of the people — peasants, workers, students, women, squatters, shanty-town dwellers — began to identify their class interests together no matter what their job or their political organisation; and secondly that the Chilean proletariat utilised and went beyond the traditional organisations of the trade unions and the left parties of the UP, challenging each and every part of their form and structure.

The second emphasis we want to make is the relationship between the mass movement and the revolutionary organisations. We can learn much from the practice of the Chilean comrades about rooting the vanguard in the struggles of the mass movement. We think this is the most important point, even after the coup. It would be ludicrous for us to even try to posit the question of the Party outside of the real situation in which Chilean militants found themselves. Nor can we blame one revolutionary group for the failure of the revolution. Rather, it is a credit to the vitality and imagination of the Chilean proletariat that the experiment lasted so long, in the face of the combined power of several imperialist nations.

The question of social democracy and the Labour Party is the last point. We must continue to use the space provided by its reforms for our own mass mobilisations, as well as stressing its own internal contradictions in order to break its hold on the working class.

Like the anti-war Vietnam slogan of 1968, Chile is here with us. Let's use that experience to continue the struggle.

Viva Chile

Venceremos



THE CHILEAN LESSON *Lotta Continua*

(These are extracts from a document that Lotta Continua produced in February 1974. Lotta Continua is an Italian revolutionary organisation, with who Big Flame has close links.)

For communists the duty is to analyse the limits and mistakes of those involved in a revolutionary process, but only on condition that they use the lessons to advance revolutionary strategy.

In the Chilean events we see the highest point reached by revolutionary struggle in Western capitalism since the war. And its from this fundamental point that we start our analysis.

THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY ORGANISATION OF POPULAR POWER'

The Chilean experience has shown once again that a revolutionary process is based on the development and the initiative of the masses and their own self organisation in new forms. Forms that are radically different from the institutional forms of organisation of the workers movement, the trade union and the parliamentary party.

The masses, through an ever deepening involvement in the struggle give birth to united organisations of self-management, and through these they become the active force in the class confrontation. In Chile this happened through the cordones, the peasant councils and the territorial commands. Through these the proletariat was able to counterpose its own democracy to the organs of inter-classist representative democracy, behind which lay the class domination of the bourgeoisie.

In this process the struggle for power ripened, and it became possible to demand a state of a new type — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This was the crucial development. Because according to some comrades, who look at the class struggle through the filter of the "workers council" ideology (see Footnote 2), what is decisive about Chile is the process of mass organisation in terms of the growth of proletarian democracy. Some comrades go as far as making an analogy between the workers cordones and the delegate committees and territorial councils in Italy today. For us this is a grave mistake.

The powerful development of mass organisation in Chile was based in the pre-revolutionary crisis in Chilean society — in the vacuum of bourgeois power. The bourgeoisie's traditional instrument of control was inadequate, while its new instrument (the armed forces as the "party" of the bourgeoisie) hadn't yet been perfected.

PREFACE

Many people, from all parts of the political spectrum, have already commented on the "Chilean mistakes". On the other hand, there are others who have warned that it's too easy to look on and see mistakes from the outside

Before we begin our analysis, it's important to clear up confusions and understand why and what we are doing. When Marx analysed the history of the Paris Commune (1871) he did not hold back from pointing out the mistakes and limitations of the people who had a leading role in that revolutionary experience. But Marx also criticised those who saw "in misery only misery". He looked at the commune primarily in order to discover — within what was a bloody defeat for the Paris proletariat — the heroic struggle of the proletariat in its revolutionary fight for freedom.

And this is the first point against our social-democrats (see Footnote 1) who look at the Chilean defeat and don't want and don't know how to find anything but defeat. *They look for the mistakes in order to find a new and more efficient alibi for their abdication of the revolutionary road.*

In this vacuum and faced with the accelerating crisis, the mass organisations tended to develop as organs of power, *forms of a transitory dual power before the frontal clash with the bourgeoisie*. To miss this point, to see in the autonomous mass organisations only the proletarian democratic aspect, is to be gradualist, spontaneist and idealistic. It is a misunderstanding that puts *first* a gradual development of socialist islands inside the old bourgeois society, and puts *last* the question of seizing power.

In some analyses of the socialist left — the "maximalists without a party" (see Footnote 3) — the coup becomes an immoral accident in the natural development of self-management. This is a very bad way to understand Chile.... *.... the revolutionary character of the new united proletarian organizations doesn't lie in the form but in the content expressed in these new forms*. Through its autonomy from the trade unions and the parliamentary parties in the coalition government the initiative of the masses is radicalised up to the point of trying to deal with the decisive problem of arming the proletariat. (In however an embryonic and defensive way.) This is the decisive step of every revolutionary process. This is what Lenin meant when he saw that in the soviets not only the model of the new state, through which the proletariat would exercise its dictatorship, but also the organs of the armed insurrection.

THE MILITARY QUESTION

Inside the new dynamic of the mass movement, the revolutionary forces developed among an active proletariat. But that force was not strong enough to challenge the majority influence of the organised reformists. There continued to be a disproportion between the power of reformism and the development of a revolutionary leadership, and the class enemy took advantage of this.

This poses the huge and important problem of the responsibility of the autonomous initiative of the revolutionary party. Historically a minority, the revolutionary leadership can and must come to grips with, tactically, the dual contradiction: between the bourgeoisie and the reformist organisations of the proletariat; and on the other hand between the reformists and the proletariat. And it has to handle this problem in a way that ensures both the growth of the mass movement and its own integration and hegemony inside that movement. But having said this, it is necessary to recognise that *the bourgeoisie speeds up the crisis before the balance of power between revolutionaries and reformists inside the proletariat, goes in the revolutionaries favour*.

But still, despite its minority position at that time, when faced with the accelerating crisis and the preparations for the bourgeoisie for civil war, revolutionaries must undertake the autonomous initiative and break from the reformists. Though its important to add — to take the initiative does not mean to guarantee victory but may just mean the enemy is stopped from having the most favourable conditions for itself.

The way in which the coup in Chile happened is the hardest and most tragic for the proletariat and its organisations. The proletariat reaction to the Tancazo (see Footnote 4) of July 73, the beginning of the process of arming the masses, was the highest point in the Chilean process. From then on, it's clear that the die is cast. Only the acceleration of the arming of the workers and the people could have modified the balance of forces, which in terms of armed power was overwhelmingly in favour of the bourgeoisie.

But the reformist line, which here reveals its total bankruptcy, was to call on the proletariat only as reserves troops to the 'democratic sector of the standing army and the military apparatus. And by the time the UP scheme had failed, that is the forces did not split vertically between the 'democrats' and the 'golpists' (those who wanted a coup), all possibility of armed resistance to the coup had disappeared, and the working-class was left disarmed in the face of the ferocious reaction, both before and after September 11th.

Even here we can see the precise analogy with the anti-fascist line of the Italian revisionists, which all the time tries to rely on and embrace the 'unconditional loyalty' of the military high-command.

The general lessons of Chile confirm many of the basic Marxist teachings, from which the revisionists squirm — the decisive importance of work inside the army; the class nature of the state; the necessity of the revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat; the revolutionary role of the autonomous political/military organs of the masses; the necessity of the revolutionary party. These are very important confirmations but they have to wedded to the originality and specificity of the Chilean experience.

Historically, the general crisis of imperialism and capitalism, on a world scale, has reached its highest moments with inter-imperialist wars. The development of the revolutionary movement has always reached its maximum strength by coinciding with inter-imperial wars and has always been marked by the specific nature of those wars and the crisis in general. Even the first experience of the proletariat conquest of power, the Paris Commune, grew out of



the Franco-Prussian war and the defeat of the Bonapartist Empire. Then, the highest cycle of revolution in the West goes from 1917-20 and again represents a proletarian answer to the general imperialist crisis which led to WW1. The victorious revolution in Russia came out of the transformation of the war between states into a civil war.

This is not accidental. It was in the course of the war that the conditions developed for the conquest of power by the proletariat:—the crisis in the power of national states; the weak-

On the other hand the consciousness, more or less clear, of the impossibility of just repeating that experience, led some comrades

to underline, from their analysis of the 1920's, not the role of the party in the insurrection, but on the contrary the political role of mass organisation, the soviets and the workers councils, the germ of a new philosophical idealism and a new political gradualism was born through the rebirth of the "councilist ideology". In what seemed to be the impossibility of answering the problem of seizing power, there grew up the



ness of imperialist control over different zones of the world; *the arming of the proletariat*. Its again related to inter-imperialist war that revolutionary armies have grown up in Asia....China, Korea Vietnam and Indo-China.

In Europe its again inter-imperialist war which started a new revolutionary cycle characterised by the anti-fascist and anti-capitalist arming of the proletariat which clashed with the schema of imperialist control worked out in Yalta and Teheran. The people's army was victorious in Albania and Yugoslavia; disarmed and dismantled in Italy by the bourgeois-democratic restoration; and isolated and crushed in Greece.

From the end of World War 2, the question of seizing power has not been on the cards for the proletariats of the Western capitalist countries. This is changing now that the imperialist world-order is again in crisis. For a long time, the revolutionary movement in the West—against the Revisionists, who simply avoided the question—continued to use the Bolshevik—3rd International model of revolution. A model of revolutionary insurrection that could only occur in the context of an inter-imperialist war, in which the masses have to be armed.

desire to prefigure the proletarian state instead of first destroying the bourgeois state.

Against this the experience of the Chinese revolution and the international hegemony of the Chinese Communist Party, and then the importance of the Vietnamese struggle (linked to ideas on the struggle of the partisans) seemed to offer a much better model than any of the others. The model of insurrection was replaced by the model of a long and protracted peoples war. And this related much more to the character of the capitalist crisis, which no longer takes its form in a vertical and brutal collapse, but is rather something that is drawn out and controlled.

But in the Chinese revolution — which came out of the defeat of the workers insurrection in the cities and by the integration of the communists in the countryside— the existence of the war, and with it the mobility of the borders, and the impossibility of the different imperialist powers to establish their control, was decisive. (as it was in the war of the partisans.) In the prolonged revolutionary war in China the class struggle became a territorial struggle, more or less respecting the norms of regular warfare; and always founded on the existence of

some territory in the hands of the enemy and some territory, even if flexible in the hands of the people — the red bases and liberated zones.

So again, given these conditions, the development from a struggle of partisans to the creation of a peoples army, is totally unrealistic in the western capitalist countries. In theory the struggle could end up in a sort of Vietnam, though still with important differences, but it cannot give us a starting point for the development of the politico-military organisation of the proletariat.

In Italy there exists a political current which poses the politico-military problem in a bankrupt way, by combining the partisan tradition, the model of the prolonged peoples war and the experience of guerilla war. It's not by chance that one finds in certain political positions that the element of "national liberation" was used to support a militarist territorial conception of revolution in South Tyrol, Sardinia etc.

But if this was the response influenced by the communist and partisan tradition, the generation that grew up in the 60s was influenced by a new experience: the guerilla. "No to war, Yes to the guerilla" "non a la guerra, si a la guerriglia" was what we chanted on the demos in '67 and '68 and we were looking much more to Cuba and Latin America than to Vietnam.

The long experience of the guerilla in Latin America which became a general strategy after the Cuban victory and was personified in the figure of Che, seemed to match up in a new and satisfying way to the so far unresolved problem of revolutionary strategy at that time. The strong anti-imperialist tension, the explosion of the student struggle the squalid image of revisionist bureaucracy, the embryonic expression of the new autonomy of the working class: all these were building up an impetuosity and impatience, a voluntaristic will for revolution. And this did at least resurrect that question and the problem of the seizure of power.

At that time the slogan "The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution" was not just a play on words, but a very healthy reaction to the long revisionist hibernation of revolutionary consciousness.

In fact in Latin America, the guerilla movement, while heroic and full of lessons to enrich the movement and the comrades in it, was destined to defeat. We cannot belittle its importance, and without wishing to schematise what came out of the guerilla strategy, we can underline the decisive element in it. *The unilateral way in which the problem of the anti-imperialist and socialist revolution was reduced to the problem of the seizure of power.* And we find here in the final analysis, the roots of a voluntarism and militarism. The problem of revolution — and so of revolutionary organisation — is always a problem of the role of the proletariat in the revolution (the emancipation of the proletariat is the work of the proletariat itself); the problem of strategy (that is, the communist content of the revolution); and the problem of force and the seizure of power. It's a typical avant-gardist deviation to underestimate *the mass line and the importance of strategic clarity.*

In Europe, the guerilla line has been embodied in marginal, caricatured ways. In Germany the Red Army Fraction, in Italy the Red Brigades. The fundamental idea of these groups is that there is an exemplary value in armed actions that serves as a motor in the progressive arming of the masses. But everywhere this has shown itself as useless and a total misunderstanding. A perversion of the relationship between mass action and vanguard action, and between legal and illegal struggle. Paradoxically, in its so-called "anticipation" of the revolutionary process this position lapses into a new sort of gradualism. Its hypothesis—whether explicit or not — is that the arming of the proletariat (the proletariat, not its conscious vanguards organised in the party) can only happen in a gradual and progressive way.

This is pure idealism; the arming of the proletariat is a task that the proletariat only poses itself when the crisis of the bourgeoisie and the general confrontation develops to the point which makes such a step necessary. The task of a revolutionary leadership is

to prepare itself among the masses, politically and organisationally, to confront this process, this jump in the class struggle, in the best and most efficient way.

So where lies the specificity and the general significance of the Chilean revolutionary experience? *In the fact that for the first time since the war the proletariat in the west has been able to use the new conditions of the imperialist and capitalist crisis, its prolonged nature, in order to unroll a process of mass initiative self-organisation and mass arming.*

The UP government which was an expression of the fact that "if the proletariat is not capable of governing Chile, neither is the bourgeoisie", allowed the development of this revolutionary process and at the same time marked its final and tragic limit.



FOOTNOTES

1. ie the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Up until the Chilean events the PCI had a perspective of a broad left govt., with the Socialists and the left-wing of the Christian Democracy. After Chile it is no longer looking to split the CD but to compromise with the whole of that party to form a govt of what it now calls the "HISTORIC COMPROMISE".

2. This is explained later in the text.

3. The left-wing of the Socialist Party of Chile, led by the party General-Secretary, Carlos Altamirano. A tendency that was often capable of raising the tasks of the situation, but always tied to the UP in terms of carrying them out. So were never able to give any sustained lead to the mass struggle. This is a form of ultra-leftism because it never backs up its plans with the forces to carry them out. This usually leads to a demoralisation of the working-class. In this country we would see the Militant group in this way. Talking about revolution but always delegating that revolution to the reformist leaders of the Labour party.

4. The attempted coup of the Tank Regiment on June 29th 1973.

(Footnotes inserted by BF).

EL PUEBLO UNIDO
JAMÁS SERÁ VENCIDO

A people united will never be
defeated.

NOTES ON THE MIR



(movement of the revolutionary left)

The development of the M.I.R.*

The history of the MIR from 1970 onwards has to be seen as totally connected with the history and development of Popular Power. During these years of increasing proletarian militancy, the MIR was the revolutionary organization best able to sense at what stage of militancy the proletariat vanguards were at and this always determined what forms of organization the MIR developed, what initiatives it took and what demands it agitated for. Of course, during the three years of the UP government, many individuals form different organizations were radicalized and in the institutions of Popular Power, militants of the SP, MAPU, Christian Left, MIR and some CP and CD fought together and this has continued into the resistance which is open to militants of all organizations.

The MIR before the UP government

The MIR was formed in 1965 by militants from different left

*This section is obviously incomplete. Hopefully, the MIR will soon publish its own documents that will clarify what we have written. They will also serve as an answer to the criticisms made in this country by *both* the reformist and the left groups which claim that the MIR was just an 'ultra-left' guerilla group. Many left groups are just using Chile as another occasion where 'the revolution failed because there was no revolutionary party'.

groups and militants who had not previously been part of any organization. Like many other Latin American revolutionary organizations, MIR militants were inspired by the Cuban Revolution. In its early political declarations (1965-68); the MIR said that the revolution would be made by a guerrilla war that would be political ('conquering not territory, but the majority of the people'); from a strategic point of view it would be rural since this would 'assure the stability and continuity of the armed struggle, but from a tactical point of view it would also have to mobilize them by the anti-capitalist nature of our actions'. 'We will also use other forms of struggle; illegal or legal; the creation of militia work within the armed forces, the general strike, etc.'**

At this time, most of the MIR's activity was centred around Concepcion, especially around the University. In September 1967, the building of the U.S. Information Centre is sacked and street fighting goes on through the night. An armed policeman is taken hostage by the students who retire to the University and only released three days later. Those events get national coverages and militants throughout the country begin to identify themselves with the MIR. At that time the organization undertook a period of study and analysis with the aim of finding out which were the revolutionary vanguards amongst

**The quotes in this section are from 'A revolution amongst us can lead to a revolution in Chile', MIR internal document May '69 and 'A Declaration of our Programme and Principles', August '65.

the Chilean proletariat. Through this work MIR militants came to see the central importance for the land problem and the housing problem in the struggle for liberation of the Chilean people. This research is behind the decisions taken at the 3rd Congress of the Movement in December '67 where it is decided to build a military infrastructure and, throughout '68, to place militants inside the sectors of the proletariat in struggle. Hundreds of militants are sent to work amongst the peasants (especially the Mapuche Indians), political education forums are set up with miners and textile workers, and many militants are sent to work in shanty-towns, an area totally neglected by the other left parties. So at this time, MIR militants are centrally involved in the wave of struggles that sweep through the country as the people are no longer controlled by the rhetoric of the Christian-Democrat government.

At the same time, the MIR was considering armed actions that would supplement their overground activities. In June '69, they kidnap a right-wing journalist Osses who worked in close contact with the police and specialized as scandal-mongering exposure stories. Osses is set free in the street with no clothes on. Aided by the Communists who accuse the MIR of 'a provocation', the right-wing press is able to use the incident to discredit the MIR. The way the Osses' affair backfired, forced the MIR militants to very seriously consider the possible repercussions of their underground actions; especially as the organization has a growing following amongst the Mapuche south, the textile workers and coal-miners around Concepcion, in some industries and shanty-towns of Santiago and in the army amongst privates and non-commissioned officers.

Throughout late '69-early '70, the MIR is bringing together its armed actions (like expropriations) and its political actions. The Bank of Work (!) is robbed of £20,000 and the money is handed over the shanty-towns. The peasant movement is supported by land occupations and land of the universities is occupied. Other groups are involved in armed actions including the MR2, a group which split from the MIR on the grounds that the MIR was neglecting the armed struggle and had too wide a conception of the proletariat.

With the growing violence in the clashes between squatters and peasants and the forces of 'law and order', the MIR was forced to pay more attention to assisting the formulation of popular militias and the defence of the shanty-towns. The links between the MIR and the militant shanty-towns were further strengthened when men like Victor Toro, a market porter who was a leader of the '26 January' shanty-town joined the MIR. In a speech at the first congress of shanty-town dwellers held in Santiago in March '70, Toro said: 'The homeless, tired of waiting for years for the minimum that a family needs — a place to live — have been forced to occupy lands. These occupations have had to, by the nature of things, go beyond the law, take on an illegal character and hit where the bosses rule is most sensitive — property rights. These forms of action, that go against the law demand a higher level of organization It will be the militias that, side by side with other revolutionary organizations, will take power and set up a government; this will not be the result of a progressive evolution but will happen the day when a revolutionary and popular army will destroy the military apparatus and domination of the bosses; the bourgeois state.'

He then thanked the MIR for having helped in all aspects of the organization of the shanty-town — the building of it, supply with food (with money from the Bank of Work job), and help in publishing the newspaper — and by the use of its armed section to have prevented the police from entering a second time. In fact, a short time before Toro had been taken, off by the police and tortured by the political police (Investigaciones).

At the end of this congress of squatters (attacked by the

CUTO, the Movement of Revolutionary Shanty-town Dwellers (the MPR) is set up. This includes all the shanty-towns of Santiago and takes the initiative of setting up the shanty-towns 'Union', 'Ranquil' and others. In the same way, the MIR is instrumental in the setting up of the Movement of Revolutionary Workers (the FTR), the Movement of Revolutionary Students (the FER), and the Movement of Revolutionary Peasants (MCR); these are all organizations open to militants of all political parties and those of no party who want to join the struggle in a specific sector around specific revolutionary demands that the Movements themselves formulate They are the way through which someone can join the MIR which has no public offices or addresses. It publishes the weekly paper 'El Rebelde' (the Rebel) which has a national circulation of 50,000 and which is used by the FTR, MPR, FER, MCR to publish news of their struggles, programmes, etc.

In June 1970, although its leaders have not been caught and its clandestine infrastructure was perfectly operational, the MIR brings a halt to its armed attacks and bank expropriations. It does this, recognizing that 'the growth of the popular mobilization is the central political fact of this period'. The organization decides on a two-fold strategy: 1) to give revolutionary momentum to this popular mobilization; 2) to carry out direct actions linked to this mobilization. At the same time the organization is forced to develop a strategy for the electoral period; given the widespread proletarian support for Allende. In this period, given the MIR goes to every public meeting and march of the UP. Although rarely allowed to speak, it vies its critical support to the UP. When elected, Allende chooses MIR militants as his personal body-guards.

In the period between Allende's election and his taking office (Sep.-Nov. '70); there is a feeling in the country that the forces of reaction are 'up to something'. On the 22 October, the 'legalist' general in command of the armed forces, Schneider, is murdered; immediately the right-wing press and the telly blame the MIR and the UP in an attempt to create a pretext for their long-planned coup. But the MIR's intelligence service had full knowledge of the assassination and they were able to publish full details in a evening-paper of the day before giving all the names of the right-wing military and politicians involved. The assassination cannot be pinned on the left and the people's anger forces the Senate to ratify Allende's election on the 24th October (Schneider dies in hospital on the 25th).

1970-73

During this period, the MIR's strategy is dominated by its assessment of the UP government, which changes in the government's class position. Because large sectors of the proletariat were identified with the programme of the UP, the MIR's strategy was to encourage the people to implement the pro-



gramme themselves. And this was done by the peasants (occupation of farms over 40 hectares), squatters (occupation of urban land not being used) and workers (taking over of factories not being used in the public interest). And in the first cases, the UP government was ready to make legal acceptance of these acts after they had been done. But time went on, it became clear that the bourgeoisie was not prepared to accept the implementation of the UP programme on a mass scale; it would allow it a few token nationalizations as 'window-dressing' but that was all. In this situation, the UP caved in (at Lo Curro) and even agreed to hand back some of the factories that had been nationalized and the land that had been occupied. At this point, the MIR made clear that it no longer could support the UP government; (from 'An answer to criticism of the CP.' *El Rebelde*, February '73). 'We must not mystify the present nature of the UP government, different from that of '70-'72. To-day it is a government, where is dominant an alliance small-bourgeois reformism and some parts of workers' reformism, with high ranking officers of the armed forces. The working-class parties are no longer at the centre of the government. The Allende-armed forces alliance dominates, with the backing of the CP leaders. The views of the generals carry more and more weight in the decision-making process of the government. And none of the generals and high-ranking officers incorporated in the cabinet have pledged themselves to carry out the UP programme and even less to 'open the door to socialism'.

You have only to open your eyes on national politics to see that the *achievements of the UP-generals cabinet precisely does not lead* to 'revolutionary changes' and 'an opening of the door to Socialism'. On the contrary, these achievements more and more come into conflict with the interests of the working-class and the masses.

(then follow a list of examples including)

1. The handing back to private owners of the electronic factories of Arica.*
2. The handing back of the construction companies, the super-markets, the giant distribution companies.
3. The reopening of the Bio-Bio radio station. Bio-Bio was a province in Southern Chile. Its radio station was used by the right-wing to stir it up during the October strike. It was closed down by the government during the strike, and then allowed to reopen.

4. The attempt by the government to turn the 15,000 JAPs into part of the state-bureaucracy.

Since the MIR could see clearly a state of conflict developing between the proletariat and the government, its strategy now wants to push for the fastest possible development of the organs of Popular Power. Throughout the country militants of the MCR, MFR, FTR and FER pushed for the setting up of industrial assemblies and area assemblies and as these assemblies were set up, the Movements dissolved themselves in them.

STRUCTURE '70-'73

Throughout this period, the MIR wanted to operate on two levels. This was because it realized that it was in the specific moment in the development of the class-struggle when it had to change from being a closed organization to being a mass party. At the same time there were still certain jobs that still had to be done by a clandestine form of organizing. So the two levels were:

1. A tightly knit core section composed solely of militants of the party. This part had a cell structure and the cells were both geographical and by function; propaganda, industrial interventions, self-defense, military operations, etc.

2. Movements like the FTR which were open to all workers and which operated around a specific factory.

You could usually *only* become a militant of the MIR by going through one of the Movements. You then had a period of up to a year when you were 'on trial' before you became a militant of the party. You were then sent to a MCR, FTR, FER, or MPR group where your role was to push revolutionary demands and initiatives; you did not know the other MIR militants; this was a security measure that has helped protect the party's infrastructure after the coup. It was your job to approach other members in the (MPR) group whom you

*A town in Northern Chile where the struggle against the handing back of the factories lasted months, with some victories. Under the Junta, the workers of Arica have been made to pay a high price for their level of revolutionary consciousness; repression, tortures, assassinations. The recent need of the Junta to import televisions is the result of some of the electronic factories being bombed and put out of action.



thought would want to be and make good MIR cadres.

The purpose of this dual structure was to make sure that the party was 1) not open to infiltration *but* 2) able to constantly reflect changes in the momentum of the proletariat; they had to have a structure flexible enough to respond to the people's initiatives. And the changes the MIR went through — from guerilla group to popular power — show clearly that it was very successful in accomplishing this aim.

The MIR saw quite clearly that the greater the popular mobilization, the less it needed to be a separate entity; in a pre-revolutionary situation, the masses take the initiatives that have previously been taken by the parties. At the same time, with the possibility of an Imperialist/National bourgeois coup always there, the party had to maintain a clandestine infrastructure that would enable it to prepare the militias that would smash a coup or, if that failed, to go underground. Obviously, the need to respond to these two different demands put the organization under a lot of pressure. In the six months before the coup, workers all over the country were demanding MIR cadres; the organization could not meet this demand.

When the coup came the MIR and the other left groups were not able to gain in the military field what they had not been able to gain in the political field. They had not become large enough to smash the control reformism had over large sectors of the working-class. And although they were growing in strength, the bourgeoisie did not wait for the time best for the revolutionary left to launch its military offensive. It was a race against time that the revolutionary left lost. On the day of the coup, many factories and shanty-towns were armed and defended themselves but the class *as a whole* had not enough arms. The main blame for this lies with the UP (parties especially the CP) who could not see the coup coming even when it stared them in the face.

The MIR's conception of the proletariat

We have already said how the MIR had a much wider conception of the components of the revolutionary movement than the other left parties. This was because the MIR did not have a tradition of imposing stereo-types on the class struggle; it was able to see in an unprejudiced way which sectors of the proletariat were militant. But it also has to allow its choice of where to intervene to be affected by where it was likely to be most successful, and after '69, it continued to stress amongst the unemployed and the more 'marginal' elements of the proletariat because it saw these as important in themselves, but also in a way into the industrial working-class. And in '73, it was the most radicalized as it came face to face with the contradictions of the UP policy (including the handing back of factories). And it is important to remember that those factories in which the revolutionary left were in control were



Comrade Von Shouwen — a MIR leader tortured by the junta.

these included factories of all sizes.

The MIR (through the FTR) only began to grow rapidly amongst the industrial working-class as the reformist ideology that controlled this section of the proletariat was smashed and this happened when the government started to hand back to the bosses, the factories the workers had taken over. At this point the growth of the FTR was enormous and the MIR came back to the role of the industrial working-class in the revolutionary movement. In a paper that was both an internal document and a position paper of the FTR, December '71, the MIR wrote: 'The manufacturing or industrial proletariat and the mining proletariat are more concentrated and compact than the proletariat of the tertiary sector (service workers, transport, etc.). This increases their capacity for organization and mobilization, tends to make them into the key sector of the working-class, its most advanced fraction. The proletariat of the tertiary sector, on the contrary, although it suffers more from capitalist exploitation because of the forms of production and capital that it is linked to, is very dispersed, very atomized which makes difficult its organization and possibilities of mobilization and mass action! The document then goes on to distinguish the proletariat by size of unit of production, then by type of ownership, then by level of technology. In documents written since the coup, the MIR has made it clear that it sees what happened in Sep. '73 as the defeat of reformism. It has also made clear that it considers the first task of the resistance the creation of the People's Revolutionary Army; we quote from this document on page 37.



Glossary

The Left

UP	Unidad Popular, the Popular Unity Government of Allende, composed of the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, MAPU, the Radical Party, PSD (the Social Democratic Party) and API (Independent Popular Action)—these last three were all tiny.	Comando Comunal	Area Assemblies or Territorial Commands. (A fairly loose translation). They began as a defensive measure against the 'Bosses Offensive' in October 1972, but were in fact developing together like Soviets or revolutionary communes.
PS or SP	Socialist Party, of which Allende was a member	MCR MPR	Movement of Revolutionary Peasants Movement of Revolutionary Shanty Town Dwellers
CPC	Chilean Communist Party, the largest party in the UP, committed to legalism and 'democracy'	FTR FER	Movement of Revolutionary Workers Movement of Revolutionary Students. All these broad-based groups were set up and influenced by MIR, although they were open to all militants: you did not have to join MIR to organise in a Front.
MAPU	Movement of United Proletarian Action. Broke with Christian Democracy when it saw through the superficial reforms of Frei's Government. Left wing force within UP. Split at beginning of 1973 produced MAPU (revolutionary) and MAPU OC (a right wing break off with leanings towards the CP)	Social Sector JAP	ie, all state-run firms Committee for the Control of Distribution and Prices. Originally set up by UP in 1972 when small and medium tradesmen and shopkeepers were invited to run them. Many JAPs, however, were quickly taken under the control of the Cordones and the Comandos.
MIR	Movement of the Revolutionary Left. Revolutionary party outside the UP Government		

The Right

CD	Christian Democratic Party. Main bourgeois parliamentary party in the Chilean Congress. Right wing party of the middle classes with some working class support. A 'progressive' party set up by Yankee capitalism, similar to the CD in West Germany and Italy.	People	
NP	National Party. Party of the monopolies, landowners, of the traditional Chilean oligarchy. The Party of Imperialism.	Allende	Elected President and head of the UP Government in September 1970. Member of Socialist Party
Patria y Libertad	Fatherland and Liberty. Main fascist party	Altamirano Corvalán Frei Pratz	Leader of the SP Leader of the CP Head of CD Head of Armed Forces and made a Minister in UP Government after October 1972. 'Loyal' to Allende
		Pinochet	Chief Gorilla of the coup (a term which became more and more common as the right reorganised itself). At one stage, a member of Allende's Government, now front man for the Gorilla dictatorship. Will not survive the coming revolution.

Working Class Organisations

CUT	Central Unico de Trabajadores, Chilean TUC. The only trade union federation in Chile. A very strong movement with a very long history of violent struggle against the imperialist bosses, especially in the mines and the railways, so tended to be more left wing than the TUC. Tended as well to be dominated by the CP	Other Terms	
Cordones Industriales	Industrial Assemblies. Called Cordones (belts) because they tend to stretch out the length of roads in main towns in Chile	Población Poblador Campamento	A working class district, made up of both houses and shacks A person who lives in a poblacion A shanty town in which the people are organised, formed by legal or illegal land occupations, or squatted by groups of homeless people, often organised as Homeless Committees. (NB In the text there is some inconsistency in the use of these terms.)

We got our information from the following sources —

- 1 Comrades who have come from Chile
- 2 The daily newspaper of Lotta Continua, which supports the MIR and is using what has happened in Chile to discuss the needs of the Italian revolutionary movement. Lotta Continua has conducted an immensely successful national campaign to raise money for arms for the MIR.
- 3 Politique Hebdo, a French left weekly which has carried statements from the executives of all the left parties as well as communiques of the Chilean resistance. The paper supports the Chile committees which exist all over France, which have a practice which tries to integrate support for Chile into a more general revolutionary practice.
- 4 COFLA, a US research group which has produced 'Chile—Unmasking Development', an excellent folder available from Rising Free.
- 5 NACLA, another US group, produce a newsletter which contains important information on the imperialist economic offensive against UP Chile.
- 6 Chile Lucha and Chile Monitor are available from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, and from Rising Free.

Books/Addresses

MIR 1970—73
(collected writings) Politique Hebdo, Paris, 1974

MAPU 1970—73
(collected writings) Politique Hebdo, Paris, 1974

L'Experience Chilienne
Alain Labrousse: Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1972

Chili: L'Affrontement de classes, 1970—73
Nouvelles Presses Parisiennes, 1973

New Chile (1973 edition)
NACLA, New York, 1972

Chile Est Proche
(Maspero, Paris, '74)

Chile Solidarity Campaign
129 Seven Sisters Road
London N 7
tel: 01—272 4299

*These books need translating.
Anyone interested please
contact Big Flame.*

Rising Free
197 Kings Cross Road
London W C 1
tel: 01—837 0182

Thanks to Sue Newsom Smith for translations.

Thanks to Race Today for typesetting. Race Today, 74
Shakespeare Rd., London SE24.

CORRECTIONS

page 5; in the quote from Glauser, the 7% buy more than 50% not 5%. It is not our usual practice to make the rich poor!

page 11; left-hand col- the introduction is inadequate; the article says more. right-hand col (near top) the unreadable word is homeless

page 15; left col 'raised to the ground,' is not as mad as it looks

page 15; left col- 'razed to the ground' not raised in no way. Right col- the picture has eliminated some of the text; what it said (more or less) was that as the people were forced to form their own organizations they did so and that direct democracy was a feature of these organizations (the assemblies).

page 16; left col, beginning- 'working to the commune' should be something like 'finding a job locally' OK?

page 18; in the graphic- 'Urgent Task 1) is 'active support' not 'attack support'.

page 30; Well, what is populism? Is this a form of 'participation' to not put it in? Populism; Form of government that confuses the proletariat into thinking that its interests are the interests of the nation. This leads to the incorporation of unions into the machinery of government, a 'national plan' and other anti working-class measures. Populist regimes are anti imperialist in rhetoric and claims to support 'national capital', which is a non-existent thing- all capital is international.

page 32; left col, near top 'that this would happen' should go. Further down, it should be £745 a ton not 745%. Right col; it was the 3rd anniversary not the 34th.

page 39; in the graphic- the quote that begins '.....the question is.....' comes from who knows where and should be eliminated as should have been 'momjos'.

page 49; right col top- 'CUT' not 'CUTO'; half-way down 'it gives' not 'it vies'. Last para- the sense of the sentence that begins 'During this.....' is that the strategy of the MIR towards the UP had to take into account the relationship the working-class saw itself in with the UP. As long as large sections of the working-class identified with the programme of the UP, the MIR saw itself as forced to give the UP critical support.

page 51; left col, near bottom- 'And in 73, it was' the 'it' is the industrial working-class which was radicalized as.....

Last line should read 'revolutionary left were in control included factories.....'

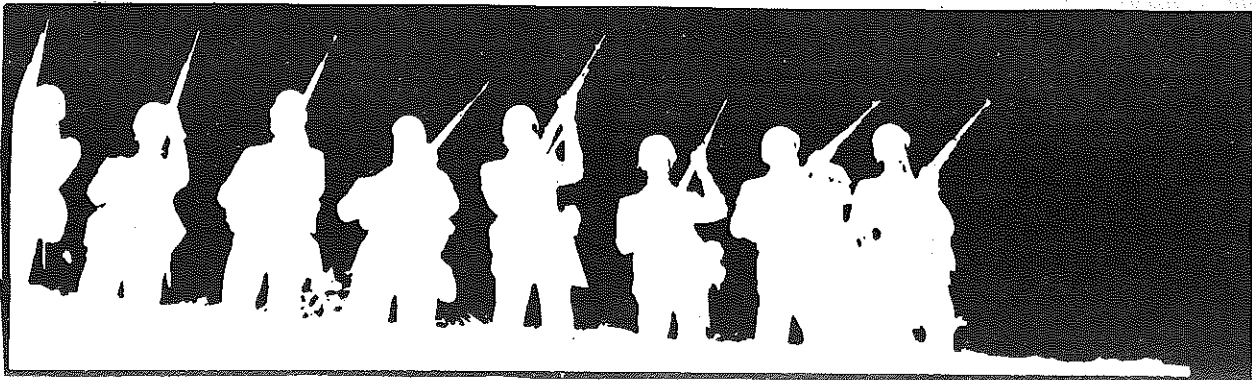
The current address for Merseyside BF is 66 Logan Towers, Liverpool 5 051.207.5400

If you want copies of this or any other BF publication, please deal through Birmingham BF 632 Bristol Rd Selly Oak

BIG FLAME GROUPS

East London
79c Anerley Road, London SE 20/ tel:01-659 3895
West London
7 Norland Gardens, London W 11/tel:01-603 3275
Manchester
43 Aspinall Street/tel:061-224 8292
Merseyside
22 Woburn Hill, Liverpool 13/tel:051-220 5223
Birmingham
632 Bristol Road, Selly Oak

Brixton Group at 20 Villa Rd., SW9.



LA SECUNDA INDEPENDENCIA

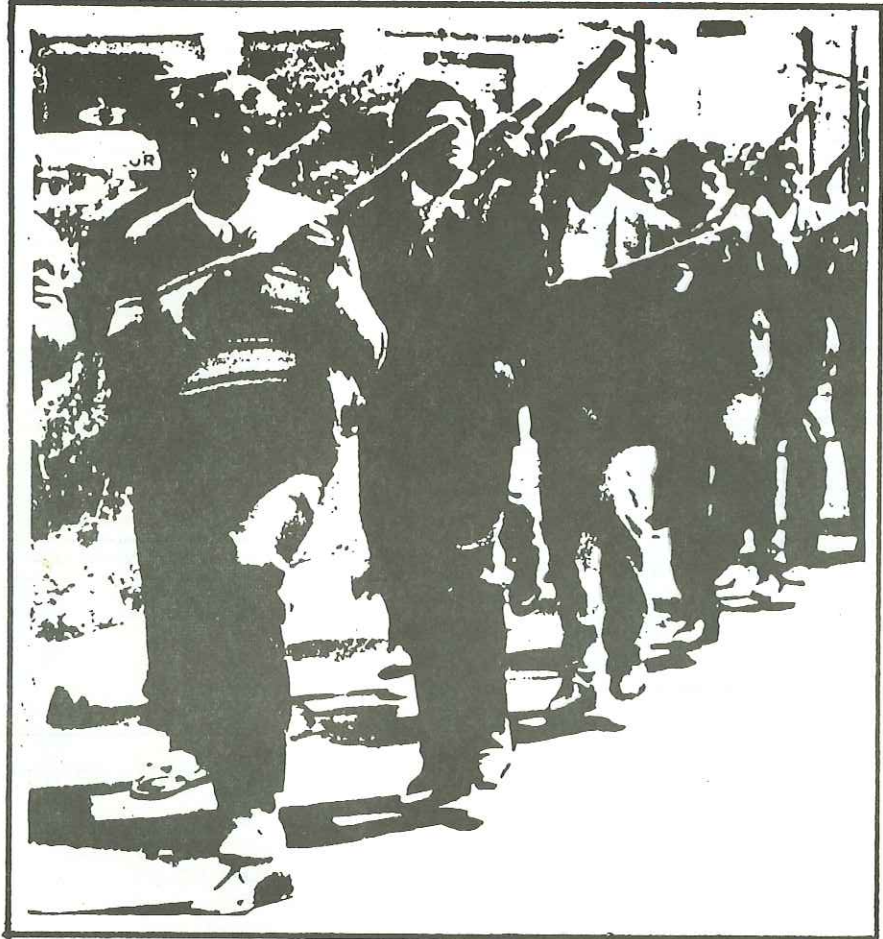
Yo que soy americano
no importa de que pais
quiero que mi continente
viva algun dia Feliz

Que los paises hermanos
de Centro America y Sur
borren las sombras del Norte
a ramalazos de luz.

SECOND INDEPENDENCE

I who am an american
it doesn't matter from which country
want my continent
to live some happy days

That all the brother countries
of Central and South America
cancel the shadow of the North
with rays of light



Si hay que callar, NO CALLEMOS
pongamonos a cantar
y si hay que pelear, PELIEMOS
si es el modo de TRIUNFAR

Por toda America soplan
vientos que no han de parar
hasta que entierren las sombras
no hay orden de descansar.

Desde una punta a la otra
del continente, que bien!
el viento sopla sin pausas
y el hombre sigue el vaiven.

And if we must be silent, we will not be silent
let us sing
and if we must fight, let us fight
if this be the way to triumph

And until all of the Americas blow
a wind that has no waning
and all the shadows are overcome
there shall be no rest.

From one end of the continent to
the other, then
let the wind blow without ripose
and let man follow in its wake.

Printed by Suburban Press: 433, London Rd., Croydon
Surrey. 01-684 3955.