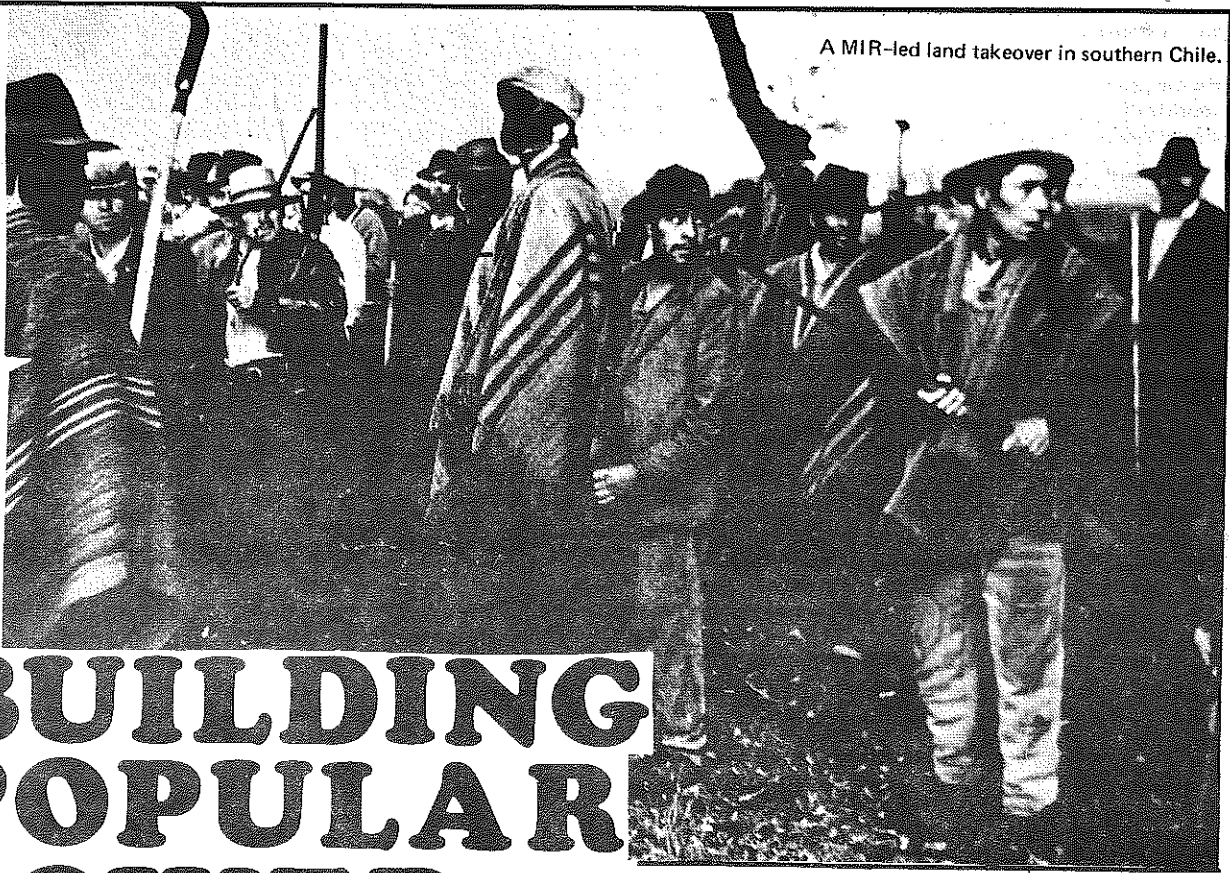


A MIR-led land takeover in southern Chile.



BUILDING POPULAR POWER

The working people of Chile have been fighting a bitter class war for many years, but the fight to 'Build popular power' which was heard more and more among the masses in Chile from Oct '72, can be traced back to the Frei (Christian Democrat) Government especially since 1968. The section on 'The three years' discusses Frei's policies in detail, here we want to look at the origins of the four main movements which were to develop most strongly the ideas for Popular power: the peasant movement, the workers movement, the urban movement and the student movement.

The peasant movement

The Frei government had tried to introduce agrarian reforms to win the peasants over to its policies. It tried to divide the peasants and turn some of them into a rural petit bourgeoisie, while doing nothing for the agricultural workers. This did ensure a certain following for the government, but because Frei was unable to carry out the bulk of the reforms, it also provoked spontaneous land seizures where the peasants (including the Mapuche Indians) started their 'Corrida di cerco' where they would move the boundaries of their land at night and take over the land that Frei had 'promised'. The peasants had also had their own union, the Ranquil union which was dominated by the CP and organised on the lines of a trade union.

The workers movement had a long tradition of struggle and was organised through the C.U.T. It represented all the workers in large industries, the majority of those in medium sized factories and a minority of those in small factories. The CP and the SP were both dominant in the CUT as was the popular base of the CD. Frei had in fact failed to divide the C.U.T. and it remained dominated by the left.

The urban movement had appeared in 1965. Frei had promoted it in order to penetrate the popular base of the workers parties. It was, in fact, an attempt to organise all strata of workers on the basis of where they lived. It was an attempt to set up a stable electoral following for the CD through the agency of the neighbourhood 'junta', and secondly to set up organisations of working class housewives through 'mother's centres' to be used as a basis of propaganda. The movement was supposed to channel the demands of the organised home 'ss committees, so that the Ministry of Housing could assign plots of land for the building of planned shanty towns', awaiting the construction of proper homes. In fact, many homeless committees, with the support of political elements often decide to occupy land by force with all the risk of repression that that involved. In fact, the election periods were good for this type of occupation since the government could not get involved in violent repression at such times. During the presidential campaign of 1970 the encampments set up by the 'pobladores' (squatters) were as numerous as the shanty towns planned by the Frei government, while the new names reflected a new political consciousness: 'Campamentos Che Guevara'; 'Campamentos New Havana'; 'Casa O Muerte' (Houses or death); 'Campamentos Lenin', 'Rigoberto Zamora' (a militant of the MIR, shot in Bolivia). As support for the CD declined, new forms of organisation were able to emerge. In the most militant encampments (MIR and sometimes SP) the beginnings of people's militias sprang up with forms of collective discipline creating a skeletal form of peoples justice. The organisational structure of the 'pobladores', legalised in 1968 and founded on the model of the bourgeois parliament was to be replaced by either a structure where a party cell was in control of the whole (C.P.) or else forms of mass organisation (MCR) The urban movement was by far the most militant expression of popular power in 1969 and 1970.

The student movement, dominated in the early '60s by the CD, began making links with the peasant movement during

spells of voluntary work in the holiday periods. There was also support for the urban movement, and the first school cells were formed before 1970. There were also some spectacular demonstrations, and many students were soon to leave the colleges and universities and join the revolutionary groups of the MIR and the MAPU and others.

The absence of a women's movement is notorious. The conservative ideology was still predominant in the 'mothers organisations' manipulated by the CD in the lower sectors. And the left failed to take any serious initiative on this front.

Outside of the election periods, the CD had been fiercely repressive. On March 11 1966, 8 miners were shot dead fleeing from CS gas outside the Chuquicamata mine, the man in charge of the army was Colonel Pinochet, while on May 8th 1968, 8 people were killed in the 'massacre of Puerto Mott' where 70 families had occupied a plot of land with the aim of setting up a shanty town.

In 1970, Allende attempted to channel all this unrest into 'Assemblies for Popular Unity' which were to protect proletarians against an Imperialist coup during the election period. They were dominated by the CP who was quick to disband them once Allende was elected, especially since some militants were talking about turning them into permanent popular assemblies. There was no room for popular assemblies inside the CP scheme of things. The CP saw itself as putting forward a programme for an alliance between the middle classes and the proletariat. So the political line of the CP wanted to mobilise the masses only *when necessary* to back up government initiatives and structural changes.

The 'battle for production'

The UP leadership developed a political line to comply with the interests of the peasants and of the organised proletariat. There was an intensification of the agrarian reforms which meant that the continuing occupations of the 'fundos' (big landed estates) continued, while the nationalisation of the first industries — by the ruse of intervention* — relied on the political action of the organised proletariat.

The slogan 'the battle for production' was launched for the other sections of the people, in line with the U.P. programme. In fact the reforms provided for the need for maximum production to allow the income level of the middle class and the popular sectors to be maintained. In terms of mass mobilisa-



*'Intervention' was a process whereby the Government could nationalise a company which wasn't working to full capacity. The workers 'encouraged' this process by striking to halt production. Of course, the government could refuse to send an 'interventor' and often did. At Lo Curro (see section on The Three Years) the government agreed to hand back to the private sector many 'intervened' factories. In most cases this was successfully resisted by the workers.



Classroom in Nueva Habana, a poblacion outside Santiago.

tion, that meant the creation of 'vigilance committees' for production in the small and medium industries, and the 'voluntary work schemes'.

So this programme of 'production' and 'voluntary work', whose inspiration was the USSR and Cuba was taking place in a country which was still largely owned by the bourgeoisie, and not surprisingly, the proletariat was not keen to do voluntary work for the capitalist class. It is also true that the revolutionaries amongst the people opposed 'voluntary work' because it deprived their fellow workers of a job.

A 'New Havana' shanty-town dweller speaks: 'Our problem here is to use in the construction of the shanty town the workers who live here. Some squatters have suggested that we incorporate voluntary work to reduce our costs; but that created a problem. To accept the voluntary work on Saturdays and Sundays of 40 or 50 comrades meant taking away the jobs of 2 or 3 unemployed squatters.'

DIALOGUE BETWEEN ALLENDE AND A DELEGATE FROM A PEASANT ASSEMBLY.

Allende: You peasants must increase production so that the country doesn't have to go on increasing the amount of food it imports. We must carry on a land reform that is in accordance with the law.

Delegate: Sometimes, us peasants get the impression that our seriousness is being doubted. We will go forward to the extent that we are given the technical means, and to the extent that we will organise ourselves at the grass roots throughout the country. In the province of Linares, 65% of agricultural workers are unemployed because the landowners are sabotaging production. This leads us peasants to take over the lands.

Allende: To occupy lands is to violate a right. And the workers must realise that they are part of a revolutionary process which we are carrying through with the minimum of suffering, deaths and hunger. Think about it. Suppose people behaved the same way about the 35,000 factories that could be nationalised, what would happen?

Delegate: Change, comrade president.

Housing

It was in areas like housing that the proletariat first saw very clearly that its interests were not the interests of the government. The government had promised to build 100,000 in 1971, because the Building Employers Federation was sabotaging the delivery of materials to sites and in the process of building itself it became clear that not even 40,000 homes

would be built. The people's response was to expropriate materials and set about forming building teams from amongst the unemployed of the shanty-towns and to put pressure on the government to nationalize the construction industry.

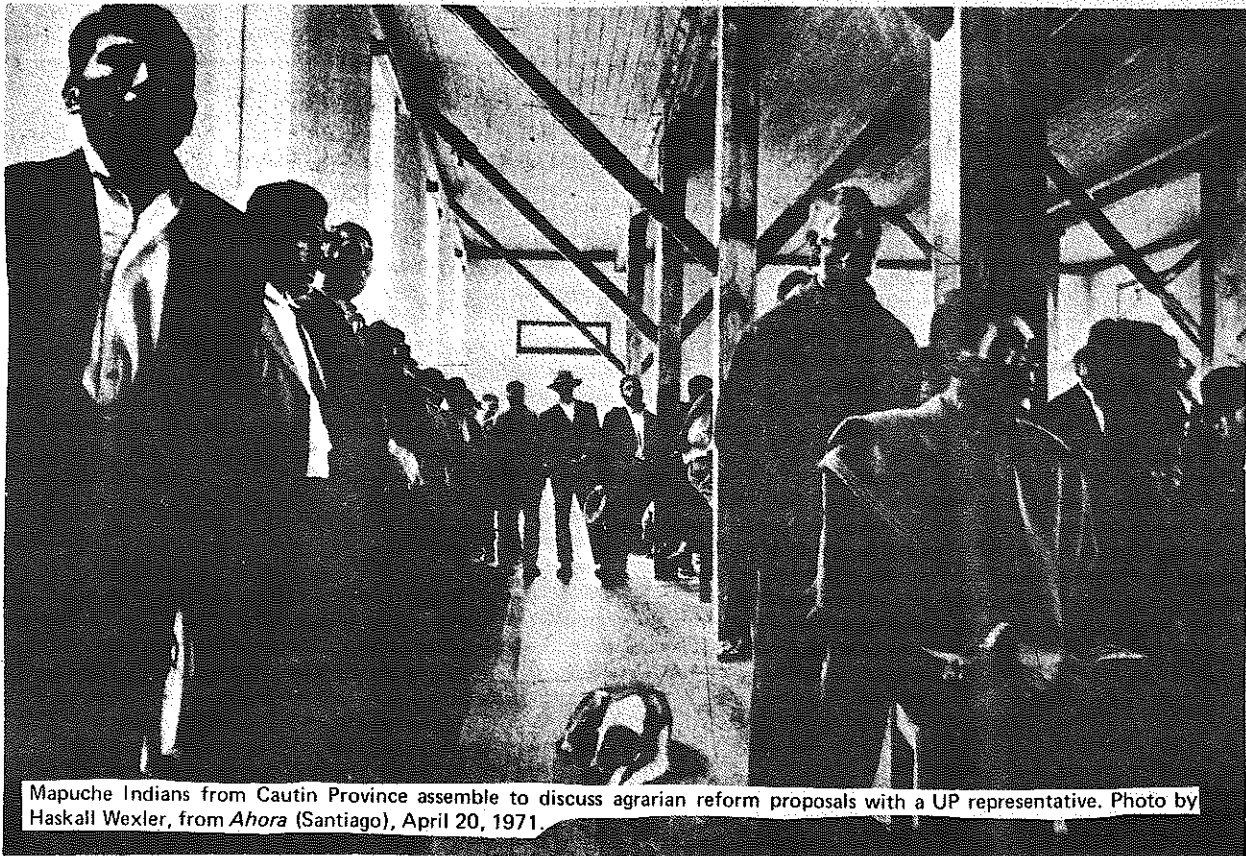
A 'New Havana' militant: 'We created new methods of work: workers' brigades to replace the traditional groups with their foreman. We got rid of foremen because there is no room for them in our socialized way of working. On our sites, there is only one class; workers. Our aim now is to fight for the construction industry to be taken into the *social sector*.*

But the government refused to attack the Building Employers' Federation (a CD stronghold) and remained passive whilst the press blamed the government for the shortage of houses. And in many cases, where the shanty-town inhabitants started their own building programme, the police were sent in to 'make them see reason'. In some shanty towns like 'New Havana' where the MIR was strong, the police could not enter and the government agreed to provide supplies for the construction of hundreds of houses.

to the decisions of the base (organized by the Socialist and MIR militants) placed the organization of the J.A.P.s in question. Increasingly they had to adopt a *mass line* which meant strict control over tradesmen, thorough investigation of consumer needs, vigilant surveillance of prices, boycott of speculators, democratic participation and organization at district level of all the J.A.P.s. The active opposition of the tradesmen associations and the local C.D. head-quarters also radicalized the J.A.P.s The situation developed in fact which required close co-ordination between the workers' movement in the private and public sectors, the public administration, the urban movement and the peasant movement. The only way to block the black market other than by impotent and bureaucratic measures was by the creation of a powerful and co-ordinated mass movement.

The Popular Assembly of Concepcion

The first attempt to give this mass movement an organizational



Mapuche Indians from Cautin Province assemble to discuss agrarian reform proposals with a UP representative. Photo by Haskall Wexler, from *Ahora* (Santiago), April 20, 1971.

The J.A.P.S.

At this point (late '71-early '72), shortages of many essential items (including food) began. The government refused to implement rationing and instead set up J.A.P.s (committees for the control of distribution and prices). The U.P. government thought that these would provide a link between the state distribution enterprises and small tradesmen and enable the government to win the support of that sector of the 'middle-strata'. Small and middle tradesmen/shop-keepers were invited to run the J.A.P.s and used their positions to increase their speculation and black-markets activities. Yet the reaction of the masses and the obvious value of direct distribution, eliminating tradesmen in practice or forcing them to submit

form was the Popular Assembly of Concepcion in July '72. The idea was to bring together in an assembly delegates from the different struggles of the proletariat; industrial workers, peasants, students, squatters from the shanty-towns. In this assembly, they would co-ordinate their activities and join forces to put pressure on the government. At first the Popular Assembly had the support of the SP, CP, MIR, Christian Left and MAPU but as soon as Allende attacked it, and reminded the people that the UP programme would be carried out in 'respectful legality', the CP leadership denounced the Assembly and ordered its Concepcion branch to withdraw support. This act withdrew a lot of popular support from the assembly and it soon faded away. But the experiment was important in establishing the idea of a Popular Assembly in the consciousness of the proletariat which together with the 'People's Programme' became identified as the way forward to break the stalemate that existed after two years of UP government.

*Social sector: the sum of the nationalised industries and those placed under government control after 'intervention'.



The growth of working class power

During 1970-72, the vanguard of the Chilean proletariat discovered that they could best satisfy their needs without the army of bosses, foremen, bureaucrats, civil servants etc. which are an essential part of capitalist society and that they could not wait for the government to get what they wanted, even if it was 'their' government. This realisation that they could control *all aspects* of proletarian life spread wider and wider.

The struggle for expropriations goes together for the struggle for workers' control of factories, the struggle for food leads to the setting of popular organs of distribution. This struggle sweeps through education and the fight for health. The proletariat comes to see that the whole of society must be re-organized to suit its needs and not just economic production. The institutions of 'popular power' are developed at that stage of the class-war, where the demands of the proletariat come into conflict with the 'legalism' of the 'Chilean road to socialism'.

This need to spread the struggle to all sectors of the class was felt by the industrial working class. The Industrial Assembly of the Cerrillos district (Santiago west) was set up in July '72; it brought together delegates from all the local factories; it immediately published a list of demands and set about convening an Assembly of the area which would include all people in struggle; workers, housewives, peasants, students; this was the first Area Assembly (Commando comunales).

At this point, the future of the Area Assemblies and the Industrial Assemblies was in the balance. They represented the way forward for large sectors of the proletariat; but their growth was being blocked by the government and the CP. They could only grow *in opposition* to the government, which was still able to blackmail large many people to not 'rock the boat'. However, this hold of reformism over the proletariat

crumbled during the truck-owners strike of October '72, when it became clear their *physical survival* depended on their own ability to organize self-defense and the distribution of food. Assemblies were set up throughout the country as the proletariat's answer to a two-pronged attack of the bourgeoisie;

1. the attempt to starve the people through the collapse of distribution, 2. the development in residential districts of middle-class organizations with a mass line whose function was to undermine the people's confidence in the UP government.*

The Truck Driver's Strike

What the truckers' strike did was to paralyze distribution throughout the country. The response of the industrial assemblies and the area assemblies was to requisition lorries, sell things from these lorries at cheap prices, force shops to sell goods at fixed prices, set up people's shops, take over supermarkets (the Macula whose prices were too high was taken over). At the same time as they were getting control of distribution in their areas, the assemblies were taking over factories regardless of whether they were in the 'social sector' or not. In the months after the strike, it was obvious to the ruling-class that the assemblies as organs of autonomous popular power were a direct threat. At this point *and for the last time* their strategy was an electoral one. Their idea was to divert the class-struggle into the elections and take it out of the factories and streets. In this they were in part successful, the power of the assemblies diminished and the left-wing parties concentrated on the March '73 elections, even the MIR asked its supporters to vote for the SP candidates. The UP came out of the election well, and set back the bosses but it slowed down the mass struggle in the assemblies. Now the ruling-class was able to put pressure on the government to attack the workers in the occupied factories. The Arms' Control Bill allowed the army and police to enter the assemblies and factories to search for arms and many times this

* Very little is written about "gremialism." It is a form of corporatism which the Chilean bourgeoisie used to 'go to the masses'. They set up neighbourhood advice centres, mothers' clubs, co-ops and through these organizations fermented popular discontent towards shortages of goods and supplies that they were creating by their sabotage of the economy. The importance of this community politics is understood by the

right-wing paper *El Mercurio* which writes: 'The democratic sectors must link themselves to the masses. This means large sacrifices and often a substantial change in the life-style of our representatives. We will only re-establish ourselves through grass-root activities. To penetrate the masses is essential but difficult.' !!!!

helped them kick the workers out; it also was an obstacle to the assemblies' plans to arm themselves.

April — September '73

Under this pressure, the assemblies re-organized themselves. The aim was to end up with a popular assembly in each commune with its own industrial assembly in charge of production, its own organ of distribution, its housing sector, etc. There would also be a section in charge of self-defense and the arming of a militia, and a section in charge of propaganda. This was done and in Santiago, the two largest assemblies began to publish a weekly newspaper. As this process was developing, the attempted coup of the 29th June took place. From then it was clear to the people that a violent class-confrontation was inevitable. All sectors of the proletariat formed Assemblies including workers in public administration and the waiters in the cafes in luxury districts. Every event of daily life was politicized; to be let on an 'assembly-controlled' bus you had to agree to the list of demands the driver/conductor presented to you! For the first time, the Assemblies set about arming themselves since it was becoming clear to more and more proletarians that the U.P. policy of relying on the neutrality of the armed forces was a potential disaster. It became obvious that by allowing the army to search and torture in the assemblies and factories, the government was siding with the forces of reaction. In August, the S.P. openly sided with the sub-officers in the navy who wanted the government to purge the navy of its 'pro-coup' officers. In fact these sub-officers were rounded up and tortured and imprisoned. By early September, the country was split between the forces of Popular Power (which included militants of the SP, MAPU, MIR and Christian Left) and the right-wing forces. Allende and the CP thought that civil war could be avoided by a Military-Allende government that would get the support of the CD. But this was a non-existent solution. The coup took place on Sept 11th, the day for which Allende had planned for a referendum.



In a small coastal town in the South an Area Assembly (Comando Communal) is formed. Here, the delegates elected by the peasants, fishermen, high school students, from the hospital and from the Mothers Centres elect the Committee for their Commune.

In many places, the Assemblies resisted and factories and shanty-towns were raised to the ground by the army's tanks and bombers. When it became clear that these tactics were suicidal, the Assemblies abandoned open resistance. Since then, the resistance has gone underground.

THE Assemblies as Weapons of Proletariat

On July 12th, Juan Olivares, president of an Area Assembly,

said at a meeting: 'To-day, more than ever, it is necessary to increase and spread the positions the people have conquered in these days. We have made enormous progress in the struggle for our liberation; *never before was the working-class as close to taking power as to-day*'. It is essential that we see that it was the increasing power of the Assemblies that made a coup necessary for the bourgeoisie. When the bourgeoisie lost power at parliamentary level, they were not particularly worried since they knew full well the limits of parliamentary power. They were only really threatened when the proletariat began to develop *its autonomous organs of power* that grew in strength by successfully challenging the power of the bourgeoisie.

and parliament; by making it impossible for the government to return to private ownership factories that the workers had taken over, by taking from the private distribution circuit the job of allocating food, by the proletariat policing its own districts and making it impossible for the state's police to do its job.

Two things must be remembered about their assemblies:

1. *their class composition*; the great strength of the assemblies came largely from the fact that they included members from all sectors of the proletariat. This made it impossible for the bourgeoisie to use their traditional tactic of attacking the proletariat where it is least organized and of putting one sector against another.

2. *the form of direct democracy they practiced*. During this period in Chile, there are many examples of the people learning to do without the intermediary strata that capitalist society imposes everywhere. In bourgeois society, the people are taught to doubt their own abilities and to rely on experts and leaders. Central to the revolutionary process is a people regaining confidence in itself; confidence to build its own houses, administer its own justice, develop its own culture and self-education, supervise a fair distribution of food (the 'people's basket' — canasta popular — made sure that people got their necessary food all at once). In this process, the people were less and less dependant on others to do things for them,

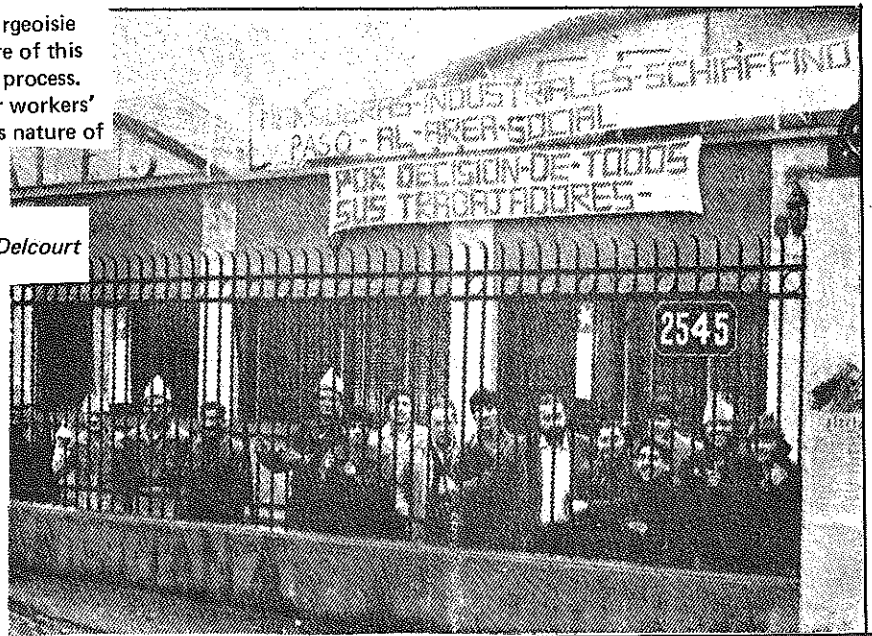
and the direct democracy of the assemblies in this process.

As they developed, The assemblies took over more and more of the traditional functions of government; in their area, they controlled parts of production, distribution, education, health, ideological propaganda, self-defense. Their 'failure' was their inability to match the military power of the bourgeois state. To understand this failure we must remember that for many years the proletariat has been under the influence

of 'legalist' leaders. As the class-war against the bourgeoisie developed, the proletariat rid itself more and more of this crippling 'legalist' ideology, but this was an uneven process. Through its practice, it came to realize the need for workers' control of production before it saw clearly the class nature of military power.

Some of the material for this section is taken from "Politique Aujourd'hui" (Spring '74) by Francois Delcourt (pseudonym for a MAPU militant).

There were more than 400 firms like this one here which after having been occupied were nationalised by the workers (often against the wishes of U.P.)



LAND OCCUPATION at Vina del Mar

I am a militant in the Socialist Party, began the old man, and I work as a scavenger. But since Frei's time, working to the commune was no longer easy for a militant. I didn't want to lick anyone's boots. So, in order to exist without working — I lived with my whole family in a rented room on the hill opposite — I went and brought fish from the fishermen and then resold them from door to door. Thanks to that activity I got to know a lot of people. We talked. Those people all lived like me, very badly, in rented houses, one room per family. And each family had lots of children whom the landlords couldn't stand — so you can understand the problems that cropped up. Not only were rents put up but very often one had to move house because the cries of the children annoyed the owners. And so, it was like that on my fish-selling rounds that I began to think about this plot of land. I saw it from the top of the hill and discovered that it was just what we needed. I knew the owner was an old Spaniard who let the land lie fallow, and so the idea of a good occupation began to take hold of me. Of course, I didn't ignore the fact that the owner would obviously like to try his hand at speculation on his property and resell it for more than double its value, by dividing it into strips or some other means. For this reason I didn't shy away from the difficulties that faced me. I began talking with everyone and said: 'I've seen a piece of land which would be just perfect for an occupation.' But I didn't reveal where it was so that the owner couldn't intervene. 'If we all put everything together, we could occupy it', I said. Little by little, I got 172 families together who had agreed to this 'takeover'. I remember one woman who lived in a loft with a gaggle of children who had been abandoned by her husband and every time I went by, she said, "Don't forget me when the occupation is due. Remember. I have no man."

When I thought the time was right, I rounded everyone up and we elected a steering committee. I was chosen as leader.

We needed a leader as everything had to be well organised democratically. We had to be prepared so that in the long run we would be able to resist. We all wanted one thing: a house, and to get that we knew that we had to follow a very strict discipline. In this way we learnt a certain degree of autonomy.

In brief, on the morning of July 3, 1972 at 5 o'clock in the morning while it was still dark, we all gathered on this plot of land — men, women and children. We brought along all our belongings, mattresses, casseroles etc. and occupied the property; first in the upper part where we are now. We had 15 tents, a red flag and a huge photograph of Che Guevara, as well as a photo of the president and a Chilean flag.

To begin with we built a barricade at the entrance — there weren't any of the streets then that you see now — then we put up tents, and constructed several shanty huts. There were nearly 1,000 people. We hung photographs of Che Guevara and the president from a large eucalyptus tree which is behind the square and also the Chilean flag. We placed the director's seat under the tree. The children were placed mainly near the eucalyptus tree for better protection while we took it in turns to take guard. The majordomo of the property arrived later with a 2-bore shotgun. He threatened several women, shouting and telling us we had to go. But one of the women punched him and he fled. This majordomo was a real fool. Just imagine he chased off women who came to collect firewood on his property whilst he never used it himself. The owner then called the police who, after ordering us to leave, left themselves. We formed a committee made out of several women whose duty it was to go on a formal visit to the governor at Vina and announce that we intended to stay on this land, and that we also wanted materials to build houses, and to make an official declaration that we wouldn't leave at any price.

The Governor told us it was very difficult, he would see what he could do but in the meantime would we please not do any damage to this private property. In the meanwhile more and more people were arriving, because word of the occupation

had spread and many came to ask if there was room for them. It was because of this that we created an entry office which investigated each family which came to settle. How many were there in each family, where did they come from, what sort of work they did, how many children etc. We explained to the new arrivals that this was a serious occupation and if they agreed likewise we would accept them.

In a few days, we admitted 4,000 families. Of course, not all of them came in the end. You must remember that the situation here was very hard, especially for the children. On the second night there was an almighty deluge. Everything was soaked and the children screamed. It was unbearable so we decided to effect another occupation.

The leaders drew up a plan and the following morning we occupied the big crossroads not far from here, paralysing the traffic. We explained our reasons to the people and told them we wanted houses. Many of them agreed with us, but soon after, the army, the police, the union leaders and the governor arrived. We were so insistent and so decided that in the end, they gave us some large army tents which held 60 people each. We finished the seige. But the tents were old and there were only two good ones amongst them.

More and more people arrived and we couldn't even manage to give shelter to all the children so we began to walk. On the hill opposite there was an army depot. The following morning we set off for there taking with us wood and tools and other things. But then there were more than 3,000 of us, who could work in organised groups, watched over by a guardian group. Some architectural students came to help us put our projects into focus and examine the technical problems of carrying

them out. So, in one day, we drew up a plan for a small village with streets, squares etc. And I must emphasise that in order to get hold of the materials, we tricked the army supervisors in a most diabolical way. But things couldn't go on like that. The depot phoned several times and eventually the police arrived and interrupted our transport of materials. There was a bit of fighting but we were all able to get back to the camp and another night went by. We were inside and the police on the outside and we discussed our position interminably. Finally, they decided and proposed that we should give back all the materials to the army and promised us prefabricated huts in exchange. As for the plot of land, CORA (Corporation of Agrarian Reform) would appropriate it in any case since it was not being used as agricultural land. In the next two days we took everything back to the depot. Very little was missing. In fact, everything worked out very well

And that's how it happened. It was the first occupation at Vina del Mar and we named the settlement after Salvador Allende. We wanted the president to know about it. After the occupation the courts were after us (myself and the leaders) for occupying private property, causing damage, stealing military property, violation of domicile etc. The case is still happening. You know what they're like, once they've got hold of you, they'll never let go . . . but I'm a tough old bird!

Vincenzo Sparagna

*Translated by Sue Newson Smith, July 1974.
From an interview in August 1973.*



AREA ASSEMBLY at Santa Julia supermarket

Before the supplies problem which was created by shutdown of shops by the bourgeoisie and the transport strike, the people of Santa Julia organised themselves over the Almac, in Los Presidentes, so that the establishment in question could be opened to sell goods to the public. The supermarket workers agreed fully with the people's proposals, and this union between the people and the workers led to the setting up of an

assembly: the *area assembly* of Macul.

At the people's assembly, three of their leaders got up and spoke. Lenin Guardia, one of the leaders and a worker at Almac supermarket in Santa Julia said to the assembly formed by neighbours and villagers from the Santa Julia area, Villa Frei and Jaime Esaguirre:

It is important that the working class as a whole has the right spirit, using the experience we have here, so that from this moment, all of us who are here can begin on a concrete objective. Change will only be possible in as much as all workers create new forms of power, which means we must reaffirm our faith in a socialist government. I also believe, comrades, that from our centre at Almac we must make contact with the various *co-ordinating committees* functioning here. If there aren't any, then we must create them. There is an *industrial assembly* at Macul — we must join it. We must strengthen the J.A.Ps, form revolutionary defence committees and reinforce everything concerning supplies and security for the people; our confidence comes from a morale that belongs to workers alone — it is a morale which justifies the class struggle and is the only one the working class has.

We want you to understand that what has happened here is not the result of decisions taken higher up by political parties, but is the result of work done by all of us who've participated. It's the result of a united working class. We believe, comrades, that for once and for all it must be understood that the wheels of history, factories, water, and construction are all products of the working class. No one can take away this work from us, or deny us anything. We will continue to *make progress* where products stopped by managers be taken over. These working class victories are a step forward and that is why we will not now give anything back that we now control.

This embryo of people's power must go on fortifying itself. We must control production, transport, medical services and education. Through these organisms we must create people's power, so that we can finish with imperialism and the bourgeoisie in this country.

During the strike, Almac was closed until October 20, when thanks to all the squatters from here who had no food, we managed to open it again helped by students from the teachers' training college. Since that date, it has been run voluntarily by workers from the college, comrades, squatters and other comrades from the neighbouring area. We have supplied three

times more people than usual, and we've never been shut. On the contrary we are open on Sundays and on holidays. At the moment we consider it a fundamental part of our work that people should continue to have control of Almac and therefore control of supplies and food prices.

Almac belongs to Senator Pedro Ibanez of the National Party and during his administration we have evidence of some serious irregularities, which affected the kids; for instance, spoiled foodstuffs. The refrigerators were left switched off with the result that much food was lost, including many milk products: there was a complete lack of hygiene; soap was packed next door to sugar. But since the squatters have taken over, Almac has lots of customers.'

At the assembly one of the women says:

Tonight, we all got together, especially us women since we've always been the most oppressed. Tonight we must carry out a real trial. Almac will not be given back to its proprietors. We must not be afraid of these "*momios*" (term of abuse for middle-class person) who insult us. No, we must wash their brains out so that they understand that this government is for change — change that will favour the Chilean people.'

The following day, after the assembly, we saw Mario Gomez, a popular leader from Santa Julia, who told us:

'At 9 in the morning we opened Almac and began to wait for people; soon a fascist group called "Country and Liberty" arrived who intended to take back Almac. They insulted the shoppers and during an altercation a dreadful thing happened: one of the members of this fascist group hit an old woman of 60 in the face and broke three of her teeth. Faced with this fascist aggression, the people and workers of the Macul assembly, immediately came and gave us support — making the fascists run. These people who came to provoke us were the same who were used by the reaction during the critical days the country experienced. Before finishing, Gomez went on, it is worth saying that those provocateurs who live in these flats are those, who during Frei's regime, occupied the flats where they now live and who today do not want the shanty-town to have supplies.

We the people have decided to show by mobilising all the groups in the area that Almac will not be given back. Today, more than ever we are against the bourgeoisie's law. We are for the control of the supermarket.'

The people decided that the workers' supermarket should pass into the social sector; control and management of the supermarket to be done by the co-ordinating committee of the shanty town.

Translated: Sue Newson Smith, July 1974 from 'Posicion', the SP newspaper, 14.11.72.

tarea urgente

organo de expresion de los cordones industriales y comandos comunales

Director: GERARDO CHARRALAN
 Representante: VERA, ANA MARIA
 Editor: EDU VAL
 Administracion: ROBERTO VARELA
 Representante de los Cordones Industriales
 Comandante Provincial de Armas: CARLOS GONZALEZ
 Director Comunal Campesino:

8

LAS INDUSTRIAS TOMADAS: ¡NO SERAN DEVUELTAS!

¡¡Duela a quien duela!!

TAREA URGENTE ES:

1. Seguir activando los Comités de Vigilancia y Protección en cada Industria.
2. Organizar las escuadras de combate en las Industrias que formen cada cordón.
3. Organizar a los pabelleros en cada barrio, por cuadras.
4. Vigilar al enemigo de clase.

13 July

The Occupied Industries Will Not be Handed Back!

Cause Pain to those who cause us pain

Urgent tasks

- 1) Attack support for the Patrol Committees and Protection Committees in every factory.
- 2) Organise combat squads in the factories in every cordon.
- 3) Organise the people in every community, street by street.
- 4) Keep watch on the class enemies.

A DISCUSSION ON POPULAR POWER



MAPU
PS
MIR
MAPU OC

(Chile Hoy No. 60 August 3, 1973)

Chile Hoy: There has been a lot of talk about popular power and it is often said that the area assemblies could be the principal nuclei. What do you think?

Olivares (MIR): *It is a question of fashioning an autonomous power out of the power of the working class, a power that is independent of government and self-governing as far as the state is concerned, i.e. a dual power. The bourgeois state is a state that does not put itself at the service of the working class or of the people, so the working class is aiming at creating an autonomous State, which will, in turn create a working class power which will transform the State. And that's what we're aiming for. The Government is stuck in a bureaucratic and bourgeois system and it could be an instrument of the proletariat, but is not part of it for as long as it doesn't submit itself to it. And what do we want? We want the Government to put itself at the service of the proletariat. When it does that it will become a logical part of the popular power. Meanwhile it is only an instrument.*

Romo (MIR): *Several days ago, there was repression against the Barrancas area assembly. From that we can draw conclusions why we must be independent of government. Because the chief commissioner who depends on the government is bound to the bureaucratic and repressive state and incapable of stopping this repression; in fact he probably even inspired it! This person, inserted into bourgeois structure, begins to exercise different functions to those he would do in a popular power situation. That is why we believe we must be independent of the government. This mobilisation was not against the government, but against employers and the bureaucracy. The government can only be a useful weapon in the people's struggle but it cannot be an integral part of it because it has a different structure. The structure of popular power is direct — one decides and then one implements rapidly — it is directly linked to the base. Popular power must be independent, it cannot be tied.*

Munoz (PS): *We have already said that the government is an instrument of the proletariat, which, up till now, has allowed it to advance its positions, along a new dynamism which didn't exist before 1970. Since then, the successes in a new perspective has permitted us to pose the problem*

of power as a fundamental question. It is quite clear that we must insist on the fact that the working class has, through its representatives, conquered some of that power, which, at the present moment, is an instrument of government. I think that is clear to everyone.

Chile Hoy: The Government is a popular power?

Munoz (PS): *I wouldn't define it as a popular power, at least I don't dare to give it that definition. Whatever it is, the problem of taking power leads us basically to the proletarian parties which exist in Chile. Here, the masses are not going to take power independently of the political vanguards because, up until now, no revolution in the world has succeeded without there being a political vanguard, which is the real guide of the class struggle, and of the dispossessed masses, in their march towards the conquest of power and the establishment of a socialist society.*

Romo (MIR): *Many comrades think they have taken away a piece of power from the bourgeoisie. For us it is not a question of a piece of power taken from the bourgeoisie, or of a partial penetration into the bourgeois state which is a structure of bourgeois power. To conquer power, we must advance in restructuring a whole State, a State which allows us to realise our class interests. At present what do we gain from this power we have won within the bourgeois State? All it gives us is a possibility of destroying it from the interior, in a total way.*

It is a state which — if we don't destroy its essentially bureaucratic and repressive nature — will go on serving the bourgeoisie. And you only have to ask the shanty-town dwellers of Playa Giron. Try telling them that these 'skunks' of the 'Mobile Patrol Group' are led by a government which has opened up new perspectives for them — repression is always repression. The problem is to get rid of all this — and you can never do this without creating a new structure which is neither bureaucratic, nor repressive for the majority; but is repressive towards the minority which is the bourgeoisie. It's from that point that we begin to have power, not a fragment of power but an extension of power. We will not get first one fragment then a bit more, then more . . . What we have now is a leftist government which can be used to provoke contradictions amongst the bourgeoisie. It is this which has allowed us to keep the bourgeoisie split in two recently.

Lopez (MAPU OC): Do you mean that you believe the Government is only a part of the power?

Romo (MIR): It is not part of the proletarian power. It is a weapon which can be used to destroy the bourgeois state.

Munoz (PS): But tell me what would happen if at this moment the government was not ours and didn't represent a fragment of power. What would happen?

Romo (MIR): The problem is not whether one has the government or not but of changing its structure and to do that, it's already a great help to have a left government and our penetration into the bourgeois state will also help us to reach a proletarian state. But in fact this has absolutely nothing to do with a fragment of power.

Olivares (MIR): I maintain that if the government represents a fragment of power, then let the government have this fragment of power and let us await new elections to gain another fragment. That is we conquer power little by little until we have that power which is held by the bourgeois state. It's nothing like that; people must exercise power, they must conquer it and take it from the bourgeoisie and destroy that bourgeois state. The people must then build a new structure, its own structure, but they can't do it from within the bourgeois state, it must be autonomously.

Occasionally the government puts itself at the service of the workers, but only when pressure from the workers dictates that this happens, because when the workers are led bureaucratically by the parties or organisations that they have now, things are suggested, then the wheeler-dealings and sell-outs begin again and the workers are betrayed.



Lopez (MAPU OC): We believe that it really is a particle of power because since 1970 the working class has developed enormous potential which it could not develop before because it was brutally suppressed. Go and see the copper mines, the nationalised industries, go and see everything that's been got through this government and you will see whether it's a fragment of power or not. Popular power is composed of two things: the government and those who attempt to break the bourgeois state from inside using its own laws and the masses who push from the outside to destroy it. You, for example, want to destroy it immediately. Good. But tell me how you are going to do it? With fire and blood? With what? We must find new formulae to attack it with.

Chile Hoy: The comrade claims that the government is a part of popular power. What do you think of that?

Martinez (MAPU): We are discussing whether or not we think the government is a fragment of power. We say that in a bourgeois state there exist several powers: legislative, judiciary and executive. In 1970 we conquered the executive. But the problem now is knowing how to transform this power into popular power. If that executive power — the government — delegated responsibilities and concrete tasks to the working class, then the government would be a fragment of popular power.

Munoz (PS): The worker's organisations are potential embryos of power which are evidently opposed to the power of the bourgeoisie. In Chile at this moment we are asking ourselves about the problem of duality of power which are actually in formation. The truth is that the bourgeoisie holds a large part of the running of the economy and therefore economic power — which is what we can speak about here — because there is economic power and political power. The economic power is still in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Doubtless we have made progress thanks to the government through the area of social ownership which leads to a change in the economic configuration of the country and tends to restrain the economic power of the bourgeoisie.

Now on the political terrain, the (left) parties are insisting on the necessity of developing organs which are opposed to bourgeois power and here we, at least I, pose the problem of a final confrontation. Today we are in the throes of developing a dual power and we believe that one of the most important undertakings for the working class, represented by its parties, is the building of a power which will confront the bourgeoisie. We cannot speak here of a peaceful transition to socialism. Any possibility of that is excluded today. Besides I have never believed in a "Chilean path towards socialism".

It is quite clear that today we are concerned with the development from the grass roots of those organs which in the

end will be the organs of dual power — because this duality doesn't exist yet for me. This will occur when the antagonism will reach such a point that there will be a break in the bourgeois institutions and each class will attempt to take control of geographically determined zones — which signifies effectively political control — and will fix its sights on winning over the regions which are still controlled by the antagonistic group.



Romo (MIR): Developing popular power and area assemblies is something we should do today and not tomorrow. This could happen at Maipu if there was an area assembly there; there are good conditions there for developing popular power. But what does this mean? a trade union, whatever its strength, is not a popular power.

Chile Hoy: What do you mean by popular power; Give us a concrete example rather than theory.

Romo (MIR): After the Barrancas barricades, when we united the people we explained to them what we understood by popular power. We told them that for us it was the fact that we had imposed our own decisions on the local area.

Chile Hoy: In what sense?

Romo (MIR): In so far as we decided which vehicles could pass and which couldn't.

Munoz (PS): But that was a very circumstantial thing . . .

Romo (MIR): I am not arguing that this is a definitive victory of popular power; these are signs which we can point to what will develop in the future which is not so far away as our comrade said . . . We controlled the passage of cars; ambulances could go and fire engines, buses taking workers to and from work and also sympathetic soldiers. Those were allowed to pass but others weren't.

Chile Hoy: How did you determine who was a sympathetic soldier?

Romo (MIR): It is not as easy as being able to say, on seeing a soldier arrive and asking his name and rank, if he was sympa-

thetic or not. But after contact with him through the barricades, one knew perfectly well. When the 'carabineros' went to an area assembly at the dead of night and knocked gently on the door like any neighbour's son, we would open up to them and after they had come in, explained to them why we had requisitioned two buses etc. Then we could judge whether they were sympathetic or not. We knew that if the armed forces on the perimeter of the barricades came to ask for permission to do their round from the area assemblies, then we knew and the masses knew they were sympathetic. One realised this when we said to them that a comrade on the point of giving birth had to be driven to hospital and they put their vehicles at our disposal. One would also know when a less friendly 'mobile patrol group' arrived.

Another example of popular power: at midday we would lead the people to previously determined points and at five o'clock would put up the barricades which we kept up all night and withdrew them the next morning, Tuesday. That was popular power because we imposed our conditions in spite of repression.

We also think that popular power is that which puts forward a programme which doesn't include just political questions or wage demands, but a combination of both. For example, adding as far as supplies are concerned, expropriation of the large units of distribution which provides a solution as well. We would add fraternisation of those in uniform and the comrades at the barricades would understand. A poblador (squatter) is not capable of throwing stones at a soldier without having a talk with him first . . . they would let them pass, give them some propaganda and would say: 'Here we speak about you', and many of them would reply: 'Yes, we've already read it'. Or when they had read it on the spot they would say: 'We too are in the struggle'. One officer made a speech on the barricades which was against bureaucracy and saying that here was real power.

As well as this, when the attack came, they were organising themselves into units of 10 and were shouting: 'The police have two choices, to go with the people or to assassinate them'. And the women comrades shouted to a skinny policeman: 'Listen love, you are our son, don't throw bombs at us'. But if they did throw bombs, we would catch the bastards and beat them up.

Another example of popular power is when one sees a total unity of workers, peasants, pobladores and students; and no one struggling for his or her poblacion or for his or her union but for the common interests.

Chile Hoy: What do other comrades think of this experience?

Lopez (MAPU OC): As experience and practice I find it



Campamento Las Barrancas, one of the first wildcat encampments squatted in Santiago in 1967.

Campamento Las Barrancas, un des premiers campements sauvages de Santiago, en 1967.

excellent. It mustn't just happen there but in other places, because it creates a class consciousness and that is the most important thing. However I would like to know how many problems did this raise?

Martinez (MAPU): How many carabineros took down the barricades?

Romo (MIR): Seven police vans on one and two on the other.

Martinez (MAPU): To come to the fact that if we hadn't had comrade Allende at the head, if the government had been a repressive government, there would have been even more police vans arriving . . .

Romo (MIR): Of course.

Martinez (MAPU): My question was meant to show that this government has been of some use. It has widened the perspectives and formed a greater consciousness amongst the working class and the armed forces because as you said today some soldiers are with us. I wonder if that was the case several years ago when they fired on the 'lumpen' elements and never in the air.

Olivares (MIR): I agree this government is not repressive and that after 1970 the level of repression fell but that does not mean to say that we have power. Repression is not as strong as it was before, if it had been a repressive government they would have arrived with machine guns.

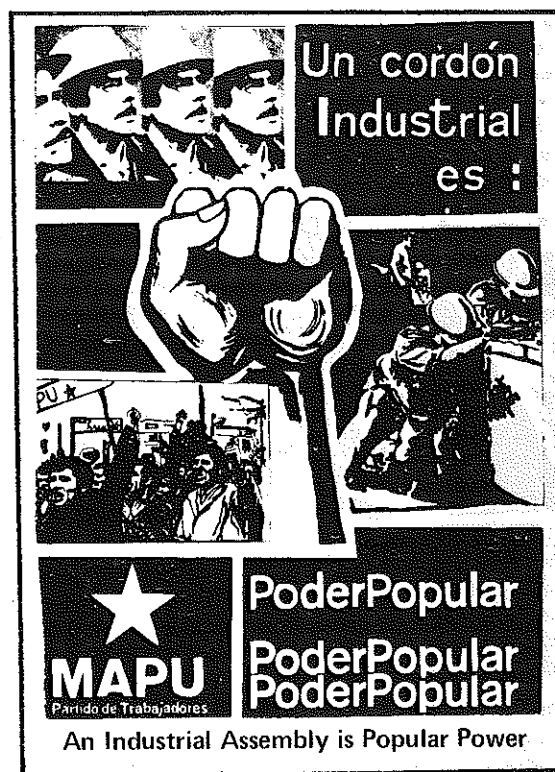
Martinez (PS): I want to tell you what happened in the 'Mobile Patrol Group' when one of our comrades fell. They led him around a bit and for each stone that touched the soldiers, they hit him with a stick. But after a while the carabineros talked with him and showed themselves for what they were. They said to the comrade that they were foreign to all this and that really they agreed with us but they had to obey orders. Another fact that came to light was that when the mayor was negotiating with the central area assembly, he ordered that the repression should be stopped, but his order was not obeyed by the officer in charge.

Romo (MIR): We are not saying that the government is not useful. In fact, today we managed to requisition and supervise all the lorries in the commune; this act is in opposition to the ruling-class but supports the government. But there have been times when to go against the ruling-class, we had to go against the government because it was restrained by certain inhibitions while for us it is a matter of class struggle.

Anyway, I don't agree with the comrade: these things haven't happened because the present government is in power. The government was elected by a class which is in the middle of evolving and now that class has more maturity. The fact that the repression was stopped was not due to any government decision. The comrade said the mayor gave orders which weren't obeyed . . . it is a question of the balance of forces. We chased the Mobile Patrol Group to the hills and there were wounded. Peasants came out to defend their companions though they were not part of the mobilization. They managed to catch some policemen and threw them into a neighbouring canal.

It is the strength of the class which has done that, which seems to be perfectly clear to all of us. If the government does not bend more often (to bourgeois pressure) then it is thanks to this strength. The deeper reason for all this is class consciousness. The government does not stimulate this consciousness; it is the class which progresses and creates conditions which allow the government to advance. If we relied on the government alone, I think we would have been blocked ages ago.

Lopez (MAPU O.C.): Taking up what the comrade said, I believe that the government depends solely on the masses; but does not for that reason cease to be part of it. If we didn't



have a popular government like the present one, where would our military sympathisers be? It is certain that if the masses fell asleep, the government will do likewise. And we can't allow this to happen because the government and the class must remain united.

Chile Hoy: Could you give us some more examples of popular power?

Olivares (MIR): I think that all comrades have had such experiences, for example when the workers decided to occupy the factories after the strikes of October and 'June 29', they exercised this power. It is quite clear that this popular power cannot be maintained, because the power of the class defends itself and is defended by force and, in the last instance, by arms.

Lopez (MAPU O.C.): Manifestations of popular power are evident in several places. I could give you an example of my own factory. Two years ago we occupied it because the owners wanted to divide it so that it would not be taken over by the government. We spotted the manoeuvre and came out on strike and in the end occupied the factory. The company came under state control. This was not enough for us so we put the pressure on to take over the running of it. In fact, control didn't work, so we put on more pressure and got rid of the interventor. (see explanation in 'Building Popular Power') A new one arrived and we didn't like him either and so again we appealed to popular power. We are waiting now for the nomination as interventor of one of our comrades who struggled with us and knows our problems. We will participate in the management with him, exercise popular power in such a way that it will be for us to decide on production, imports etc. It will not be as before when one just arrived and clocked in . . . We have faced concrete cases where we have had to decide between producing for us, the proletariat, or saving on primary materials.

Chile Hoy: To wind up. What must these nuclei of popular power do to confront the current situation where we have both an important transport strike and the beginning of a dialogue between the government and the Christian Democrats?

Romo (MIR): Well, with the Barrancas mobilisation we have got into what we call the beginning of the popular and revolutionary counter-offensive. And in the face of the lorry-owners/drivers strike and the death of the assistant of the president (assassinated on 25 July '73), we propose to develop it; for that we have put the accent on the needs of defence, on the formation of brigades and on their training. Also surveying and developing our information about the right-wing groups which exist in the district — local ones and factory ones — and lastly, to watch and requisition lorries which have stopped in the area, there are many of these. Requisitioning also happened during the bus strike. At the time of the daily assembly, comrades from the camps explained how they set about requisitioning them, how one discussed things with the driver, assured him of safe conditions of work and how we ran the thing.

Chile Hoy: Did you win over the drivers?

Romo (MIR): We explain the problem and say to them: If you make it difficult for us, we will take your lorry anyway,

because there are several drivers with us. But if you come with us, you can look after the bus; we will protect you with our brigades and you can work'. Nearly all of them decided to work, because we also assured them of a good salary. One must look for conditions that don't provoke confrontation. That is a very important tactic.

Chile Hoy: Is that MIR's position?

Romo (MIR): It is the position of the area assembly in Barrancas.

Chile Hoy: Yes, but does it coincide with the MIR's position?

Olivares (MIR): Yes, but I would add that about the dialogue with the Christian Democrats which is at the same time preparing a coup d'etat against the workers and even goes as far as threatening the government with bringing it down. We say that a dialogue must be started with the masses, with the workers. It is on this level that the dialogue must take place.

Munoz (PS): In our party we have not agreed with this dialogue



with the Christian Democrats because it implies ignoring the counter offensive which has been launched by the workers after June 29. I believe our job is to continue to organise the workers to attain objectives which we have given ourselves since June 29 to gain strength and to organise the formation of the area assemblies from the industrial assemblies.

As far as the transport strike is concerned, we have given firm instructions to the industrial assembly yesterday, on the necessity of keeping a register of vehicles on which each factory can count and of supplies of fuel. We must also maintain and reinforce the protection of factories. All these tasks have been accomplished since June 29.

Martinez (MAPU): This dialogue must not be allowed to compromise in any way, however small, the programme of Popular Unity otherwise it must affirm the position of the government and position of the working class, and on that basis, consolidate and advance the process.

Chile Hoy: What will the workers part be in all this?

Martinez (MAPU): Today, we the workers, must have concrete objectives. We share the idea that one must support the area assemblies. They must express the coming together of the Mothers' Clubs, the neighbourhood groups, the sports clubs and the industrial assemblies, in fact every representative organ of the people in the district so that a communal, powerful power can decide what must be done and what tasks are to be accomplished.

To set up these defence committees within the factories, check all the lorries and trucks for the transport of workers. To programme urgent journeys and make all drivers and car owners work, guaranteeing them protection. To integrate all the workers in the fuel sector in the industrial assemblies and decide to whom one gives petrol and fuel and to whom one doesn't. These are the concrete tasks in the industrial sector. In the poblaciones we think that there are imminent dangers today. One must ration certain basic foodstuffs to build up stocks, to supply people in critical moments. To cut off provisions to all shopkeepers who shut their shops and programme supplies for the whole population. We must form an assembly which unites the J.A.P. and the people's shops. To form a defence committee and expel all fascists living in the commune. We are pushing these tasks forward.

Chile Hoy: As far as the area assemblies are concerned, do you propose to create them immediately or over a longer term?

Martinez (MAPU): Now, within a week. We think that with the problems of June 29th, the industrial assemblies have been strengthened and now have a more revolutionary structure; today in any case they are in working order. We think that the lorry driver's strike and all these recent assassination attempts will help us create an area assembly and we will organise it so that it appears for one and for all.

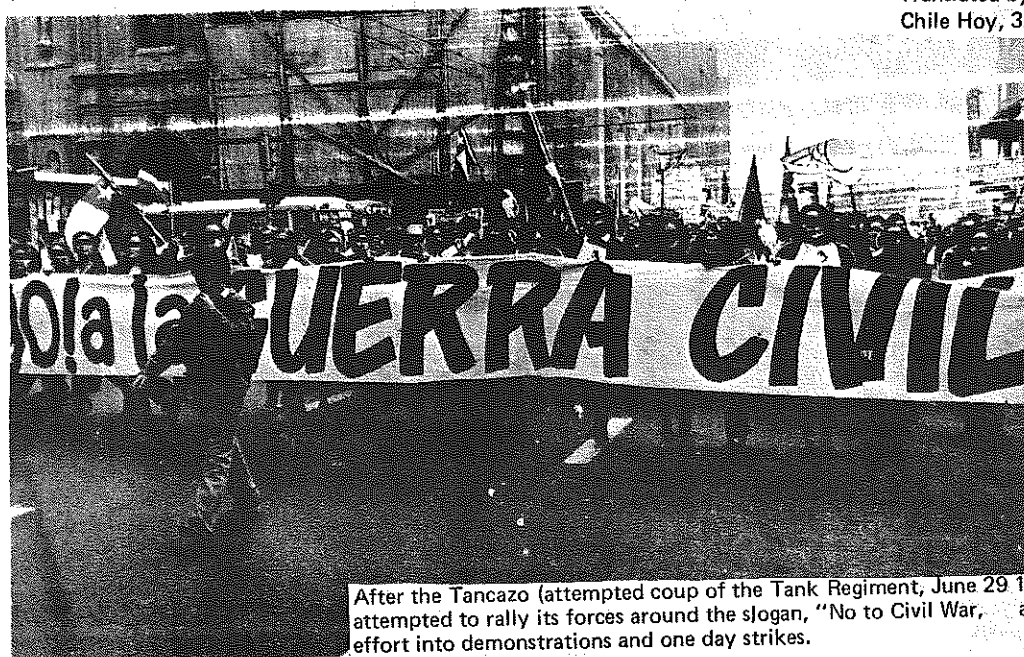
Lopez (MAPU OC): We believe that the lorry drivers strike and the assassination of the president's assistant were done to prevent the dialogue from starting. At this time the National Party does not favour a dialogue between the government and the Christian Democrats because it strengthens the discords which exist in the heart of the armed forces. Besides we see that there is a break in the Christian Democrats; the leadership doesn't agree with the dialogue but the youth section is asking for it. If one didn't accept this dialogue, they could say that the Marxist government has thrown it out and then they can do what they want. We are well aware that one must not give anything, not even a single factory.

Chile Hoy: And what do you think of the popular response to the dialogue?

Lopez (MAPU OC): The dialogue should not just take place at the summit. It is a positive measure which opens up the possibilities of establishing a dialogue at the grass roots. We know that at the moment there are hesitating Christian Democrat comrades who don't know what to do. The dialogue does not mean that we must sit here with folded arms and if we must take something we will take the factory.

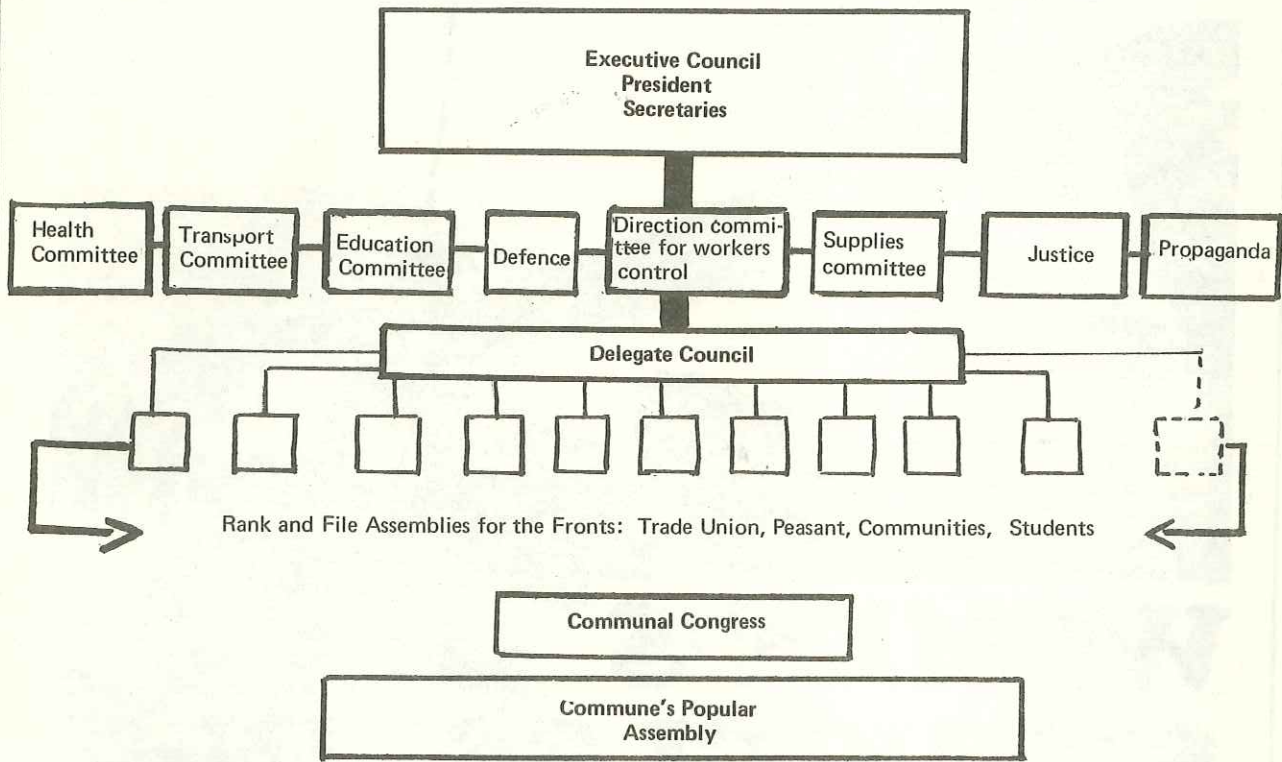
Romo (MIR): We are opposed to this dialogue. The dialogue that we will institute with the Christian Democrats will be at the base and in actions. If one wants to have a dialogue with the base then one must talk to the base. Besides, there are some contradictions; whilst one was in the middle of discussion with the Christian Democrats, with Funtealba (former president of the Christian Democrats who pushed the dialogue line) who one could classify as progressive, it would seem that the left wing comrades who called for the dialogue were fundamentally the most sectarian at the grass roots level and would prevent a frank and open discussion with the CD over concrete common actions. The dialogue must take place at the grass roots level, resting on concrete objectives and revolutionary positions and not at the summit making concessions at the expense of the people.

Translated by Sue Newsom Smith.
Chile Hoy, 3.8.73.

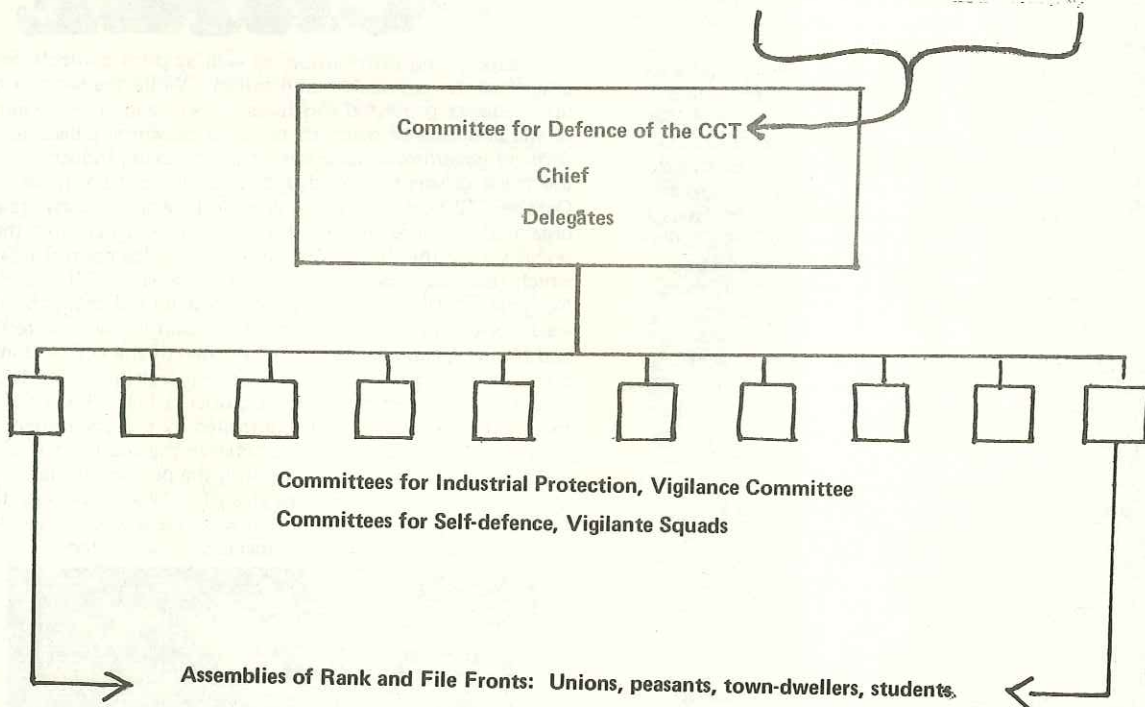


After the Tancazo (attempted coup of the Tank Regiment, June 29 1973), the CP attempted to rally its forces around the slogan, "No to Civil War," and putting maximum effort into demonstrations and one day strikes.

Organisation Chart of the Workers Communal Commando



Organisation Chart of the Committee for the Defence of the Area Assemblies of Workers



This Organisation Chart shows the links between and organisation of the real local administrations which are at the same time the bodies which make the laws and put them into effect.