

CHILE. The peaceful road to slaughter

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To attempt to analyse the events in Chile over the last three years must present a daunting task to a communist living in Britain. One must try and avoid the traps into which the revisionists and trotskyists have plunged.

THE C.P.G.B. LINE.

On the one hand, the Communist Party offers no criticism of the strategy used by Allende's Popular Unity Coalition. Its commentary is limited to recounting the bravery of Allende in his final hours and in attacking U.S. imperialism and its machinations within Chile. It stresses first, that the 'parliamentary road' was the right one for Chile. Any attempt to mobilise the people militarily would have precipitated the coup at an earlier date. Hence the compromises made by Allende were "essentially tactical, because the armed forces were in the last analysis determined to prevent him and he knew it"

Secondly, the C.P. says that Allende was on the right road. The general secretary of the Chilean C.P., Corvalan, said in 1970:-

"What we have started is not irreversible, we must make it so".

The progressive forces lost when the balance was overturned by the reactionaries at home in league with imperialism. But as this was expected, why was so little done to prepare for it? As one can see, it's a case of 'the chicken or the egg?'. The events in Chile have made a nonsense of the "peaceful

transition to socialism" theory, and the revisionists have, by their own analysis, tacitly accepted that their programme for conquest of power is unworkable.

THE TROTSKYIST LINE.

The Trotskyists, on the other hand, stress quite correctly that the Allende regime should have armed the workers. But they fail to answer the C.P.'s bone of contention that this would have triggered the coup. They add that the independent workers' and peasants organisations should have been encouraged, not dismantled. But in fact it was not the central, but the municipal and provincial authorities, (evidently having some administrative power within the state), which were responsible for prohibiting privately held arms.

And the provincial authorities were represented in the congress, which soon after the nationalisation of the copper resources prov itself hostile to almost every measure proposed by Popular Unity.

Finally, the Trotskyists declare that they would have sacked the generals and called upon the rank and file in the army to arrest their officers. But this would almost certainly have been a disastrous move. Nowhere within the armed services were the cadres who had infiltrated, in a strong enough position to make such a challenge. A general can be "sacked" - but who is to remove him from his post? If the rank and file had not responded, what then? Generally, the Trotskyists

have confined their analysis to attacking Allende for "Stalinism". In their final analysis Allende was effectively an agent of the ruling class. To quote from the Manifesto of the trotskyist Socialist Labour League:-

"The purpose of the Stalinist Popular Front is to virtually tie the hands of the working class behind its back and physically disarm it while the ruling class prepares the real conspiracies against it".

The conclusion that Allende was no Marxist-Leninist is a fair one. But to infer that he connived with the ruling class is plainly absurd. It denies that there were other contradictions within the Chilean State other than that between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. As such it must be rejected.

It is in submitting proposals - which might have been attainable within Chile - that one must take caution not to be presumptive. Only the Chilean comrades can decide tactics for their struggle. However, one must be just as cautious not to mouth rhetorical slogans.

The Popular Unity Coalition was overthrown on September 11th, 1973, by a putsch carried out by the three armed services and much of the Civil Police. The formation of the Junta was announced immediately. The coup was the culmination of the policies pursued over three years by the monopoly capitalist and landowning class in Chile and financed covertly by U.S. imperialism. It was engineered at this time not only because of Allende's economic policies; perhaps more importantly it was his inability to implement these policies constitutionally that triggered the coup. This failure was leading to the real-

isation by many working people in Chile that to advance at all they would have to be in effective power. The ruling class was witnessing this development, and its choice of action now limited. It was the growth of independent organisations as a parallel power - still a weak one - to the bourgeois state, that prompted the army to step in.

There is strong evidence the U.S. imperialism had since the 1960's noticed the development of political consciousness among the Chilean People. Under President Frei, Chile was receiving the most "aid" in Latin America from U.S. imperialism, yet this "aid" failed to stabilise the economy. When Frei left office there was 18% unemployment; the rate of inflation was second in the world only to South Vietnam; many foodstuffs were in short supply and the infant mortality rate stood at 40.0 a year.

When subversion undertaken by the C.I.A. directly on behalf of U.S. monopoly capital failed to prevent Allende coming to power, the tactics changed.

Allende was elected in September 1970, but did not take office until November. In the two months, there was a crippling flight of capital from Chile. During the following years imperialist subversion of the economy intensified. The U.S. imposed a complete embargo on trade with Chile. Not only was "aid" withdrawn but also all capital which they suspected would be nationalised.

But the subversion was not just in the economic field; the Allende regime at all times faced terrorism from armed fascist organisations within the country. In October 1970, General Schneider, Commander in Chief of the army, was murdered by a right-wing terrorist. The assassin received two years imprisonment.

Throughout a great part of his term of office there was incessant rioting from extremists. It remains a criticism of Allende that he failed to suppress such disturbances. During this summer, when the owners of transport and of the communications industry halted operations, all communications between the provinces were cut, creating chaos within the country. It remains another criticism that Allende failed to halt this internal economic subversion. To enforce a socialist change on society, where one part of the population imposes its will by force on another part, authoritarian means are unavoidable.

It is too early to say whether the strikes that took place amongst Chile's industrial working class represented mere sectional interests or were engineered and funded by foreign agents, (as Allende's widow maintains). According to the revisionists, the Chilean miners formed the labour aristocracy; apart from the miners there existed the lumpen proletariat. But this definition would apply to many countries on the sub-continent. It is, I believe, an over-simplification. Miners have played a very positive part, on the whole, in the armed struggles that have shaped recent Latin American history.

The declared task of the C.P. of Chile was to mobilise the masses, but politically, rather than militarily. Allende had been elected with 36% of the vote; in the mid-term elections this increased to 44%. How long would he have waited before mobilising the people for the coming armed struggle? The Chilean industrial working class is one of the most organised in the world, and the regime enjoyed its solid electoral support. The urban middle-classes - in particular the owners of small scale means of distribution, were not won over to Popular Unity's policies. Neither were the middle strata of

farmers and peasants in the countryside. It was precisely this that Allende set out to do but failed. The trotskyist approach is to ignore the middle strata in society. It states that, on the verge of civil war, the armed working class should say to all other classes, "You're either with us or against us. You may join us, but if you stand in our way, you've had it". But the Chilean working class was too small to win a revolution on its own. Whilst it must always lead the struggle, the working class must have the widest possible alliance of forces on its side. This is achieved by exploiting the antagonistic contradictions between these other classes and the owners of land and monopoly capital, whilst weakening the ideology of these classes. It is not achieved by denying the nature of the coming struggle and renouncing the control that the industrial working class must have - as modern revisionism has done; nor is it done simply by issuing an ultimatum at the point of no return - as Trotskyism proposes.

To give a few examples where Popular Unity failed to achieve this alliance. Whilst the Government controlled the provision of food, there is evidence that a black market arose as some workers were retailing part of their rations back to the middle class at inflated prices. This created an antagonistic contradiction between the small owners of distribution and the working class. That it should have been rigorously controlled can be seen from the fact that the shopowners eventually joined the side of reaction when they closed down all their premises in Santiago this year, contributing to the existing chaos in the food supply.

In the countryside, only 7% of the land was distributed by the Government. This provided a situation where bands of peasants and farm

labourers took the initiative. Seizing the land themselves in an uncoordinated manner, especially in the south, they seem to have left the wealthier peasant strata in doubt of its own security whilst the major landowners would be expropriated.

So in the countryside, the regime faced opposition not only from the great landowners but from many small farmers, worried about the activities of revolutionary groups who may often have proceeded in too undisciplined a fashion. It should be stressed that the fault lay chiefly with the regime in providing a vacuum where this could occur.

MARXISM REVISED, A FIELD DEMONSTRATION.

It is undeniable that to remain in power, Allende should have operated outside the constitution. Just by looking at the parliamentary set-up in Chile one can see this. Popular Unity was always in a minority, in the congress, which from 1971 exercised its right to veto almost every reform proposed by the coalition. The Chilean Communist Party, in its efforts to isolate its enemies, compromised with the Christian Democrats to a point where it was the most moderate faction in the coalition. But class struggle transcends all parliamentary manoeuvring. As Chou-en-Lai said of Chile in 1970, socialism cannot be mid-wifed by parliament. This is accepted now by the Chilean C.P. On Oct 15th U. Teitelboim of the Central Committee recognised that the bourgeoisie "to preserve their domination and their control of the means of production do not hesitate to drown in blood every manifestation of democracy". He admits that they controlled the Army, Parliament, the judiciary, the civil service, municipal administration, the Press, and most of the mass media. Why then, if this was so obvious, did not the C.P. in power undertake the clan-

destine arms training of cadres in the countryside, and the arming and organising of cadres in the towns to prepare for such an emergency ?

There is evidence that they began the latter only in his last month. The point is that, if it was possible in the last month, why not before ? From news of the resistance it appears that some comrades retained possession of their arms. Yet Allende's widow says that when the women approached her husband with requests to distribute arms, he refused. Without a peoples' army, the people have nothing, and an army cannot be built in a short space of time.

THE BETRAYAL IS EVIDENT.

The coup was inevitable. This was plain to all. In the film "When the People Awake", made in Chile in 1972, the workers and peasants interviewed, revealed their knowledge of what was to occur one year later. It is a tragic document.

Time and again they stressed that to build socialism they would have to control the state. Time and again they reject the notion of peaceful transition. One may accept that the pronouncements on "the professional and constitutionalist tradition of our armed forces" made by the C.P. leaders right until their fall were tactical denials of the real situation, in order to stall for time. But where were these denials counterbalanced by the creation of an armed force amongst the people who would remain loyal ? They were followed through by the admission into the Cabinet of Generals from the Forces, whose underlings were already preventing factory occupations in the provinces, and conducting a purge of progressive elements of the rank and file in the armed services. And why was

General Prats not given the necessary authority to commandeer the road transport vehicles during the Stoppage this summer? It would hardly have been a revolutionary act on Allende's part, but it may well have split the army on the question of loyalty.

THE POSITIVE ASPECTS.

It is true however, that agitation within the armed was undertaken by a number of organisations, including the C.P., the Socialist Party, and the M.I.R. There is also evidence that this propaganda, which is of tremendous importance in affecting the balance of forces, was taking effect. In the June revolt in the Navy, one regiment from Concepcion was decimated following a purge of elements sympathetic to the regime. In Santiago, at the time of the coup, regiments of civil police were fired on by the Putschists, when they refused to take part in the suppression of resistance. The work which had been done proved insufficient, although this is no attack on the comrades directly involved.

Now the Chilean people are faced with an immensely more difficult task. From a position of potential strength, from which, with the correct leadership they could have advanced, they have moved to one of weakness, where their fight is one for survival. Yet the resistance continues and according to some reports, is intensifying. We hear that the toughest fight occurred in Santiago's suburbs, and in the south in Chillan and Puerte Alto, where a state of seige existed. In Valparaiso, in the provinces of Nuble and Antofagasta, police stations and army installations have been attacked. That the struggle has been sustained in the face of the bestial cruelty of the Junta is a tribute not only to the heroism of the activists, but a tribute to their correct strategy. The

Junta now has little political support within the country. By suspending Congress and dissolving all political parties, it has alienated much of its potential support among the Christian Democrats. Many have publicly dissociated themselves from the military authorities. If they are moved to a position of neutrality, this would represent an improvement in the relation of forces.

EXPERIENCES - LESSONS - FUTURE TACTICS .

Since the military have taken power, they have imposed an increase in many food prices of nearly 600%. The working week has been increased by 8 to 10 hours. Regiments stationed in areas of tension are moved frequently to prevent any communication with the people. Even tunic colours are regularly altered so that rebels will be indetifiable when they do not report back for duty.

To aggravate the contradiction between the military and the broad mass of the people the attacks must be maintained. The junta must be prevented from legalising itself by passing nominal reforms, as has happened after the countless coups that have taken place in Latin America, and as happened in Greece, the interpretation of the struggle ahead is made purely as suggestion in the light of recent armed struggle on the continent and elsewhere, and not as a solution to be posed from outside.

It is to be remembered that all the guiding principles of military operations grow out of the one basic principle; to strive to the utmost to preserve one's strength and destroy that of the enemy. So it is not enough that the workers are in control of small arms; these present a weak answer to a central army, well equipped, well trained and highly disciplined. One can look back to Bolivia, in

1970, where the industrial workers, large contingents of whom were armed, did not prevent General Banzer marching into La Paz with his troops. If the Trotskyists now call for Bolshevik-type insurrections within the cities under military control, the result will undoubtedly be a massacre of what popular forces exist. The Trotskyists believe that the development of a "people's war", by organising armed insurrection in stages, is 'formalist, bureaucratic and militarist'. But the struggle undertaken by the people must now principally be waged in the countryside. It necessitates the creation of mobile strategic forces - the nuclei of a people's army - which can work amongst the people, whilst at present retaining their organic and operational independence from them.

There are already, in the province of Arauco independent groups of guerrilla fighters in operation. It is up to the comrades in the towns to consolidate what little they have at present, undertaking actions which would keep the forces of repression occupied in guarding installations and suchlike.

"We were not prepared for the bombings", said Allende's widow after the coup. It is precisely these well defined areas, the cities, and especially the shanty towns outside the metropolitan areas, that would be the most vulnerable to heavy attacks, particularly from the air, resulting in slaughter suffered for no gain.

It is for this reason that, as a direct assault on power would be unsuccessful at this stage, the protracted nature of the struggle should become clear. The object must be the gradual encirclement of the cities from the countryside.

Any attempt, at present, at creating 'zones

of self-defence', outside which the Junta's army would have freedom of action, would likewise prove disastrous. It is only as long as the struggle is extended beyond 'safe base areas' as it was in China, and Cuba and as it is being done throughout Indo-china, that 'self-defence zones' acquire significance.

Otherwise they will be crushed, as were the peasants in the Colombian province of Marquetalia in 1964, and the tin miners in Bolivia in the summer of 1965.

The necessity of a people's army is plain, as is the inevitability of a people's war. To build an army is a long process requiring people, armaments, training and discipline. But whatever military line will be taken will be the expression of a political line. If the political line is wrong, then the military line will fail. The success of the military strategy will depend upon whether the ideology is rooted in Marxism-Leninism. If the Chilean people can build a Marxist-Leninist party as the vanguard in their struggle, they will fight with history on their side. Without such a party, the present resistance will at best remain resistance. It will never be transformed into a successful revolutionary struggle.

SOME CONCLUSIONS FOR BRITAIN.

The chief lesson for us here in Britain is that there can be no peaceful road to Socialism. Given that the economics of Britain and Chile are far from identical, the main contradictions in both countries are the same. We should not be led to think that if a similar situation occurs here, the ruling class will "play the game" and behave more gentlemanly. For almost three years the C.P.G.B. pointed to similarities between Chile and

Britain; constitutional government for over 100 years; a well organised industrial working class:- etc;. Chile was the shining example that vindicated their policy.

Now, following the coup, they maximise the differences. "Chile had an economy perverted by imperialism" - in other words, it would be different here.

If the theory does not fit historical experience, then the theory must be wrong. Do the revisionists accept this? Not at all. If the reality does not fit the theory, they distort the reality. A recent article by Jack Woddis, head of the C.P.G.B.'s International Department explains:-

"It is essential, now, to campaign for fundamental democratic changes in the State, and especially in the army in order to lessen the chances of the ruling class using the army against the people or a left wing Government..It is vital to campaign now, even before we have a Socialist Government for essential changes in the State."

This demonstrates more clearly than anything we can say, that the leaders of the C.P.G.B. are not capable of learning from history. They still think in terms of changing the state by peaceful pressures. Not only does Woddis tell us there can be fundamental changes in the state before we have a socialist government, but that if we obtain these democratic changes, there will be less chance of the ruling class using its own machine against us. As long as the C.P.G.B. peddles this lie, it will do nothing but sow confusion amongst the ranks.

As long as it puts 'Parliamentary Struggle' first, it is weakening the working class by

making concessions to the enemy. The ruling class will not make that same mistake. They know the meaning and value of State power based ultimately on force; and they will not hesitate to use it.

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attack by the ruling class, but it would be foolish to assume that such a defeat will compel them to change course.

Renewed attacks using different methods will continue to be made and they will always have the whip hand as long as they hold state power.

The French workers won a victory in 1967 in terms of wage increases obtained, but the capitalist class, because it occupies state power, was able to make changes in prices, taxation etc; which nullified those gains.

The point that we are trying to make is that struggles for higher wages are both necessary and unavoidable if we are to try to keep our heads above water, but as long as the capitalist class holds state power this will be a never ending battle, with the working class using its industrial strength to wrest better wages and conditions from the employing class, and they in turn using their control of the State machine to make changes in taxation etc; for the purpose of redressing the economic balance in their favour once more, and also to bring about changes in the law (such as the Industrial Relations Act), aimed at weakening our ability to wage industrial struggles.

Sooner or later we must take State power into our own hands so that we can dictate to them.