From the archives of Marxism: Lessons of the 1973 coup in Chile

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September 11, 2023 marks 50 years since the bloody coup led by General Augusto Pinochet that crushed the working class in Chile and ushered in 17 years of fascist-military dictatorship. The coup unleashed savage repression that saw tens of thousands of Chilean workers, students and leftists murdered, disappeared, tortured and forced into exile.

The *World Socialist Web Site* publishes below the statement issued within days of the coup by the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.

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Defend the Chilean Working Class

Statement issued by the Fourth International on September 18, 1973

Stalinism and counterrevolution

"Defend your democratic rights not through Popular Fronts and parliament, but through the overthrow of the capitalist state and the establishment of workers' power. Place no confidence in Stalinism, social democracy, centrism, revisionism or the liberal bourgeoisie, but build a revolutionary party of the Fourth International whose program will be the revolution in permanence."

These are the lessons which are being written in blood by the heroic Chilean proletariat as the tanks and the execution squads of the Chilean bourgeoisie take their murderous toll, and while the Stalinist, Socialist and Liberal bourgeois leaders scour the barracks for a sympathetic general or prepare to make their peace with Chile's new masters.

The working class will never forget the unequal yet inspiring resistance of the Chilean workers who showed, not for the last time, that they are the only revolutionary force in Chile confronting imperialism and the native capitalists. But it will never forgive the Stalinist and Socialist leaders, whose political cowardice and base treachery alone enabled the Chilean bourgeoisie to follow the example of Indonesia, Greece, Bolivia and Sudan.

These events testify in the most sanguinary way to the crisis of working class leadership and the enormous dangers which confront the working class as a result of the collapse of the world monetary system and the August 15, 1971 measures of Richard Nixon.

Stalinism once again stands condemned as the most consistent defender of bourgeois property and the bourgeois state and the most vicious enemy of the working class in its struggle for the defense of basic democratic rights.

From the inception of Salvador Allende's regime in November 1970, the whole weight of the Moscow bureaucracy has been used to bolster the reactionary and weak Chilean bourgeoisie and disorientate the working class through the instrumentality of the Chilean Communist Party.

If in 1970-71 the military was unable to seize power and had to wait three years to execute its plans, we can say categorically that this was because it required the planned and systematic political disorientation carried out by Stalinism before the conditions were created for the coup. The chief ideological weapon of the Chilean Stalinists in preparing the conditions for the coup was the Menshevik theory of a two-stage revolution and the bankrupt concept of a "peaceful parliamentary road to socialism" through Popular Fronts—both of which disarmed the working class and prevented its mobilization at the crucial moment.

Ignoring the effects of the world monetary and economic crisis, which brought Allende to power in the first place, and consciously playing down the reactionary class nature of the capitalist state, while exaggerating and distorting the reformist inclination of a small section of the Chilean bourgeoisie, Chilean Stalinism became the hangman of the Chilean revolution.

Defeat was not inevitable

No defense of the Chilean working class is possible without an unveiling of the lies, half-truths and outright distortions resorted to by the British and European Stalinists to cover up the causes of the defeat and play down the magnitude of its consequences.

Having made a major contribution to the deception of the Chilean workers by uncritically supporting every reformist retreat by Allende, the European Stalinists now try to present the Chilean events as tragic but historically inevitable. The last thing these reformist bureaucrats desire is an honest examination of the Chilean events.

Their fear and contempt for the working class are so great that they will not dare to make the slightest criticism of their policies. On the contrary—the Chilean defeat will encourage them to pursue the "peaceful road" more vigorously.

Typical of these statements is the attempt of Mr. John Gollan, secretary of the British Communist Party, to whitewash the Chilean events in the *Morning Star*: "The people of Chile will never give up the struggle; for the Popular Unity government and President Allende have started political changes which, come what may, are historically irreversible, not only for Chile, but for the Latin American revolution as a whole." (September 15, 1973.)

This is a gross Stalinist distortion aimed at conditioning dissident Party members to accept the idea that the defeat is not a decisive one, and that the revolution is in any case "irreversible."

On the contrary there was nothing irreversible or accidental about the events which led to Allende's downfall. This is a Stalinist fraud—the same

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kind of fraud that was perpetrated by Stalin on the Comintern after the Shanghai Massacre in 1927.

Every stage of the Chilean catastrophe was determined by the crisis of working-class leadership, the bankruptcy of Stalinism and Chilean social democracy. This bankruptcy was expressed in an absolute refusal to expropriate totally the Chilean capitalists and a complete prostration before the capitalist state dressed up as the defense of "100 years of congressional democracy in Chile."

This policy is identical with the policy of British Stalinism—"The British Road to Socialism" and of Stalinist parties all over the world. That is why the Chilean defeat is of immediate and vital importance for Marxists in every country. To cover up this defeat with the rationalization of "irreversibility" is not only to libel the working class of Chile, but is also the conscious preparation for bigger defeats in Europe and elsewhere.

In this sense, the lessons of Chile are universal and apply with particular relevance to those countries like Italy and France where Stalinism dominates the labor movement and uses its reactionary doctrine of "peaceful coexistence" and "advanced democracy" to lull the masses and permit fascism and the capitalist state to prepare their attacks.

The entire history of twentieth century Latin America, as well as the rich experience of the European working class movement from the Paris Commune, has shown with ruthless clarity that the capitalist state is not neutral, but the expression of the collective will of the ruling class—a machine for the coercion of one class by another. The sole function of the state is the defense of capitalist property relations.

In the epoch of the decline of capitalism—imperialism—the conflict between the productive forces and the property relations is enormously intensified and, to the same extent, the state's role of intervening in the social and economic life of every country is enhanced. The apparatus of repression—"the bodies of armed men," as Engels defined the state machine—assumes a disproportionate size and the attack against basic democratic rights becomes a pervasive feature of capitalist rule. If the working class fails to create a revolutionary party and overthrow the state, *then* the transition to fascism and Bonapartism becomes inevitable.

This was the lesson of Germany, Italy and Spain in the 1930s.

The Watergate exposures have revealed the enormous menace which the uncontrolled growth of the repressive state machine represents in US society, with the decline of US imperialism expressed in colonial wars and world-wide subversion.

In Britain the "Littlejohn affair," the Ulster occupation and the reactionary legislation of the Tories against workers' rights have proved indubitably that there can be no talk of a "peaceful transformation" of the capitalist state. It must be destroyed and replaced by the dictatorship of the working class.

This was the principal task which faced the Allende coalition in 1970, but which Allende, aided by the Stalinists, consistently evaded.

The role of the military

No popular regime could coexist with the Chilean armed forces which were led by the most reactionary representatives of the capitalists and landlords. Every one of their leaders was a CIA-trained professional reactionary.

Instead of dissolving Congress, the Senate, and the armed forces and instead of creating a popular militia whose power would be derived from the workers' and poor farmers' councils, the Chilean Stalinists became the principal defenders of bourgeois "law and order" through the creation of the Popular Front government.

In a recent seminar organized by the Stalinist journal *World Marxist Review*, the spokesman for Chilean Stalinism, Banchero, clearly stated his party's attitude to the state: "A distinctive feature of the revolutionary process in Chile is that it began and continues within the framework of the bourgeois institutions of the past. … In Chile, where an anti-imperialist, anti-monopoly, and anti-feudal democratic people's revolution is now under way, we have essentially retained the old state machine. Government offices are staffed mainly with the old officials. … The administration exercises its functions under the guidance and control of the popular government.

"The armed forces, observing their status of a professional institution, take no part in political debate and submit to the lawfully constituted civilian power. Bonds of cooperation and mutual respect have evolved between the army and the working class in the name of the patriotic goal of shaping Chile into a free, advanced, and democratic land.

"Ultra-left elements clamor for the immediate 'introduction' of socialism. We hold, however, that the working class will gain full power gradually: it will be in step with our gaining control of the state machine that we shall begin to transform in the interests of the further development of the revolution."

Banchero was preceded by the British Stalinist, Idris Cox, who also preached on the "Peaceful Road":

> In Britain, the question is often put, but mainly by ultra-left elements, whether we can achieve our aim without the use of armed force or civil war. No one can give a guarantee that this will not happen, but it is our view that with the change in the balance of world forces, and the weakened position of the British ruling class, it is unlikely that it would use armed force to defy the results of a democratic election.

Cox's apology was more succinctly expressed by Pablo Neruda, Stalinist poet and Chilean ambassador to Paris: "As for our army, we love it. It is the people in uniform."

The statements of Banchero and Cox vividly illustrate the bankruptcy of Stalinism and their readiness to cooperate with the capitalist state against the working class. They are also the most blatant attack on Lenin's teachings on the state.

How far Cox is removed from and opposed to Lenin's most important writings on the state is revealed by the following quotation from Lenin's famous article on the Constituent Assembly:

"In mockery of the teachings of Marx, those gentlemen, the opportunists, including the Kautskyites, 'teach' the people that the proletariat must first win a majority by means of universal suffrage, then obtain state power, by the vote of that majority, and only after that, on the basis of 'consistent' (some call it 'pure') democracy, organize socialism.

"But we say on the basis of the teachings of Marx and the experience of the Russian revolution: 'The proletariat must first overthrow the bourgeoisie and win for itself state power, and then use that state power, that is, the dictatorship of the proletariat, as an instrument of its class for the purpose of winning the sympathy of the majority of the working people.'" (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 263.)

Contrary to Cox, the decline of the British ruling class, like that of the Chilean rulers, does not make the state more amenable to working class change but instead intensifies its reactionary and repressive functions. This is an inexorable law of history.

The real authors of this reformist strategy, however, are not to be found in Britain or Chile, but in the bureaucratic center in Moscow. In the interests of their foreign and home policy the Soviet bureaucracy have been the principal champions not only of a "peaceful road" but, more important, of a new and more flexible approach to the armed forces in

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Latin America.

For generations it has been a tradition of the Latin American socialists and even some sections of the Stalinists to treat the army with hostility and suspicion—but this attitude conflicts with the policy of the USSR bureaucracy, which is to recognize and trade with every military dictator, whether it be Franco (Spain), Papadopoulos (Greece) or Lon Nol (Cambodia). Hence in the recent past the Soviet "theorists" have been busy conditioning their Latin American colleagues to work with and under the army.

To do this they have tried to obscure the class character of the army and its essentially repressive role. In the November 1970 issue of *Comment*, a certain Dr. Shuglolvsky wrote a lengthy article which spelled out in a definitive way the new line, which found its bloody sequel in Chile.

"Great harm is done to the liberation movement by vulgar anti-militarism which calls for the elimination of the armed forces, describing all military leaders without discrimination as stooges of imperialsim and reaction. It should be kept in mind that the reactionary elements frequently make good use of such sentiments. The American sociologist Martin Nidler polled the Ecuador military and established that one of the reasons for their anti-communism is their conviction that the communists wish to disband the army and replace it by a people's militia (sic).

"The responsible revolutionary forces have [a] positive program for the army to counteract the false imperialist propaganda. Not only do they admit the existence of patriotic and anti-imperialist tendencies in the armed forces, but they declare their wish to see the army [as] a renewed and democratized force serving the nation and the national interest. It is the opinion of the Communist Parties that the healthy forces in the armies must play an important role in the liberation movement and in effecting deep social changes. The Communists strongly oppose vulgar anti-military views, and any manifestation of sectarianism [!!] in relation to the military, because these simply add grist to the reactionary mill."

Although presented as a theoretical analysis, this article is a clear instruction to skeptics in the CP. In the same way, it must be recalled that the late Stalin instructed the Chinese Communists in the 1920s to subordinate themselves to the Kuomintang army of Chiang Kai-shek on the grounds that it was modern, progressive, even revolutionary. This bureaucratic theory led directly to the greatest massacre of Communists that China has witnessed—the Shanghai massacre.

In Chile this question was given additional significance by the fact that both Congress and the Senate were dominated by the right-wing Christian Democratic and Nationalist parties, both of which were dedicated to the overthrow of Allende.

The Christian Democrats—led by the CIA nominee, Eduardo Frei—utilized the bogus legitimacy bestowed on Congress and the Senate by Allende to the utmost, to slow down and obstruct his reformist legislation, while at the same time preparing a concerted plan of attack. In this plan their main allies were the Stalinists, who backed to the hilt Allende's consistent refusal to build a workers' militia. At the height of the September 1972 Cabinet crisis, Allende made especially clear his determination to stamp out extreme left-wing opposition to his Fabian reforms and expressly rejected the idea of a people's militia.

Capitulation to the right

"There will be no armed forces here other than those stipulated in the constitution. That is to say, the army, the navy and the air force. I shall eliminate any others if they appear."

On the scale of history the meager reforms of Allende, which aroused great hopes in the workers and peasants and middle class, weighed far less than the betrayal of these aspirations through an enforced respect for constitutional legality.

The reactionaries in the opposition were thus able to integrate their plans more effectively with the "gorillas" of the armed forces, the foreign creditors and the expropriated monopolies. Using their constitutional majority in the two houses and building on the growing disillusionment in the country with Allende's failure to stem inflation, the opposition put into operation the first stage of its plan: to force the resignation of radical ministers and bring in the officers. After the January 1972 by-elections Allende was forced to drop his socialist Minister of the Interior, while his plans for the reform of the two-chamber system were effectively blocked by the opposition.

In June 1972 more pressure and secret talks between government and opposition produced another cabinet crisis when Allende fired his left-wing economics minister, Pedro Vuskovic, and dropped his nationalization plans. This predictably had the full support of the Stalinists who, as in Spain in 1938, had become the extreme right wing of the coalition. The Stalinists accused Vuskovic of "destroying business confidence." At the same time they advocated a "dialog" with the Christian Democrats and the acceptance of the oppositionists' phony program on "workers' participation" in place of nationalization.

Stalinist union leader Figuero welcomed this corporatist plan in glowing terms: "Participation must be expressed NOT in the ownership of the firm's property by their workers, but in an effective and active role in management and planning." This exhortation was combined with an organized drive for greater productivity and "voluntary work" (Reported in *Workers Press*, April 1, 1972).

In August 1972 the "peaceful road" took a rude battering when shopkeepers clashed with police in Santiago—the Stalinists immediately used this as a pretext for demanding the banning of the extreme left-wing groups like MIR in the south with the pathetic plea that these actions of the left wing "would furnish a pretext for military intervention."

The enormous hostility of the Stalinists to any group on the left which didn't toe the Allende line found a brutal expression in August 1972 when Stalinist members of the police attacked an MIR (left-wing) stronghold outside Santiago and killed five peasants.

By the end of 1972 the reaction was ready for its second phase. This was the truck owners' strike in the south against nationalization. After four weeks, Allende not only capitulated to the reaction, but also agreed to bring three generals into his cabinet, and for the second time dropped another Interior Minister. The most prominent of the appointments was General Morio Prats—head of the Armed Forces and notorious anti-working class reactionary. The Interior Minister—Del Canto—was dropped because he permitted "illegal occupation" of private industries by workers. This shift to the right was inexorable.

This was not only a signal of victory for the reactionaries, but a significant gain for the Stalinists, who all along fought against any factory occupations or land seizures and ruthlessly opposed any struggle which was not controlled by them or Allende.

All over the world, the Stalinist lie machine went to work to distort the meaning of these ominous changes. *Comment* (November 1972), the British CP journal, did not hesitate to defend Allende—and Prats:

"Is this not a sign of weakness? Or a surrender? Or a betrayal?. .. the entry of these officers into the government, strange though it seems, is an indication that the right wing has been outmaneuvered and defeated in this engagement of the class battle."

In the same way that Sukarno in Indonesia tried to balance left against right in his doomed cabinet, Allende rewarded the Stalinist Figuero with the job of Minister of Labor.

The remarks of *Comment* show the enormous depths of duplicity of the Stalinists in this period. Prats is an astute conspirator who fought successfully for the retention of the US military mission in 1969 and for

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good relations with the US Navy. Unlike the Stalinists, Prats, as the following speech made on his inauguration shows, was under no illusions about the peaceful roads to Santiago:

"Workers must refrain from struggling for higher wages, and must not go on strike. . . If the strikes were to become widespread, the government would be transformed into a completely repressive dictatorship..." Prophetically Prats concluded that such an outcome would be much worse than Uruguay because those repressed "would not be a small group like the Tupamaros but the whole people."

The insoluble economic crisis

Behind the growing intrigues of the opposition, the arrogance of the generals, the mounting vacillation of President Salvador Allende and the capitulation of the Stalinists during 1972-73 lay the insoluble crisis of Chilean and world capitalism.

When Allende took power, Chile was in the throes of a major economic and financial crisis which has since been considerably exacerbated. The Central Bank's reserves had dropped from $500 million to $280 million and by April 1972 were estimated to be no more than $60 million. At the same time Chile's foreign debts exceeded $3,000 million, most of which was subject to scrutiny by European central bankers.

Failure to repudiate this massive national debt, coupled with the continued drop in copper export prices, meant that Allende had to devalue the Chilean escudo four times in two years. The servicing of foreign debt alone amounted to almost $300 million in one year. The collapse of Bretton Woods and the cutback in US foreign aid ended all hope of the Chilean capitalist economy ever being solvent. Allende's and the Stalinists' compromise with foreign creditors encouraged the native reaction to increase the pressure to stop all further nationalization and prepare openly for counterrevolution.

Demonstrations of workers and students against the right wing were condemned by the Stalinists, while Allende occupied himself with praising the hated Carabinieros—the elite of the police force used for attacks against workers and squatters.

Allende's words express clearly the awe—not to say the impotence—of the petty-bourgeois doctor before the machinery of the capitalist state and his complete lack of confidence in the working class:

"Not for nothing is the motto of the Carabinieros 'Order and Fatherland.' Order, based on moral authority, in the correct carrying out of duties, which in no way implies the negation of hierarchy. In fact you have a sense of discipline and hierarchy which grows on the conception that this government has of social discipline and the use of public force" (*Workers Press*, May 11, 1972). It was precisely this "sense of discipline and hierarchy" which led the Presidential Guard of Carabinieros to surrender when the military coup took place.

In September 1972 Allende dismissed any prospect of military coup: "I believe my government is the best guarantee of peace. Here there are elections and freedom. Ninety percent of Chileans do not want an armed confrontation."

The remaining 10 percent, however, did not share Allende's Stalinist illusions. New groups like the semi-fascist "Freedom and Fatherland" front began openly to arm against the regime while the landlords in the south created private armies to impose summary "justice" on peasants. Under the terms of the October 1972 settlement with the opposition, moreover, Allende conceded an invaluable weapon to the reaction by freeing Chile's 155 radio stations and prevented a compulsory link-up with the state network.

By 1973, the Stalinists' policy of "moderation and conciliation" had disillusioned the industrial workers and for the first time the copper miners began to strike for more wages. This was a serious sign of the crisis, but with the advice of the Stalinist ministers, Allende attacked the working class in the most vicious manner.

On his return from Moscow in January 1973, Allende attacked striking copper miners as "real monopoly bankers, asking for money for their pocket without any consideration for the situation in the country."

In the same speech, Allende revealed that the foreign debt had gone up in two years from $3,000 million to $4,020 million and admitted further that parliament should have been dissolved at an early stage. This was the price of the "peaceful road."

Here, too, the Stalinists showed their hand. When the copper miners of the huge nationalized El Teniente copper mine struck for 70 days for wage rises, the Stalinists opposed Allende's overtures to the miners as "vacillation" and "highly inadmissible" and encouraged the regime to use water cannons and tear gas on demonstrating miners. The province of O'Higgins—the area of the strikes—was put under military control.

At the same time Allende made a proposal to bring back the army generals who resigned their posts in March 1973. The purpose of this move was clear: Allende and the Stalinists wanted to use the army against the working class, even though their party leaders were convinced that a coup was being prepared by the opposition for August or September!

In June 1973, the right wing made their first attempt at power in the aftermath of the copper miners' strike. This attempt of the Second Armored Regiment failed, but it showed how extremely vulnerable the regime was to a coup.

This attack stimulated the working class to go into action, to seize factories and to strengthen the assemblies of rank-and-file workers which sprang up in October to November 1972.

The reaction of the Chilean Stalinist leader, Luis Corvalan, to the abortive coup of June 29 testified to the panic of these traitors when they saw the handwriting on Allende's wall. Gone was the complacency and euphoria, but instead there existed a terrified paralysis before the army: "The revolt was quickly contained, thanks to the prompt and determined action by the Commander-in-Chief of the army, the loyalty of the armed forces and the police. ... We continue to support the absolutely professional character of the armed institutions. Their enemies are not among the ranks of the people, but in the reactionary camp" (*Marxism Today*, September 1973).

Even at this late hour, the situation could have been changed by resolute and decisive leadership—instead Chilean workers were exhorted to place their faith in the shadow of the Chilean capitalists.

"Avoidance of civil war is and will continue to be the principal political task of all Chileans, followers of the government or not, who believe in the necessity of maintaining the class struggle ... at the level at which until today it has developed (sic). For this we value not only the voice of the working class, but also the words expressed by the church and the rectors of the universities." (Ibid.)

And what did the rectors have to say on this momentous question?: "Many tests demonstrate that we can achieve justice without breaking the moral unity of our state, nor the basic values of our nationality." (!!)

To this humbug and deception, Corvalan servilely responds: "We comply if not word for word, with the spirit which flows through such a declaration, *from such high exponents of university culture and education*." (Emphasis added.)

In contrast to the "high exponents of culture," the exponent of the class struggle, V.I. Lenin, long ago scathingly attacked those philistines who thought that acute problems of the class struggle could be solved by means of formal democracy.

"Such problems are actually solved by civil war if they are acute and aggravated in struggle." (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 267.)

The Chilean Stalinists, however, followed a course which was not only

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false but, worse still, contradictory. As Corvalan wrote: “The patriotic and revolutionary slogan must be: ‘No to civil war! No to fascism.’” But fascism is civil war against the workers and the existence of the capitalist state carries in it the potential danger of civil war against the working class. By renouncing civil war and leaving the struggle in the hands of the reactionary bourgeois officers, Chilean Stalinism only facilitated and expedited the defeat of the workers.

“Nothing increases the insolence of fascists so much as ‘flabby pacifism’ on the part of the workers’ organizations. Nothing destroys the confidence of the middle classes in the working class as temporizing passivity and the absence of the will of struggle.” (Trotsky, *Whither France*, p. 19, LSSP edition.)

But the Chilean workers were to receive an even more ominous blow. In this desperate search for allies, the Chilean Stalinists began to make the most opportunistic appeals to the ranks of the fascists and extreme nationalist parties. Corvalan unashamedly begged the followers of Pablo H. Rodriguez, the fascist, for a “dialog” to avoid civil war, to “unite our country, to avoid artificial divisions between Chileans, who have a common interest.” The fascists predictably treated Corvalan’s entreaties with contempt and derision. .. and pressed on with the preparation of civil war.

As the workers became increasingly skeptical of the regime and began to organize spontaneously in self-defense, the right stepped up its preparations and spoke openly about following the “Indonesian road.” Chile’s major bourgeois daily, *El Mercurio*, spoke gloatingly on July 27 about the “spontaneous and horrible” massacre in Indonesia which, in its opinion, “wasn’t really so horrible” because it made Indonesia into “one of the leading nations in southern Asia, in which the economy has been stabilized and order prevails.”

Frei, former president, openly called for the crushing of the “parallel army” growing in the factories. In this situation only the most resolute action of the government in arming the workers, disbanding the army, and alerting the whole working class to struggle could have prevented a coup or smashed it. The government and the Stalinists did the contrary.

An “arms control law” passed in the October 1972 crisis was reactivated in order to prevent the arming of the workers. In the navy and army, the right-wing officers used the apathy, passivity and indifference of the Stalinists to harangue and indoctrinate the ranks and prepare for insurrection. Allende’s fervent appeals to the army only increased the determination of the generals to put a quick and ruthless end to the experiment in the “peaceful road.”

The final attack on the president’s palace on September 11 thus became the culminating blow in a plan which was conceived only because of the acquiescence of the government and the Stalinist party. Like Hitler and Franco, General Pinochet won by default, because of the treachery of Stalinism.

The petty bourgeoisie and reaction

One final question must be addressed to Stalinists. Why is it that no Stalinist leader will dare answer the most vital question posed by the defeat? Why did the urban middle class and, with it, the middle and lower ranks of the army, turn so violently against the regime? If the “peaceful road” and “respect for legality” are the only guarantee of winning the middle classes, why did they fail so disastrously in Chile?

To blame this on the CIA intrigues or the tendency of the middle class to always support military regimes, as the Stalinists now imply, is to revile Marxism and conceal the treachery of Popular Frontism. As Trotsky wrote in *Whither France?* (1934):

“The petty bourgeoisie is distinguished by its economic dependence and its social heterogeneity. Its upper stratum is linked directly to the big bourgeoisie. Its lower stratum merges with the proletariat and even falls to the status of lumpen-proletariat. In accordance with its economic situation, the petty bourgeoisie can have no policy of its own. It always oscillates between the capitalists and the workers. Its own upper stratum pushes it to the Right; its lower strata, oppressed and exploited, are capable in certain conditions of turning sharply to the Left.”

In periods of acute crisis and an absence of revolutionary leadership “the petty bourgeoisie,” continues Trotsky, “begins to lose patience. It assumes an attitude more and more hostile towards its own upper stratum. It becomes convinced of the bankruptcy and the perfidy of its political leadership. … It is precisely this disillusionment of the petty bourgeoisie, its impatience, its despair, that Fascism exploits. … The fascists show boldness, go out into the streets, attack the police, and attempt to drive out Parliament by force. That makes an impression on the despairing petty bourgeois.”

Trotsky’s words are a precise description of the petty bourgeoisie under Allende. They are, in fact, corroborated by the *Financial Times’* reporter’s description of the plight of the middle class in Chile: “Chile firmly remains in the forefront of world inflation... Item: Last month the over-worked employees of the National Mint called a strike. Through their good efforts the money supply had soared by 830 percent since Dr. Allende took office. As all other Chilean workers, their wages had been raised by 26 percent in January 1971, by 22 percent in January 1972, by 100 percent (sic) last October and by 60 percent in April. And yet, said a spokesman for the strikers: ‘We’re all under a terrible psychological strain. We handle more money than any bank and what we take home hardly buys us enough to eat.’” (*Financial Times*, June 29, 1973.)

The petty bourgeoisie were the first casualties of the coalition’s policy of trying to appease the working class with subsidies while promising increased productivity to the industrialists, curbing nationalization drastically and refusing to repudiate the huge burden of foreign debt incurred by the previous pro-US Frei government.

The net decrease of purchasing power and of consumption was felt most keenly within the lower middle class: “The lower classes, which are Dr. Allende's principal supporters, are catered to by the state which gives them first priority for basic items. If they are not so well off as during Dr. Allende’s first year, they are demonstrably better off than ever before. At the other end of the scale, the rich can afford to shop in the black market for goods which, reflecting the black market dollar, are often up to ten times the officially set price. But no one looks after the petty bourgeoisie—too rich to be subsidized and too poor to pay the black market pirates.

“...And as the pie shrinks in absolute terms, the potential of the state to continue to subsidize the poor and the working class is reduced.”

The big capitalists wanted a full-scale devaluation of the escudo or a full-scale wage freeze coupled with diversion of import dollars from foodstuffs to capital goods. The workers on the other hand wanted more nationalization, workers’ control and an end to the parliamentary fraud.

Allende and the Stalinists balked at both alternatives and were trapped in their own contradictions. It was only a matter of time before the imperialists and the junta struck. As an epitaph to Allende’s government we would suggest the following quotation from Lenin:

“The proletariat cannot achieve victory if it does not win the majority of the population to its side. But to limit the winning to polling a majority of votes in an election under the rule of the bourgeoisie, or to make it the condition for it, is crass stupidity or else sheer deception of the workers. In order to win the majority of the population to its side the proletariat must, in the first place, overthrow the bourgeoisie and seize state power; secondly, it must introduce Soviet power and completely smash the old state apparatus, whereby it immediately undermines the rule, prestige and

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influence of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois compromisers over the non-proletarian working people. Thirdly, it must entirely destroy the influence of the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeois compromisers over the majority of the non-proletarian masses by satisfying their economic needs in a revolutionary way at the expense of the exploiters."

Build the revolutionary party

To defend the Chilean working class is to assimilate the vital lessons of this period and to build a new revolutionary leadership, based on the principles of Lenin and Trotsky.

While it is true that Stalinism played a major role in the Chilean defeat, it is impossible to analyze it in isolation from the role of the centrists and revisionists who played the role of willing and unwilling accomplices to Stalinism.

The centrists of the MIR (Movement of Revolutionary Left), who had a considerable following among the landless peasantry in the south, did not take a principled attitude to Allende and created great confusion in the peasantry. Their policy of "critical support" to Allende meant in practice capitulation to the Popular Front. Like the POUM in Catalonia in the Spanish Civil War, this group withdrew its opposition to Allende in the March 1973 congressional elections precisely when a bold challenge to the Stalinists and Socialists and a demand for a workers' and farmers' government could have rallied the majority of workers and poor peasants.

The revisionists of the United Secretariat played an even more ignominious role. The *Militant* (newspaper of the United States Socialist Workers Party), in its issue of September 4, 1973, laments: "But there is still no party that can take up this example (popular control of production) and spread it throughout the cordones (labor assemblies) and throughout the country."

Why doesn't the SWP tell its readers what happened to the POR (Revolutionary Workers Party of Chile), section of the United Secretariat, which abandoned the International Committee and joined the United Secretariat to support the revisionist theories of Mandel and Hansen, theories which liquidated Trotskyism in Latin America and substituted for it the ideas and methods of Guevara and Castro? Why does not the SWP recall that it was itself the main protagonist of this political line?

Is it not a fact that the Trotskyist party was destroyed in Chile, not by Stalinism or any junta, but by the conscious application of the revisionist theory that revolutions could be successfully made without the building of a Marxist party?

Was it not the leader of the POR, Luis Vitale, who, in 1962, on the eve of the infamous Pabloite Re-unification Congress, declared in the following words this complete abdication of the struggle for a Marxist party and power?

"The new generation is developing in a different world and a more different Latin America. The Cuban revolution has broken the old prejudices, has shown that the triumph can be achieved in any Latin American country, that the imperialist counter-revolutionary oligarchy can be destroyed, that the traditional parties, reformists and Stalinists, can be overruled by broader revolutionary movements, and has shown once again that the laws of history are stronger than the bureaucratic apparatus..." (*History of the Workers Movement*, Santiago, Chile, 1962.)

The Chilean defeat, however, will change nothing in the revisionist Secretariat. Far from their learning any lessons, these events drive them closer to bureaucracy, the national bourgeoisie, and imperialism. That is why the revisionists of the International Marxist Group, for example, have no hesitation in marching with the Stalinist champions of the Popular Front in Britain in the demonstration against the Chilean junta—and for the Popular Front in Chile.

Revisionism has certainly reached a new stage in its degeneration. By marching with the Popular Front they have identified themselves openly with the counterrevolutionary preparations of Stalinism and the bourgeoisie. To fight Stalinism and Castroism is to politically destroy revisionism.

The ICFI rejects completely the spurious demand of the Stalinist Gollan that the Tories do not recognize the junta. Heath and Pinochet are partners in imperialist repression and must be exposed for what they are.

The International Committee calls for the maximum solidarity of the international working class to block Chilean shipping and goods, and secure the release of all political prisoners as well as the cessation of the summary executions of the junta. At the same time we demand of the USSR government and the Eastern European regimes that they break all diplomatic and economic ties with the Chilean junta and give every aid to the embattled workers of Chile.

- Down with the military junta of Chile!
- Down with the Popular Front!
- Down with Stalinism!
- Long live the Chilean workers!
- Build the sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International!

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