

MINORITY REPORT ON CHILE AND THE RESPONSE OF THE SWP

Last Tuesday the Unidad Popular government in Chile was overthrown and its leader Dr. Salvador Allende assassinated. The overthrow of the Allende government by the military is just the latest development in the ever deepening social crisis that has been gripping Chile since the Unidad Popular came to power. While the Unidad Popular is a bourgeois popular front type government, it must be kept in mind that this government was a government of compromise, class compromise, a government that rose to power in response to the increasing mobilization of the workers and peasants against the bourgeoisie. Important concessions were won by the Chilean workers and peasants during the period of the Unidad Popular. These concessions to the workers and peasants coupled with the inability of the Allende government to head off the rising militancy and combativity of the masses led the bourgeoisie to opt for a coup solution. Needless to say the Allende government was unable to defend itself against the coup as this would entail a mobilization and arming of the masses which in turn would also spell the downfall of the Unidad Popular. Nevertheless the downfall of the Popular Front government does not merely signify the replacement of one bourgeois administration with another. Its significance goes much deeper than that.

In Latin America the class struggle has been for a number of years on an extremely high level of intensity. The area of the continent where the class struggle has been sharpest is in the south in the countries of Chile, Argentina and Bolivia. The situation in Argentina is prerevolutionary. The situation in Chile has been transformed into a revolutionary crisis with counter-revolution on the offensive. In Chile the deteriorating situation coupled with the heightening of the masses' expectations by the Popular Front led to the revolutionary crisis which brought the military to power. It became clear to imperialism and the native bourgeoisie that to stay in power they would have to inflict a decisive defeat on the Chilean workers and peasants. The overthrow of the Unidad Popular was only the first step. The next steps involve the suppression of the mass organizations and the imprisonment and execution of the revolutionary militants. The cutting off of diplomatic relations with Cuba by the Junta as one of its first official acts on the day of the coup reflects on an international scale the kind of policy to be followed by the Junta. The period of class compromise in Chile is over.

Due to the international character and scope of the class struggle in the epoch of imperialism, a defeat for the Chilean workers and peasants would represent a defeat for the working class and oppressed the world over. The repercussions would be especially felt in Latin America, not only due to the geographical proximity to Chile but mainly because the highly sharp class struggle in Latin America, which has assumed a continental character has had more than its share of defeats, defeats which can in a very real and immediate sense shift the relationship of forces to imperialism's advantage. Thus at the present time the class struggle in Chile is at the

center and is the axis of world politics. The masses have not been defeated in Chile. The class struggle rages on with the masses realizing that only an armed struggle to smash the military regime can save them. The question of power is posed in an immediate day to day sense. Civil war could break out at any moment (if it's not already raging).

What has been the response of the Washington D.C. branch of the Socialist Workers Party to the recent developments of world historical importance in Chile. The result of the balance sheet we draw is purely negative. The branch leadership has responded to these events of world historical importance in an outrageously routinist and blassé manner. The Chilean workers and peasants may be fighting it out for their very existence, but it still business as usual for the D.C. branch of the SWP. On the day of the coup the branch leadership did nothing to begin a solidarity campaign, this despite a demonstration called for the next day, and inspite of repeated phone calls to the organizer by both SWP and YSA members. The next day a mere handfull of comrades showed up at the White House demonstration, a demonstration that drew close to 300 persons. No announcement was made the previous night at the GW Farmworkers meeting by branch spokespeople about either the events in Chile or the demonstration the next day. It was only a last minute intervention by the Chile coalition that got an announcement made. This completely unserious and complacent attitude towards the events in Chile, events which take on to themselves an overriding international importance has not been reversed by the branch leadership. The branch leadership did nothing to build or even inform other comrades of the demonstration called for Saturday. At the Friday night forum, the first SWP public function since the coup in Chile, NO MENTION was made by the branch either of the events in Chile or the demonstration called for the next day. When a group of comrades found out about the demonstration late Friday night and showed up at the demonstration the next day with their own signs, they were told by the organizer that they could not carry the signs and that they should have instead reported to the hall to be assigned to one of several areas of work that needed them and was being carried out that day. In spite of the organizer's admonitions these comrades were acting in the best spirit of Trotskyism striving to fulfill their revolutionary responsibility. As these comrades found out about the demonstration less than 24 hours before and since to their knowledge the party had done nothing to build it and had not even informed most of the comrades, it could only be assumed that the branch leadership did not know about the demonstration or did not consider it important enough to warrant any attention. Friday night at the forum I asked a number of comrades about upcoming Chile actions to which these comrades knew nothing, so there was a real basis for these comrades thinking that the branch knew nothing when they did find out about the demonstration. The fact that the leadership did know about the demonstration and had even sat in on one of the planning meetings at the Community bookstore makes their refusal to seriously build the demonstration even more inexcusable. In light of the probable non-intervention by the branch these comrades felt it was important that a Trotskyist intervention take place around revolutionary slogans.

Upon arriving at the demonstration these comrades were told to put down and not carry the signs by the branch organizer. The reason initially given was that some of the signs had Fourth International written on them. To this the comrades responded that they would cross out any reference to the FI on their signs (although it's beyond me, the Voorhis Act notwithstanding, why the branch leadership is afraid of having comrades identified as Fourth Internationalists). This it seems was not good enough for the organizer who stated that the political content of the slogans was unacceptable. The organizer also rebuked the comrades for not working through party channels to build the branch intervention. But since the branch leadership had kept the comrades in the dark about the demonstration until the last minute, these comrades had no way of knowing that a branch intervention was going to take place. These comrades realizing, unlike the branch leadership, the overriding political importance of the demonstration decided to organize an intervention. Upon seeing that the branch had organized a somewhat half-hearted intervention and upon being told to put down their signs, they did so and participated in the branch organized intervention. As it turned out the branch intervention was completely unserious and took place on a rotten political basis.

The concept put forward by the branch leadership of the Chile demonstration being just another activity to which comrades might be assigned again points up the unseriousness and complacency of the branch leadership in this matter, who obviously do not see the centrality of the Chilean class struggle at this juncture. As soon as the branch heard of the events in Chile it should have gone on a mobilization footing to defend the Chilean masses. This would have been in the best tradition of our movement which responded to the events in Germany in 1933, Spain in 1936 and even to a great extent the events in France in 68 in this fashion. The measly, half-hearted, tailist interventions that were organized took place on a completely inadequate political basis. Instead of raising slogans that open solidarize the party with the Chilean workers and peasants are related directly to the concrete situation in Chile today, the party raised minimalist democratic slogans like Hands off Chile and Free All Political Prisoners. These are basically the same slogans that the party has raised in its USLA work and in the recent Brazilian political prisoners demonstration. The point that the branch leadership misses is that there is not an identity between the struggle for the liberation of political prisoners in all of Latin America and the situation in Chile today. Today Chile is at the center of the international struggle between revolution and counterrevolution. Either the workers and peasants will be completely crushed or they will go forward to take state power. While the party must of course make clear its position in favor of the liberation of all political prisoners in Chile and its opposition to U.S. intervention, the party intervention must reflect the present revolutionary reality in Chile and pose the political solution to the crisis. These slogans would center for the need for the arming of the masses, a break with the bourgeoisie and for a workers government. This was the political content to the signs that the branch organizer objected to. This is the

approach that the Trotskyist movement has taken in the past when faced with events of world historical importance. In 1933 during the German events, the party went on a mobilization footing in defense of the German masses, publishing the Militant three times a week. The party did not limit itself to raising democratic civil liberties demands. The party intervention centered around slogans posing the political solution to the crisis. These focused around the call for armed workers militia to defeat the fascists and the need for the workers' united front. The banner headline on an issue of the Militant during the German events summed up the party's correct approach. "HITLER IS CONSOLIDATING HIS POWER! WHOEVER OPPOSES THE WORKERS UNITED FRONT IS A TRAITOR!" Also the party did not wait until its next convention to discuss out, analyze, and draw conclusions from the German experience. A major turn in the party's line and work was initiated as a result of the German events. The Party together with the International Left Opposition decided that the German events proved the Comintern was dead, and called for the building of a Fourth International. The reason I bring the analogy to the German events, is because I feel in many ways a defeat for the Chilean masses could have the same effect on the Latin American revolution that the German defeat had on the European revolution. The approach we propose for the party's work around the Chilean revolution is in the best traditions of our movement.

Concretely we propose the following:

1. That the branch go on a mobilization footing to defend the Chilean revolution.
2. That the party activity in this regard be centered around the following slogans:
 - a) Workers and Peasants to Power!
 - b) For Workers and Peasants Militias
 - c) Free All Political Prisoners
 - d) Hands Off ChileIn addition to this the party should explain the bankruptcy of the Popular Frontism which paved the way for the coup.
3. That next Friday the branch hold a forum on the Chilean events, their importance and the way forward.
4. That the branch approve the general line of this report.

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*we are open to changes in formulation as far as the slogans are concerned, as long as the political content is preserved.