

tapri

THE CHILEAN COUP

Author(s): James Petras and Betty Petras

Source: *Instant Research on Peace and Violence*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1973), pp. 163-176

Published by: Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40724705>

Accessed: 28-11-2016 10:05 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Instant Research on Peace and Violence*

James Petras
Betty Petras

THE CHILEAN COUP*

In many ways Chile in August 1973 resembled Spain 1936: a popularly elected left socialist government resting on the support of the industrial proletariat and the rural poor, tension and uncertainty rippling through the ranks of the left intelligentsia — waiting, knowing, any day, any moment, to hear the news that the military had revolted against the regime and that they would have to respond quickly with arms, the desperation, hysteria and frustration of the shopkeepers, businessmen, and professionals, who were also waiting for the military to move, who everyday preyed for a *golpe* that would put the workers back in their place, would end «this nightmare» and return Chile to its «rightful owners», *la gente decente*, and out of the slums, enticed by money from right-wing sources and probably the US embassy, hundreds of lumpen poured into the down-

town center — the fascist street-fighters of Patria y Libertad who filled the streets with garbage and gunned down antifascist truck drivers racing down the streets bringing desperately needed food to the workers' barrios. Would it be today, tomorrow? Who would start it and how would it end? The questions arose, hung in the air, and remained unanswered. Each day in the early morning dawn the militants dragged themselves back to bed after another night of preparedness, another night of «extreme alert» on orders issued from the Central Unica de los Trabajadores (CUT — National Workers Union).

On the morning of September 11, the top military chiefs decided to make their move. A junta was formed which demanded that Allende resign his elected post. The Navy commanders who had recently purged scores of constitutionalist sailors mutinied and seized control of the port city. At this signal, Air Force commanders sent planes to strafe and bomb the palace into submission, while Army units captured the communications network, and Allende remained isolated in the governmental palace where he was to be assassinated. Later, thousands of workers were killed.

* This article consists of two essays by Dr. James Petras and Betty Petras. The first one was written in October, 1973 and the second a month later which has enabled some revision in views.

Dr. Petras is a specialist in Latin American affairs. At present he is Professor of Sociology at the State University of New York at Binghamton.

The Editors

The military coup was not an isolated act but the culmination of right-wing violence that had raged in recent months. Nor were Allende's final attempts at compromise the first time he had made concessions to the military. For months right-wing terrorist groups had been in the streets — assassinating workers and destroying public facilities. Right-wing truck owners had been holding the government hostage while shooting truck drivers trying to make deliveries. The Christian Democratic and National Party politicians joined in passing legislation to illegitimize the elected government. Purges in the ranks of the armed forces and the forcible resignation of loyalist officers prepared the ground for the coup, and Allende accepted it all in the name of compromise, security and reconciliation. He sent his condolences to the widows of the murdered workers, told working-class housewives he sympathized with their problems but lacked the legal instruments to prevent the truck owners from starving the country.

Allende managed in the end to include all the notorious anti-government military chiefs in his Cabinet — in the hope of preventing a coup. Six parties of the government coalition condemned the commanders of the Navy for their hideous tortures of constitutionalist enlisted men, Allende disassociated himself from the denunciation, thereby cutting himself off from the only element in the armed forces who could have saved the people from a bloody massacre. Allende was attempting to conciliate the very people who were to put the gun to his head in a very few days.

Now Allende is dead, killed in the Presidential Palace where he was placed by millions of Chileans searching for a way out of poverty and exploitation. Allende will always be remembered for the honest effort he made to bring about a more democratic society. His personal bravery and dedication to the cause of social liberation will forever remain a symbol to those Chileans who have emerged to fight against the military dictatorship. For them Allende is not only a symbol of a more just and humane society, but a popular leader of great personal integrity. His final refusal to accede to brute force and his willingness to die rather than surrender will inspire

millions of young men and women who carry on the struggle.

How did the military takeover come to pass? During its first year and a half, the Allende Government initiated peaceful but effective change. Large landed estates were expropriated, foreign mines were nationalized, and banks were statified — a measure of social justice long awaited by the Chilean populace. A number of hastily written books and articles were churned out by impressionistic observers hailing «la via Chilena» as a vindication of the electoral path to revolutionary social change. Yet it was too early, the major test was still to come. As the workers and peasants gained in power and authority, demands and pressures increased to extend the process to industry, commerce and services. And it became clear early in 1972 that precisely those amorphous strata described by sociologists as the middle classes would not go along even if a majority of the electorate willed it. «Socialism» was barely tolerable if it affected the foreign and agrarian rich. But as workers began to occupy their factories, and to make efforts to equalize salaries and reduce status differences — as the petit-bourgeoisie saw their illusory hopes of someday becoming captains of industry or commerce smashed by the collective action of workers — they turned with a vengeance against the Government.

It was not any particular decline in income, or loss of material goods, that can adequately explain the intensity of feeling with which these petit-bourgeois sectors threw themselves into action. As a matter of fact it is likely that many of these groups have actually benefited materially from the Government's redistributive policies. Yet the mystique of property, mobility and ambition was being profoundly violated. As one pro-Christian Democrat professional in Chile told us, «Our way of life is being threatened. What do I care that I am making more money if the *rotos* are going to have their way.» Another middle-sized factory owner exclaimed that, «We are surrounded. In everything we must deal with, there is the Government! We have no security, we will not invest.» These Chilean enthusiasts of the «democratic marketplace» insisted, «*Nobody* wants him!» ignoring the

fact that Allende was democratically elected and was still supported by the working class. Such »democrats« confused their own desire to retain their privileges with those of »everybody«. From those whose security had been most fragile before, one heard a continual refrain which contained both plaintive yearning and prophetic understanding: »Chile will never be the same.»

Popular Power

In October 1972, the right-wing launched its first major offensive: doctors abandoned hospitals, shops were closed, truck-owners blocked the highways and mobs of middle-class students tried to take over the downtown area. This effort was thwarted as hundreds of thousands of workers occupied their factories and kept them running, set up distribution networks, and prepared for armed combat. The Right extracted some concessions from the Government, including military appointees to the cabinet; lost several score factories to the workers; and withdrew, hoping to win in the March 1973 elections what they could not accomplish in the streets during the October days. But in the congressional elections, the Left increased its vote substantially over the 1970 presidential elections. Moreover, the bases of support for both Left and Right were much more homogeneous: in the proletarian quarters, the Left rolled up large majorities, while the Right did the same in middle-class areas. The elections settled nothing; they were a prelude to new and more ominous confrontations.

In June 1973, an abortive right-wing military putsch was defeated by loyalist military officers. The CIA surely must have laughed at the rebels ineptness: their tanks observed the stop signs and red lights on their way to seize the governmental palace; mass communication networks were overlooked, and when a tank commander requested petroleum and was refused by the gas station attendant (»There's a gas shortage, you know.«) the putschists abandoned the tank. Nevertheless 21 people were killed before the rebels were put down, and US military advisers must have resolved to correct their »inadequacies« in the future. The well-coordinated uprising of the

Chilean armed forces on September 11 was nothing if not a professional operation.

The petit-bourgeois offensive which sought to paralyze the country provoked a historic counter-offensive among the Chilean working class: *Poder Popular* — Popular Power. The very concept was antagonistic to the bureaucratic control of the Government apparatus. »The people are fighting, creating Popular Power«, became the new rallying cry.

Factories, stores, offices and farms were occupied, owners and counter-revolutionary managers were expelled, and the workers themselves assumed the administration and defense of the means of production. As *Alerta!*, a daily wall paper of October 1972, proclaimed, »Chile is to be found producing normally from Arica to Magellanes, in the city, in the mines and in the countryside.»

The accounts of the initiative and determination with which the workers responded were varied; when the Revlon textile factory was found closed, the workers, all of them women, met, organized, persuaded their vacillating companeros, and single-handedly set the industry operating again. When public transportation halted, workers trudged miles on foot to assume their posts at work. Even the children of the working-class municipality of San Miguel organized to clean the streets of the *miguelitos*, the bent nails scattered by rightists to disable the workers' vehicles.

Networks of direct distribution were established: using vehicles requisitioned from the factories, workers brought their products — dishes, shoes, sugar — straight to the neighborhoods to be sold or exchanged for foodstuffs brought by peasants from the countryside. In the words of a Socialist in Concepcion — both a CUT leader and a leader of an industrial *cordon* — »The potential for Popular Power already exists in the consciousness of the workers, ... but a large part of converting this into a concrete reality will depend on the vanguards.»

What began as a »defensive measure« soon took on a meaning of its own; new forms of class mobilization, organization and struggles emerged. Industrial belts (*cordones industriales*) were organized from below, linking all factories within an area to co-ordinate the workers' resistance to a rightist-military coup. *Comandos comuna-*

les (municipal councils) spontaneously emerged, joining factory workers, neighborhood assemblies, women's organizations, slum settlers — all the popular forces within a geographical area — and providing a vehicle for direct action. These commandos bypassed the traditional Left leadership and established trade union apparatus, whose capacity for instant mobilization was found wanting.

In describing the success of the cordones, one leader pointed to the fact that, »communists as well as socialists, MAPU, FTR, PR and independents worked together united in the tasks of the cordon.» The leaders of these proto-soviets were described by one Allendista as »insolent young men» — aggressively independent young militants whose class instincts distrusted the wheeling and dealing going on in the Moneda (the governmental palace). They trusted in their own power, that of their *companeros* and their workmates. When Allende called on the factory workers to march on the palace to defend the government against the June putsch, some militants are reported to have told Allende to come to the cordones to be defended.

August 1973 — the prelude

The cordones and commandos reached their peak in the October 1972 crisis and confrontation; and then, lacking resources and practical tasks, they began to ebb, their members attracted back to the CUT, which organized marches to defend the Government. After initially failing to register the significance of the cordones, the CUT moved to link them more directly to their organization.

The center of the struggle has been in the urban centers, which contain over 70 percent of the labor force. The peasants, while not irrelevant, were an important *auxiliary* force in the struggle between workers and bourgeoisie. The peasants provide logistical support — supply foods and raw materials. And now in the civil war, the peasants could provide recruits for the urban armies, of the countryside could become a »fall-back area» if the struggle is prolonged.

By August the economy had begun to deteriorate because of the intense social and political conflict. The shortages of essential food items had begun to adversely affect the standard of living in working-class districts — where government and popular distribution methods failed to function with the efficiency of October 1972. The lack of raw materials had caused important industries to function at less than capacity, and construction of desperately needed public housing halted as building supplies ran out. Bread lines in working-class sectors were commonplace, while hoarding, black-marketeering and speculation had become a way of life in the *barrios altos*, the upper-income neighborhoods. Runaway inflation rates averaging a 15 percent monthly increase during June, July and August were further dislocating and undermining the economy. Inflation, shortages, and their consequences exacerbated the conflict between social classes.

In the struggle for control over increasingly scarce resources in a polarized class situation, each side demanded more radical solutions. The workers in the factories insistently sought rationing, workers' or governmental ownership of transportation and retail distribution, and a *mano dura* (hard hand) against the speculators, profiteers and opponents who were sabotaging the economy. Some cordones proposed to seize the trucks of the private owners whose main goal was to bring down the Government; the truck lockout was accompanied by hundreds of rightist anti-government terrorist incidents, particularly by the fascist Patria y Libertad. Over 500 such attacks between mid-July and August alone were launched against bridges, railroad tracks, power facilities, oil pipe lines, stores, homes and trucks. Meanwhile, the legal opposition parties blocked all reform legislation, used the courts to free terrorists, dispatched the army to disarm factories, prevented any legislation on sanctions against speculation and blackmarketeering, passed a congressional resolution calling on the government to resign because of incompetence, launched impeachment proceedings against members of the Cabinet, and openly urged the military to take over key posts in the Government. In addition routine sacking of the economy occurred in the

private sector (disinvestment and running down of machinery), and bureaucratic sabotage in the public sectors. Later the Christian Democrats endorsed the coup they had prepared.

This internal activity was carefully coordinated with US policy designed to further weaken the economy. Loans and credits from public, private and international banks were cut off and shipments of essential parts for US produced machinery were inexplicably »delayed». On the direct action front, US financing of opposition activity — especially the truckowners lockout — was evidenced by the large influx of dollars which stabilized for over a month the price of the dollar on the black market. The US Ambassador, Nathaniel Davis, is a veteran with practical experience in eliminating leftists; during his ambassadorship in Guatemala, several thousand working-class and peasant militants were gunned down. In Chile, out of an embassy staff of 140 officials, Davis surrounded himself with a team of key operatives — »professionals» with long experience in the ways and methods of subversion. Their efforts were cloaked in utmost secrecy; only the results were obvious. Their credentials speak for themselves: John W. Isaminger, political section of the embassy (1942 — Army Intelligence, 1951 — Intelligence for the Pentagon, operations in La Paz, Guatemala and Washington), Daniel Arzao, Political Council US Embassy (1943 — Army Secret Service, 1951 — State Department, 1953 — CIA, operations in Phnom Penh, Montevideo, Bogota and Washington), Raymond Warren, office of the First Secretary (1943 — US Air Force, 1954 — State Department and later CIA, operations in Caracas and Bogota), Frederick Lastrash, First Secretary (1942 — US Marines, 1948 — Naval Intelligence, 1956 — State Department, operations in Calcutta, New Delhi, Amman, Cairo and Caracas), John Tipton, Second Secretary (CIA and State Department, operations in Mexico City, La Paz and Guatemala).

In great part, the deterioration of the economy was the result of the political opposition both internal and external, and not the incompetence and bungling of socialist ideologues, as reported by the US press. Under the pretext of objective reporting, anti-communist journalists like Jonathan Kandell

of the *New York Times* and Norman Gall white-washed right-wing terror, US aggression, and Christian Democratic sabotage, presenting the same picture as the rightist press in Chile: leftists threatening democracy while leading the country to anarchy and chaos. Such reporting created the political atmosphere for the »tragic» but inevitable overthrow of the Government!

A measure of natural dislocation accompanies any transitional period involving fundamental social change: there were administrators directing industries who still lacked the full experience to do so; there was general laxness in disciplining absentee workers; and, as one US technocrat commented, there was an »excess» of democracy in running enterprises. This was in some sense a necessary development. After hundreds of years of exploitation, the workers had a lot to say to other and a lot to learn — as they were the first to admit. But what was most impressive was the way in which the workers were learning to control their destiny: over one-third of the employees in the metal-machinery sector of industry attended training schools to learn new skills; courses in accounting and budgeting (both prerequisites to efficient management) were overflowing; the national plan, including priorities on allocation of resources, was discussed intelligently and freely at workers' assemblies in the plants. The short-term costs of this »excess» democracy were perhaps more visible, but less relevant, than the long-term gain: in this direction, it seemed, lay socialism with a human face. And it was the workers we spoke to who were most aware of their own shortcomings, as well as those of the Government.

Obviously, the economy could not continue performing for long in this way. Yet the deterioration of the economy could not have been resolved in the manner proposed by the Communist Party or Allende. No efforts at increased productivity and planning had a chance to succeed while the question of political power remained undecided. Increasing productivity or controlling inflation would not have occurred as long as the material means to realize these goals were controlled in part by an opposition whose singular goal was the destruction of the Government. For example,

this winter (June to August 1973), the Communist Party made a gigantic effort to increase the areas of land to be sown and succeeded — until the truckowners' strike paralyzed the delivery of fertilizers and seeds, as well as leaving peasants with no means to deliver their products to the city. But Allende's complaint that he lacked the »constitutional« means to prevent the destruction of society was no encouragement to the Left least of all to workingclass women who stood three and four hours in line for oil and bread, when it was available. No wonder when thousands of militant proletarian women sought an audience at the Moneda, they demanded the Government confiscate the trucks removed from use by their owners — who had refused all settlement offers, except, as one typical owner put it, »one based on the departure of this Government.«

A nation divided

By September there was a great and widening division in Chile — a polarization of class forces in which everyone was almost obliged to take sides. Not everybody on either side was clearly aware of the refinements of underlying ideologies, or all of the consequences inherent in the political position with which they were allied. In part, the lines were drawn according to class loyalties and sentiments — a mixture of social solidarity and antagonism to those who threatened to impose an alien way of life.

For a moment the working class' newly-won role as protagonist of a new society engendered a rejection of all forms of domination and exploitation. Freedom and respect were won in massive confrontations and through years of struggle and study; it is inconceivable that the workers will passively return to the old patterns of subservience and domination. They have experienced freedom and they will return to capitalism only at the end of a bayonet. The industrial proletariat formed the core of socialist politics, but it was not alone. Several hundred thousand unionized peasants and rural workers allied themselves with the Left and provided active support, though their capacity for political mobilization was somewhat more limited. Lastly, there were the *pobladores*, the slum settlers,

the urban poor — a large and heterogenous stratum which was mauled by inflation and shortages. Despite the bitterness of empty promises and government vacillation, they were loyal to the revolutionary Left, awaiting the promises of the future. In Santiago, the slum dwellers marched with their own leaders, excluding the banners of all leftist parties. Their speakers addressed themselves to their desperate circumstances, insisting that the Government fulfill its obligations to them, but at the same time declaring their willingness to fight for the Government in return.

On the other side of the barricades stand the upper classes and their numerous allies among the petit-bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat. Among these amorphous social forces, the truck owners showed themselves to be the most combative and effective. Doctors and dentists were on strike almost continually throughout the year. Nearly all the established »professional« associations had become full-time political vehicles for right-wing politics: lawyers, doctors, dentists and agronomists passed a series of political resolutions up to and including the call for the resignation of the Government. In a state of hysteria and impotence, the doctors expelled Allende from the medical association. In the hospitals of the poor, emergency wards were unattended, women in childbirth, children and old people suffered without medical care; but for the doctors, the defense of their class privilege had priority. All the clap-trap about professional ethics evaporated; what remained was the insolent and gratuitous sneer: »Let the workers go to their Socialist ministers for a cure.« Probably the most dangerous classes in Chile were the dispossessed, but physically present and politically active, ex-landowners, ex-industrialists, ex-lawyers for US corporations, etc. — all of whom feel they have nothing to lose and are willing to risk anything, to support any adventure, to recover their property. This stratum provided recruits for the fascist terrorist groups and were probably the warmest advocates of »Plan Jakarta« — physical annihilation of several thousand militants put in practice after the coup.

The depth and pervasiveness of class polarization divided the Church and, to a

lesser extent, the Army. There were no »purely» professional or non-political organizations in Chile. In the Church hierarchy there were approximately one hundred supporters of »Christians for Socialism» while on the other side, rightist priests were led by one Raul Hasbun, who directs ultra right-wing propaganda over the Catholic University television station. In the middle stands the Cardinal, attempting the impossible — to mediate and reconcile the conflicting forces. In a July exhortation to all Catholics, the Episcopal Council pleaded with both sides to avoid civil war, transform Chile into a modern and progressive society with justice for the poor through profound social change — all through dialogue and prayer.

In the Armed Forces, horizontal divisions replaced vertical ones as class divisions in society became more salient. These divisions were blunted, however, by the incapacity of the Government to offer support and encouragement to the enlisted men who remained loyal. The great majority of Navy and Air Force officers supported the coup against the Government. Largely drawn from the urban middle class, many were willing to tolerate nationalist and agrarian changes but shifted to the right along with their civilian counterparts as the process deepened. Prior to the coup, many officers met frequently with US military advisers in Chile, openly expressing their hostility to the Government and expressing their desire for its demise. Not surprisingly, under the cover of these private house gatherings, US military officials encouraged their Chilean counterparts to act. No doubt the State Department's reported promise to a former official of the Frei Government of hundreds of millions of dollars of direct aid to a Frei-led Government subsequent to a coup, served to convince recalcitrant Air Force officers of the »inefficiency» of socialism.

Many enlisted men, sons of the popular classes, were against the coup — because of the improvements that accrued to their class of origin as well as the numerous benefits which the Allende government bestowed on the military. Yet the Government worked instead with their officers, men of the Right, without making any effort to link the workers with the ordinary soldiers. Indeed, during the early part of 1973,

the generals were still divided between loyalists (about 40 percent for Allende) and putschists (about 60 percent) allied with the Right or in opposition to all political parties. By the end of August, however, the putschists clearly gained the upper hand, forcing the resignation of three loyalists (Prats, Pickering and Sepulveda), and thus further homogenizing the leadership of the Army General Staff in preparation for the coup. The coup was delayed mainly because there was considerable uncertainty among the generals about the degree of support for such a move among conscripts and enlisted men.

While the Armed Forces were deeply divided, the prospects for a successful rightist coup were dim. The Right instead relied on terrorism, combined with pressure inside the military, in attempting to force the Government to resign. The greatest fear among prudent putschists was that the loyalist sectors of the Army would have sufficient support to arm the workers and turn the coup into a civil war, one which the Left could very well win. The right-wing military waited until it had purged its internal opposition before initiating action on more favorable terrain: a unified army against partially armed workers.

The class polarization also deeply affected the Chilean intelligentsia, a group which, in previous periods, commonly expressed concern for the poor and protested against injustice. But by the end of the Government's third year, university professors and even the majority of students allied themselves against the egalitarian aspirations of the working class. Three-fifths of the professors, and over half of the students, elected the anti-government rector of the University of Chile. Over 90 percent of the students are from the middle class; they provided the bodies for the downtown demonstrations, as well as joining ultra right-wing groups. As in Cuba in 1960, and Russia in October 1917, the »idealistic» students suddenly discovered the incompatibility of their class aspirations and a popular revolution.

The »progressive» intellectuals — those who voted for the Left in 1970 — were disoriented by the intensity of the struggle, appalled and exhausted by the shortages, and uncertain of the role they should as-

sume. »The workers don't need us, they act for themselves», were the words of a sociologist. Immersed in their own day-to-day personal problems, they have played a marginal role in the workers' struggle. Only a small core of revolutionary intellectuals and a minority of students actively participated in the process through disciplined parties and in the day-to-day preparations to resist the coup — recognizing their role as auxiliaries to the workers' organizations.

Shattering the democratic myth

When Allende was elected in September 1970, a considerable amount of discussion and debate focused on the possibility of Chile following a distinct path toward the construction of socialism, the image projected was of a peaceful transformation of the old structures, utilizing or modifying the existing legal, administrative, military and political institutions. Chile's parliamentary tradition was cited, along with its supposedly non-political professional army, as providing a basis for such peaceful change.

But Chile's parliamentary system was always profoundly anti-democratic. The elected bodies always clearly represented the interests of the ruling classes, while for decades excluding the majority of the lower class from meaningful political participation. This became even more true after 1970, as the system attempted to block any efforts by the working class and peasants to create democratic institutions that reflected their class interests. Congress and the courts were the staunchest opponents of any changes in which the *cordones* or *comandos* would assume any effective legislative power.

The myth of Chilean democracy was also a crucial assumption of Allende's Popular Unity Government. The strategy behind Allende's leadership was that the transition to socialism would be an incremental process; having acquired »part» of the government, the Left through time would gradually gain the other portion and eventually transform governmental office into social power. Unfortunately the historical experience in Chile showed otherwise, even before the coup the peaceful and legal transition to socialism had been brought to a stop. Every

institutional road was blocked by the legal and illegal measures adopted by the opposition. The only radical transformations that occurred in the last year were the result of the independent activities of the working class outside of the Government, and in a few instances against the explicit directives of the Popular Unity leadership. For example, almost three-fourths of the industrial firms in the private sector were expropriated because of workers' initiatives, enterprises which the Government had no intention of nationalizing and which at one point Allende and the Communists tried to return to their previous owners — unsuccessfully, however, because the workers would have none of it.

As a result of the Government's incapacity to meet the obstructionist and illegal challenges of the Right, or the demands of the workers, during the Chilean winter of 1973 governmental authority sharply declined. Right-wing and working-class actions increasingly defined new areas of power. The Christian Democrats, who a year ago pretended to oppose a military takeover, were insisting the Government be replaced by military officers. Senator Frei, the US's man in Santiago, refused to criticize the military putsch of June 29, or the continuing rightist terror, while his party's paper appealed to the most retrograde prejudices of the *petit-bourgeoisie*: on the editorial page of *La Prensa* appeared an article decrying the takeover of Chile by a »Jewish-Communist cell».

Defying every Government decree, the Christian Democrats and their right-wing allies in the National Party and *Patria y Libertad* were seeking to assemble a parallel government while goading the military to seize power. In anticipation of September 11, a National Party congressman publicly acknowledged shooting at demonstrators outside of Congress, justifying his action as necessary to defend himself against »Communist dogs». The bourgeoisie openly defied all existing laws which did not suit their interest, all in the name of liberty and democracy. The workers, on the other hand, moved ahead and expropriated factories, attempting to organize themselves for defense, rejected judicial decisions handed down by bourgeois jurists. The same jurists who freed right-wing bombers and

jailed peasant demonstrators were described in the US press as an independent judiciary.

Within the industrial belts, the workers' defense committees and distributive networks were singularly hampered by the Government's unwillingness to accept a general rationing scheme administered from below. The Chilean workers were aware of the fact that all the expensive restaurants were full of middle-class patrons stuffing themselves with meat and chicken and pisco sours, while they in turn waited in line in hopes of obtaining a bone for soup. The worker's support of Allende was conditional and critical; but lacking any clear revolutionary alternative, they pushed ahead hoping he would rectify his course before it was too late. Despite misgivings about the Government, workers had no illusions what its overthrow would mean. They had already witnessed the barbarous treatment meted out by rightist military officers supposedly searching for arms caches in the factories.

Time runs out

In the day-to-day struggles in the barracks, factories and fields, each side tried to gain tactical victories, accumulating forces which would weaken the other side. Each side attempted to impose its own definitive solution to the question of political hegemony; and in the process each side could have been capable of paralyzing the economy and society. In the middle stood Allende, desperately trying to finish his term of office, appealing first for negotiations with the enemy, and then turning to the workers to defend him against the violent threats of precisely the same people with whom he had proposed a settlement the day before. The institutional noose fastened around Allende's neck by the combined political-military opposition was tightened every day.

First, a *Ley de control de armas* (arms control law) was passed, purportedly to disarm »all» armed groups. Administered by the Army, it resulted in massive searches and raids of factories; workers were herded out in the most humiliating and insulting fashion. Though arms were seldom found, the generals made their point to the workers about what they could expect after a *golpe*. These operations with helicopters and

blocked roads were clearly preparations, simulations of a real military takeover.

Throughout July and August, Navy commanders harangued enlisted men against the Government, and then proceeded to arrest those individuals who objected for being »insubordinate». Brazilian-style tortures, such as the forced ingestion of human excrement, were applied to enlisted men who had not responded with enthusiasm to the idea of a coup, to force them to admit that they were plotting subversive action. Meanwhile, to facilitate a harmonious takeover, the Navy officers were purging all anti-coup conscripts and enlisted men, as well as leftist factory workers in munition factories.

In the third instance, the right-wing generals exerted sufficient pressure to oust non-socialist but loyalist General Carlos Prats. Allende, faced with the choice of retiring six rightist Generals and perhaps facing an open military confrontation, or accepting the resignation of Prats, chose the latter. By so doing, he surrounded himself with even more conservative forces, and destroyed one of the few chances the Left had of leading a successful military struggle against the Right.

Along with the attacks on the workers, enlisted men, and loyalist generals, fascist groups stepped up their terrorist assaults against the small number of shopkeepers and truck and bus drivers who wanted to go about their business. Workers' leaders such as Oscar Balboa, leader of non-striking truckers, were ruthlessly assassinated, and scores of quietly heroic bus drivers were stoned and shot as they tried to complete their runs. But the Government was unable to offer adequate armed protection, especially with generals sitting in the Cabinet, clandestinely plotting the Government's overthrow. The threads of counter-revolution lead back to the opposition parties, and behind them stand the scores of functionaries of the embassy, the CIA, the Pentagon, and the State Department.

It was not legality, nor Chile's »democratic tradition» nor Allende's adroitness which restrained for a time the civilian and military *golpistas* from achieving their ends. They were acutely aware of the workers' organizations, their capacity for mobilization, their willingness to fight; they knew, too, that

some workers were armed. They were aware of the divisions in their own ranks; they had heard the enlisted men whisper that, »He is the best President we've ever had . . . » And the military officials must have already calculated the costs of the destructive civil war they knew that a *golpe* would provoke. In a textile factory, a young apprentice, a militant socialist, put it nicely: »The military may take over the government, but they can't run the factories — we'd blow them up first.» Instead the air force leveled them.

But time ran out. The petit-bourgeois violently resisted the expansion of worker's power, the socialization of the economy, the proletarianization of the country. The

workers were tired of the black market, the shortages and exorbitant prices, the terrorist attacks. As one worker put it, »We lack bread, oil and revolution. We can do without bread and oil, but not without revolution.» For many the uncertainty became unbearable; the time came for a definitive answer, and it came from the right.

The military has shattered forever the peaceful democratic illusions of the Allende Socialists and the Communist Party. The revolutionary Left, MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), MAPU, and the militant wing of the Socialist Party will prepare the armed underground resistance. The struggle will continue with new leaders and new strategies.

A TALE OF TWO COUPS

Preparing the coup

As the policies of Chile's military rulers unfold, differences have already appeared among the anti-Allende forces both in the United States as well as in Chile. The differences are not insignificant insofar as they reflect not only changes in personnel (civilian vs. military), but different positions regarding forms of political rule, the role of the military, and socio-economic policy. What appeared as a united effort between political parties and military offices to prevent the »communization of Chile» no longer is visible. The stronger party to the coup, the military, has discarded their political associates, the Frei-led Christian Democrats (PDC), and feel free to pursue their own policies directly represented in the Government. In this they have the support of the smaller upper-class based National Party and the terrorist ultra-rightist Patria y Libertad group (together representing about twenty percent of the electorate).

Both the Frei-led Christian Democrats and military sought to overthrow the elected government of Allende. From its inception, Frei and his supporters sought means to prevent Allende from taking power, and to undermine the economy to prevent his development policies from succeeding. The illegal and legal measures taken by the Frei-led political forces were intent on overthrowing Allende — in order for the Christian

Democrats and of course Frei to return to power. Frei had to walk a narrow line between overthrowing Allende and avoiding a counter-revolution which would sweep his forces aside — which is what in fact happened. Frei's initial hope was that economic chaos in itself would bring the Government down; later the strategy focused on legalist maneuvers centering on winning two-thirds majorities in the congressional elections of March 1973 and then proceeding to »impeach» Allende. The advantage of the impeachment tactic was that the 'legal' approach would limit the military's involvement, curtailing its influence over the choice of Allende's successor; the votes, leadership and direction of the impeachment proceedings would presumably come from the Christian Democrats thus edging out their political rivals on the right. The right-wing National Party and its terrorist allies in Patria y Libertad had no illusions about their possibilities of gaining any electoral victory in the near or distant future. Their only hope was a military dictatorship in which they would operate the economic levers and direct the administrative machinery — in brief, sharing office with the military. Hence while the Christian Democratic Right concentrated on its electoral strategy and parliamentary intransigence to unseat the Left, the ultra-right organized direct action groups within several private associations to create the

economic dislocation regarded as a necessary pretext for a military take-over.

The first major effort by the Right was the massive businessmen's lockout in October 1972 led and organized by truckowners, shopkeepers and professionals loyal or sympathetic to the National Party. Caught somewhat unprepared by the dimensions of the confrontation, the Christian Democrats sought to recapture the rightwardly moving petty-bourgeoisie which supported the lockout, to avoid being outflanked on the Right. The Right did not achieve maximum success (the overthrow of Allende) but did put the military in the Cabinet and served notice that it represented a coherent and combative force capable of paralyzing society. Only the strength of the grass roots working-class organizations and political conflicts among the general staff prevented the Right from »going all the way». The problem in the military was of an idiosyncratic nature: a small group of senior officers who remained loyal to Allende rather than to their class, but who in any case were not creating organic links to the working class or enlisted men or conscripts in the army.

The advances of the Right, also sharply polarized the electorate and heightened class consciousness and solidarity among workers and peasants. As a result, the electoral efforts of the Christian Democrats were severely hampered. Occurring amidst a sharply polarized electorate, the congressional elections offered the choice between working-class based socialism or property-directed capitalism — the »communitarian» rhetoric of the PDC was drowned out. The gains made by the Left in the congressional elections of 1973 not only indicated increasing popular support for the Left, but also eliminated the possibility for a »legal» coup organized and directed by the PDC. The Christian Democrats faced two choices: go ahead with the »militarist» strategy of the ultra-right or attempt to negotiate a coalition with the Left as a means of preserving the electoral process for a return bout in the 1976 elections. The Christian Democrats divided: the majority led by Eduardo Frei embarked on the strategy of the military coup, while a minority led by Tomic unsuccessfully attempted to open the party to a dialogue and coalition with the Allende Government.

The *golpista* course outlined by Frei probably was based on the following set of assumptions: (1) the military was incapable of ruling without a broad social base among the middle class; (2) military was politically incompetent and lacking experience, necessitating political leaders, university personnel, and technicians capable of »aggregating» the diverse social interests of a complex society and devising a development strategy; (3) the military did not have a political vocation — it was merely opposed to »communism» and once having eliminated the »enemy» would return to the barracks; (4) the US government (with whom Frei had been in constant consultation during the Allende years) would back a »civilian», Frei-led government as a means of providing an air of legitimacy to the international propaganda campaign which would ensue after the coup, claiming its purpose was to »restore democracy».

With all of these thoughts filling his head, Frei joined efforts with Jarpa of the National Party and Thieme of the Patria y Libertad fascists in their efforts to sabotage the economy and undermine the Allende Government in the firm belief that a military take-over would be temporary — a transitory phenomena — leading to the re-establishment of a Christian Democratic Government.

Toward the fall of the democratically elected Allende Government the Christian Democrats made a number of important contributions: the major political force among the opposition, they blocked all legislation that could have eased the economic crises; their supporters in industry, business, academia and government undermined policy directives and the circulation of goods; in the political front the PDC provided the legal cover for a coup by declaring the Government »illegal» and pressuring it to include pro-coup officers in the highest executive offices. For their exemplary services in destroying the democratically elected government and their supporters before and after the coup, the Frei-led forces hoped to be rewarded with the Presidency. They were soon to be disappointed.

Chile after Allende

In the midst of civilian co-ordinated lock-out, professional association strikes and street demonstrations, the military seized power on September 11. Shortly thereafter Frei issued his endorsement of the coup, calling on the military to finish their »task» and then reminding them to »return the country to democracy». In other words, the PDC leadership endorsed not only coup but the other »tasks», the extermination of the leftist parties on proviso that the military confine itself to changing the rules of the parliamentary game for some of the players — not the name of the game. The Christian Democrats' conception of the coup then followed a similar pattern as that put forth by the ultra-right and fascists' group before the seizure of power and immediately thereafter; the major difference was over the political goals of the coup: over the institutional forms which would emerge subsequent to the destruction of the left. The competition between the right-wing Christian Democrats and their ultra right-wing colleagues was over who would exercise political hegemony over the army. The National Party had one advantage — they had no vested interest in disbanding the military dictatorship in favor of a parliamentary regime but only in shaping its socio-economic policy. The military on the other hand wanted to maintain political and military control though they were admittedly at a disadvantage in devising a development strategy. In sum, the practical interests of the extreme right and the military were complementary while those of the PDC were competitive.

In the end, the military turned over the factories and banks, development corporations and planning agencies to the ultra-conservative economists and »technocrats» of the National Party — some of them graduates of the University of Chicago and employed by the Catholic University. Army officers took over the universities, replacing right-wing Christian Democrats; *all* parties were suspended, all the press, radio and television were placed under military control; congress elections and party activity was recessed for an indefinite future. In their place, the military proposes a new constitution and political structure which would directly incorporate employers and business-dominated trade associations into the

Governmental structure — a transparent version of the corporate state. While free trade unions have been dissolved and the strike is a punishable offense, professionals, businessmen, and rural property owners are put directly in charge of formulating government policy.

The *golpistas* among the Christian Democrats made a serious error regarding the military's lack of a vocation for political office: after destroying the elected government, the military proceeded to eliminate the political machinery that put the Left into power — and in the process definitively destroyed any prospects that the Christian Democrats had of reconstituting themselves as the »majoritarian» political force in a country purged of leftists. The military officials quickly recognized that the PDC could not appeal to the Left against the military moves, since the PDC had been one of its gravediggers and was totally discredited; nor could it press from the Right since the Right had no further use for the Christian Democrats after they had accomplished their end of contributing to the downfall of Allende. In fact, the Right saw the re-emergence of the Christian Democrats as a distinct liability bringing in its train, that makeshift melange of populist rhetoric, »populist» organization and an incapacity to control the growth of popular sentiments to the left of it. It was incidentally the purge of the pro-coup Christian Democratic University officials which finally must have convinced even the most loyal die-hard supporters of Frei that the future of Chile did not lie in his hands. Even the *New York Times*, whose columns have been nothing else but naked evasions of the true dimensions of the slaughter in Chile, was finally forced to concede that the military had committed »excesses» — meaning that the military had exceeded its »mandate» (a favorite term referring to the NYT pretension of selecting the proper governing officials for whatever society it designs to choose). After four weeks of unprecedented mass slaughter, the NYT chose to raise in a rather obviously grotesque manner the issue of military excesses — precisely the moment after the military relieved the Christian Democrats of their University positions.

Through terror, the military was hoping to erase social pressure from the left; by

political exclusion and co-optation to definitively divide the PDC; by offering important posts and rewards to the National Party and businessmen to consolidate an administrative apparatus capable of imposing »discipline« on labor (with the aid of terror) and the co-operation of business; and with an open door policy to foreign investment to stimulate foreign loans, credits and investment to stimulate growth. The Brazilian model is being projected in Chile over the corpses of 20 000 workers: salaries and wages are effectively lowered, prices increased, currency devalued, enterprises returned to private owners, the conditions are being created for externally induced expansion at the cost of the poor. In the near future, the middle-class, business groups and industrialists will suffer the invasion of large-scale foreign capital who in the name of efficiency will eliminate the supporters of the coup. Many of those sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie who were in the streets calling for the coup will not be its beneficiaries. As in Brazil, the military and their economic advisers are looking toward the multi-national corporations and the international banks to re-organize the economy — they too do not confide in the »entrepreneurial« capacity of the national bourgeoisie; in much the same way they do not trust their bourgeois »democrats«, the Christian Democrats to restore and maintain capitalist law and order.

If a permanent military-corporate structure is the political instrumentality of the leaders of the coup, large-scale foreign enterprises are their answer to the economic problems facing the country. In these circumstances, the Christian Democratic Party, is in the process of disintegration; the anti-coup section prepares to split to the Left — perhaps to search for some way to express its opposition to the junta without risking its semi-legal status, hoping to recreate the political conditions for a re-emergence of the traditional parties of the left in order to form a new broad »patriotic democratic front«. The rest of the Party will revolve around the orientations and personal fortune of individual leaders: some will join with the National Party and become political/economic functionaries in the military governmental apparatus; others may search for some formula, hopeful that the military will give an ear to their proposals

to offer a legislative fig-leaf to the military dictatorship. But since the military discovered it can write its own laws, including the constitution, and has the unanimous approval of the solemn judges of the highest court, they perhaps believe they can create their own legitimacy. With big loans from international banks, and the confidence of the international corporations, what better source of legitimacy could this military regime ask for — could the Christian Democrats match the arms of the military or the dollars of the corporations?

Political rulership, the military has discovered can be considerably simplified by physically exterminating the opposition, eliminating deliberative bodies, silencing critics, intervening in the universities and burning books. By putting agricultural policy in the hands of large landowners, industrial policy in the hands of industrialists and the Ministry of Interior in the hands of the Army, there is no need to aggregate diverse social interests — the political system recognizes no such diversity, in fact, it works against it. Complexities and the niceties of political coalitions and bargaining have been washed out: now as the military explains it, they give orders that everyone obeys. Military terror and technically efficient economists are the junta's answers to the charge of political incompetence.

Brazil revisited

The United States Government has long ago given up the idea that a parliamentary facade is a necessary accompaniment of capitalist development in Latin America. The incapacity of parliamentary regimes to offer guarantees against radicalism and nationalism and their incapacity to create favorable conditions for foreign investment have, for some time, provoked US policy-makers and economic influentials into re-thinking the »best« political formula to serve their interests in Latin America. Brazil provided the test-case. Frei was incapable of preventing a Marxist from winning the Presidential elections in Chile, the military dictators in Brazil were attracting loans and investment from all the centers of world capitalism. While Ambassador Korry was complaining that he had to tell Frei how to put his pants on — figuratively

speaking, we assume, meaning that he had to personally intervene to steer him in his course of action against the Left — the Brazilian military government had practically eliminated all guerrillas, trade unions, strikes, wage demands — an industrialists paradise. Whatever promises that the US might have made to Frei before the coup, (there is no doubt that the Nixon administration was deeply shocked by Frei's acceptance of Allende's electoral victory) obviously Frei was someone who the US could not trust to take-over after Allende — despite his espousal of the coup and its terror tactics. After all, it was the military that was willing to bloody its hands and therefore it was the military which would be willing to take the appropriate measures after the coup to prevent a resurgence of leftism. With the breakdown of the constituted order, and the emergence of a leftist underground, US policy-makers do not believe that Frei would be able to handle the new situation, providing the kind of security to foreign capital that the military could offer, despite the massive and bloody purge. Only a few dissident and peripheral voices of the liberal establishment (*New York Times*, Ford Foundation, *Washington Post*, etc.) felt that the military purge created a secure basis for a return to the parliamentary order and the restoration of Eduardo Frei. The mainstream of US officialdom, the bankers, the international financial agencies, the State Department, the National Security Council, and the multinational corporations have already begun to back the military, its policies and leadership. At best they viewed Frei as a useful but temporary ally on the road to power — part-payment for his earlier failure to disregard the democratic verdict of the Chilean people. But now, they can offer him a honorific or secondary part or quiet retirement.

The military is not a «caretaker» government but a permanent political force — the dominant political force in a Chile backed by US economic resources and adapting the Brazilian development strategy to Chilean conditions. As for Frei, his brief interlude as *golpista* has ended in failure: without support among the poor because he supported their repression; without support among the rich because others successfully directed

the coup. Today, Frei is silent and impotent — his coup failed.

Conclusion

The military junta early recognized the profound roots that socialist ideas had among the working class. Any doubts on that account were dispelled by the heroic resistance in the factory belts subsequent to the coup. The military understood that this profound commitment would not be shaken by a palace coup, nor would the workers be deceived by an electoral charade in which Frei would be installed as «president». What might convince the readers of the NYT as a «return to democracy» would be correctly perceived in Chile as a political farce. The wholesale massacre in the working class neighborhood and the junta's refusal to hand over power to Frei were based on an accurate assessment of the high level of working class consciousness: no amount of populist demagoguery by Frei and the Christian Democrats could replace the practice of industrial self-management and popular power which the workers' experienced during the Allende years. Accordingly, the military and US policy-makers decided that a Frei that could not contain the radicalization of the workers during the 1960's would hardly be adequate to deal with the insurgent, mobilized and class-conscious social forces that developed during the 1970's. Once having defined the final political project of the junta — a permanent military dictatorship — the problem became one of forming the political and economic team to man critical ministries and agencies. The only available groups willing and acceptable to the junta were the ultra-right National Party, the fascist Patria y Libertad and the business and professional associations. The close linkage between the associations and the Government and the dissolution of the parliament and parties thus serves to reinforce the corporate image of the Government. Yet corporatism is less the outcome of a calculated ideological move so much as it is the 'natural form of political representation of capitalism in a crisis period — the embrace of business and military dictatorship over the body of the proletariat.