

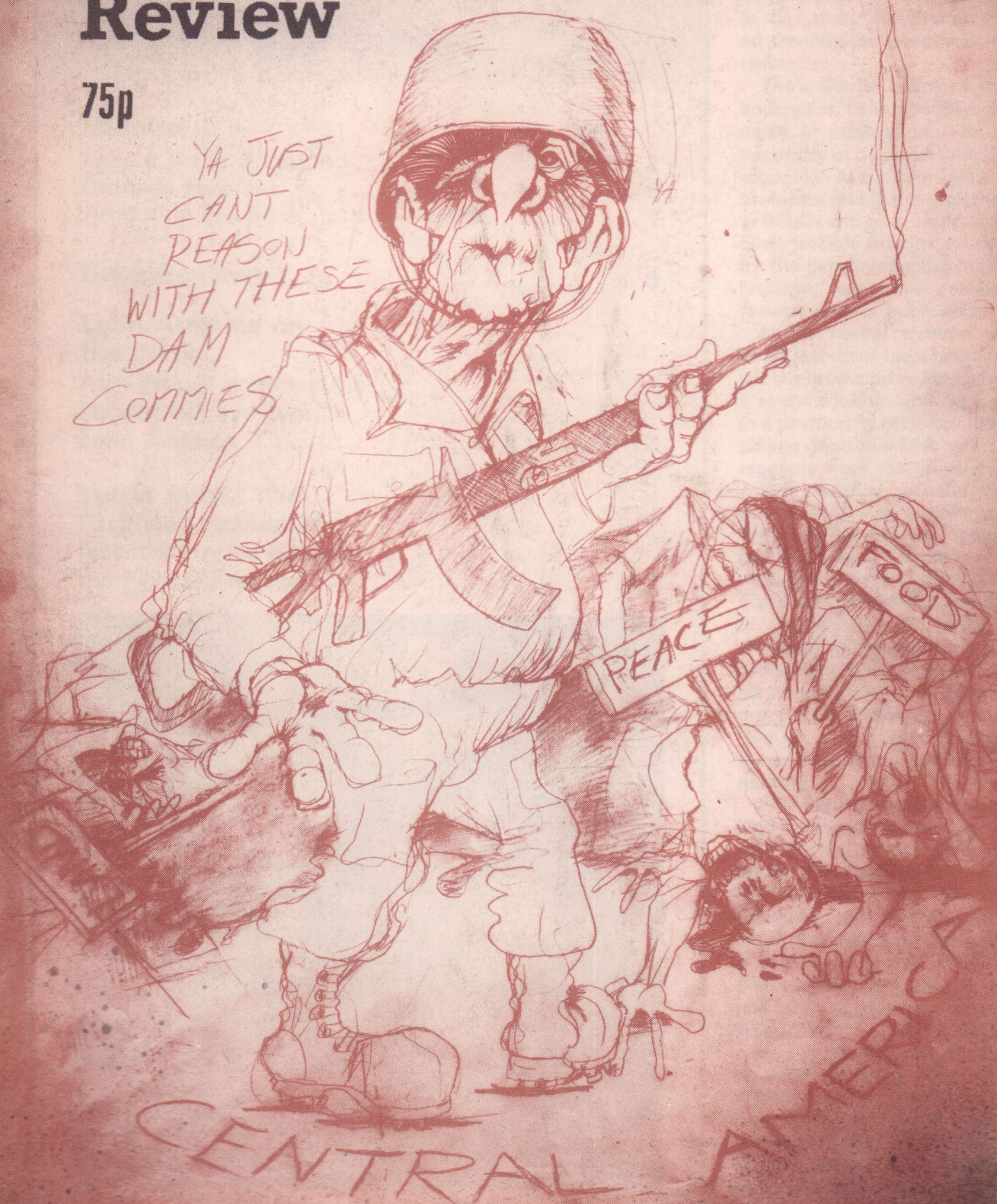
Militant International

Special feature on Latin America

Review

75p

YA JUST
CANT
REASON
WITH THESE
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COMMIES



Militant International Review

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From the editors...

The publication of our theoretical journal has suffered a severe setback in the last period. This has been mainly because of the difficult conditions created by the witch-hunt against the Marxist tendency in the Labour Party, which imposed tremendous pressures on our resources.

The editorial board of the MIR apologises to our readers for the delay in publication. The urgent necessity of a journal which offers a genuine Marxist analysis of the problems facing the working class in Britain and on a world scale has been forcibly brought home to us by the ever increasing number of requests we have received to resume regular publication.

In the recent months, exceptional resources have been taken to put the production of the journal on a sound footing, and we are now in a position to offer our readers a pledge that the MIR will appear regularly from the present issue.

This number of the MIR is dedicated almost entirely to Latin America. We make no apology for this fact, which reflects the key importance of the developing revolution in that continent in the context of the world-wide struggle for socialism. We include an important article which we have just received from Santiago de Chile which graphically illustrates the stage through which the revolutionary movement in the country is now passing.

The regular publication of this kind of material requires the active participation of the readers at all levels. We need your views, opinions and criticisms of the MIR. We would like to know how it is being used, and what kind of acceptance it has in the Labour Party, trade union branches, Young Socialists and shop stewards committees. Above all we need CASH. The sales and financial side must be put on a sound footing. Make sure that the ideas of Marxism reach every corner of the labour movement. Pass the MIR to a friend. Build up regular sales. By ensuring the financial viability of the journal, you are investing in the future of socialism. Do not fail us, comrades!

M.I.R. Editorial

Labour after Brighton

COMING ONLY a few months after the worst electoral defeat in the Party's recent history, the 1983 conference at Brighton has been generally seen as a watershed in the development of the Labour Party.

On the face of it, the conference marked a relative set-back for the left, with the defeat of Meacher for the deputy leadership, the consolidation of the "soft" left-right bloc on the NEC, and the ratification of the expulsion of five members of the *Militant* Editorial Board.

Yet for anyone with the most elementary grasp of the Marxist method, it would be a mistake to allow oneself to be unduly influenced by this or that episodic turn in the mood of the labour movement, as reflected in this conference. What is first of all necessary is a thorough understanding of the underlying processes at work in society, in the working class and in the organisations of the labour movement, without which an entirely misleading impression can be created about the real significance of Brighton.

Unite for socialist policies

For millions of workers, unemployed, housewives and trade unionists, the victory of Thatcher at the general election came as a terrible shock. The prospect of a further five years of attacks on living standards, mass unemployment, the undermining of hard-won trade union rights and the dismantling of the welfare state has filled them with horror.

It is perfectly understandable that the first gut reaction of the Labour workers is the need to rally round to defeat Thatcher, to close ranks and unite the Labour Party at all costs in the fight against the common class enemy. And, at bottom, this striving for the unity of our class—unity in

struggle against the Tories and the employers—is something which the Marxist wing of the Labour Party, represented by the *Militant*, both support and actively strive for.

It was not the Marxists who disrupted the unity of the Labour Party, but the right wing majority of the NEC, who senselessly unleashed a destructive witch-hunt which poisoned the atmosphere at all levels of the Party in the crucial lead-up to the general election.

It was not the members of *Militant's* Editorial Board who undermined Labour's electoral chances of speaking out publicly against the Party's election manifesto, but the prominent leaders of the right wing, such as Callaghan, Healey and Hattersley. *Militant* supporters worked for the election of Labour candidates, irrespective of whether we agreed with their views or not. Frank Chapple saw fit to publicly support the SDP candidate in Islington against the official Labour candidate. Yet no action has been taken against Chapple by the NEC, which has also remained stubbornly silent about the sabotaging role of the right during the election campaign, reserving all their energies for the expulsion of five long-standing Marxist members of the Labour Party.

But if "unity" is to mean anything at all, it must surely mean unity of all members of the Labour Party who are prepared to stand by socialist ideas and the policy decisions democratically agreed upon by Party conference, not those who, like the right, consider themselves to have a "divine right" to ignore the opinions of the rank-and-file whenever it suits them, and who regard the Labour Party purely as a means to personal advancement, and not as an instrument for changing society.

The leaders of the big unions have been frightened by the Tory victory and taken in by the deafening campaign of the millionaire press which, conveniently ignoring the sabotage of the Labour right, try to pretend that Labour's defeat was due to the adoption of "extreme policies".

Undemocratically over-riding the decisions of their own union conferences in many cases, these general secretaries threw their weight—and the votes of their members—behind the so-called "dream ticket" of Kinnoch and Hattersley, in a misguided attempt to woo back those same right wingers who did enormous damage to the Labour Party in the previous period, and must be held responsible in some measure for Labour's electoral catastrophe. And this manoeuvre was carried out in the name of "fighting for a Labour victory"!

We saw the same bending to the pressure of the capitalist press when the same general secretaries—despite the overwhelming opposition of the CLPs and a large section of the union rank-and-file cast their block votes in favour of ratifying the expulsions of the *Militant* Five. A classic case of "tail wags dog", if ever there was one!

No going back

Yet, in spite of everything, the Brighton conference can by no stretch of the imagination be described as a turn to the right. Many of the delegates who gave Neil Kinnoch a standing ovation on the Sunday, were the very same who gave the *Militant* Five a standing ovation on Monday—precisely the reason why the NEC, for the first time since 1978, ordered a closed session to deal with the expulsions, to deny the Five the possibility of putting their case to the visitors and the TV as well as the delegates. While the expulsions were steamrollered through by the simple expedient of the union block vote (80% of constituency Labour Parties voting against), the overwhelming sympathy shown by the majority of delegates—including a significant number in the trade union section—represented a moral victory for the ideas of Marxism and a stinging rebuff for the organisers of the witch-hunt.

Even many of those who voted for expulsions did so more in sorrow than anger, in a mistaken attempt to "get unity" and "improve the image of the Party", under the pressure of the leadership, while at the same time making it absolutely clear that they wanted no more expulsions and no more witch-hunts.

The fact that the right could take

precious little comfort from the proceedings was shown by the rough reception Callaghan got in the defence debate. When Healey, in his summing-up decided that "discretion was the better part of valour" and resorted to the fudging tactic of "two of sand, and one of cement".

The incident on the Sunday night, when despite the efforts of Neil Kinnock to get it withdrawn, the TGWU delegation—to its credit—persisted in presenting a unilateralist resolution which was subsequently passed by conference, is an indication that the goodwill which is being extended to the new leader does not give him the right to reverse previous conference decisions.

What all this demonstrates is that Labour's rank-and-file, while wanting Party unity and being prepared to extend a large degree of credit to the new leader, who is at present seen as a left, is not prepared to go back, or to retreat on the political conquests which have been made in the past few years. Any attempt on the part of the right to launch an attack on any fundamental issue—such as the mandatory re-selection of MPs will rapidly run into trouble from the rank-and-file activists, and produce a further swing to the left.

The right is finished

In reality, Labour's old right wing is shattered. The "victory" of Hattersley as deputy-leader—a product of the overriding desire for "unity" and the total lack of organisation and backbone of the *Tribune* Left—cannot conceal the fact that, in the leadership stakes, he came nowhere, while right-winger Peter Shore got nil votes.

On policy issues, the defeat of the right was still more humiliating. Despite the noisy campaign waged for months by Hattersley and friends, the motion to introduce the "one-man-one-vote" system to elect the Party leaders, a system which they hoped would give them more room to manoeuvre in the constituencies, attempting to play off the more inert layers against the Party activists, received the grand total of six votes!

Even in the trade union section, the TGWU delegation's stand on defence, and the splits and arguments

which took place in all the union delegations over the expulsion of the Five and the election of the deputy leader, indicated that the general secretaries can no longer count on having things all their own way. In the "good old days", when the right ruled the roost, the likes of Carron, Lawther and Deakon would have had no trouble in "delivering the goods" in any vote at conference. But those days have gone beyond recall. Far from strengthening their grip on the union membership, the trade union leaders will find themselves under enormous pressure, as the Tory government and the employers tighten the screw and the rank-and-file demand action. The movement of the miners in Yorkshire and Scotland, the movement that is just beginning against cuts in the NHS, the POEU dispute over privatisation—these are just a little foretaste of what could take place even this coming winter. Big battles are inevitable on the industrial front, and that will have a profoundly radicalising effect, first on the unions and, later on, on the Labour Party.

The old Labour right is finished because, in a historical sense, their role is played out. In the fifties and early sixties, reformism could give certain reforms to the working class because, in conditions of world economic upswing, capitalism could still afford to grant concessions. But now that period is gone forever. Under conditions of capitalist crisis the ruling class cannot give serious and long-lasting reforms. On the contrary, it must try to take back the concessions it gave in the past, cutting living standards and wrecking social services in a desperate attempt to "solve" the crisis at the expense of the workers, the unemployed, the old and the sick. It is not Thatcher's "callousness" (though she is certainly very callous) which makes her attack the welfare state, as both the Labour right and the *Tribune* left imagine, but the blind alley of British capitalism, of which Thatcher is merely the most convulsive expression.

Everywhere in the world, whether under right-wing governments in Britain, the USA, Germany, Denmark and Israel, or under "socialist" (in reality right-wing socialist) govern-

ments such as France, Greece, Spain, or the last Labour government in Britain, we see the same phenomenon, with differences only in degree: austerity programmes, wage cuts, the slashing of social services, and rising unemployment. And this is inevitably the case, where a Labour or socialist government attempts to operate within the confines of the capitalist system. Where the decisive, most modern and profitable sector of the economy is in private hands, that sector will dictate policy to the government, and not vice-versa. That is why a complete transformation of society is necessary in order to stave off the catastrophe of mass unemployment, and to meet the most elementary needs of the working class, the old, the sick and the rising generation.

The representatives of Labour's right-wing like Healey and Hattersley have abandoned the idea of socialism a long time ago.

They completely accept the domination of the bankers and capitalists as "the realities of life" and have no other perspective than the continuance of capitalism for ever. Their "realistic" policies have been discredited in the eyes of wide layers of the working class and middle class as a result of the experience of the last two Labour governments. Reformism without reforms—or reformism with counter reforms, to be more accurate—is a formula which has no appeal for anyone. There is no fundamental difference between the ideas and policies put forward by the Labour right and the policies advanced by the traitors of the SDP, with whom many of them have been linked in the past by close ties of friendship. They are out of step with the labour movement and out of step with the times we live in. Just like the Gunters, the Prentices the Browns, the Owens and the Williams', who could not reconcile themselves to the changed position in the Labour Party, and stabbed the movement in the back when it suited them.

To lean over backwards to appease this group for the sake of an artificial and purely ephemeral "unity" is to fly in the face of reality, as the present Kinnock leadership will discover to its cost in the future.

The only reason why the old, discredited leaders of the right managed to cling to positions of power and influence in the Party at this conference was because of the helping hand which they received from a section of the former *Tribune* group of MPs, now generally referred to as the "soft" left. The chief representative of this group, Neil Kinnock, has now been elected leader of the Labour Party.

There is no doubt that the election of Kinnock has aroused considerable expectation, not only in the rank-and-file of the Party and the unions, but also among the broad mass of Labour voters, as indicated by the boost in Labour's popularity in the opinion polls following the conference. The majority have the impression of a new and youthful leadership, with the energy to "get the show together" and begin to get on with the real job of fighting the Tories.

Nevertheless, it is not the "image" which counts, but the substance which lies behind it. What policies will the new leadership defend? Will they be prepared to stand by conference decisions? Or will they attempt—as has already been hinted—to undermine such important gains as re-selection, the election of the leader and the democratic control of the manifesto?

It is clear that Neil Kinnock will be under heavy pressure from the right to try to pull the Party in their direction. His previous attitude to the witch-hunting of *Militant* and his backsliding on the issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament at Brighton are bad omens for the future, and this has to be said clearly.

But what about the left? The Brighton conference saw the *Tribune* left in complete disarray. The campaign for Meacher was dismally organised. Once again, this tendency showed its inability to take seriously the vital task of work in the trade unions, where Hattersley swept the board, quite unnecessarily if the left had done its homework. What is even more incredible is the support which Hattersley got in the CLPs. Here the *Tribune* tendency, theoretically, has a big majority. Yet their candidate, Meacher, got less votes than Hat-

tersley in the constituency sections. Why?

It is perfectly clear that a significant section of the *Tribune* left voted for Hattersley. Like fair-weather mariners, they were quite happy to tag along with the crowd when the left was obviously in the ascendant. Now many of them have run for cover at the first sign of difficulties. They have simply caved in to the pressure and blackmail of the millionaire press and the right wing.

This undignified retreat is the inevitable result of the ideological confusion and amorphousness of left reformism, which does not take politics and the class struggle seriously and, to judge from Brighton, does not take itself too seriously either. The Marxists in the Labour Party are part of the left—the most consistent and intransigent part—but we will not and cannot remain silent when the "soft" left and even the so-called "hard" left fail to act in consonance with the principle of Socialism and the interests of the working class.

The arguments in favour of the so-called "dream ticket" carried a certain weight when put forward by the trade union leaders, in a situation where many Labour and trade union activists were anxious to achieve a formula for unity at all costs. But, unfortunately, this barrage of propaganda was not countered in any sense, shape or form by the *Tribune* left who failed to come up with a viable alternative.

The Marxist wing of the Labour Party, represented by *Militant*, always gives critical support to the left's candidates against those of the right wing. On this occasion, in the interests of gaining a left majority on the NEC, two of the candidates, Pat Wall and Terry Fields MP, both *Militant* supporters, chose to stand down, rather than split the vote. And yet, the *Tribune* supporters were not even able or willing to reach agreement on this, and actually stood against each other!

The real explanation for the sorry showing put up by *Tribune* at Brighton was not organisational but political. While many honest rank and file Labour activists have supported *Tribune* in the belief that its policies would bring socialism, it is perfectly clear that a section of its

tendency—a middle-class, "trendy" section with no roots in the working class whose ideas are more akin with Liberalism than Socialism—are moving to the right at a velocity approaching the speed of light.

The spokesmen for this wing have privately—and even publicly—placed the blame for Labour's defeat on the working class (who else?). Professor Hobsbawm of the "Communist Party" has thrown in his three ha' pence, trying to give the semblance of a "theoretical" justification to this shamefaced retreat and ending up, inevitably, on the side of the extreme right of the Labour Party, in openly advocating an electoral alliance with the Liberal-Social Democratic Alliance.

Unfortunately for the learned professor, and his admirers in the Labour Party, the bottom was knocked out of this argument by the collapse of the Alliance in the opinion polls immediately after the Brighton conference. Rather a feeble crutch to lean on! Yet these university wiseacres prefer to clutch at any straw, rather than accept the elementary truth that Labour must base itself on the organised strength of the working class to transform society.

The *Tribune* left, while it is more sensitive to the aspirations of the rank and file on most issues than the right or "soft left", has no really worked out position, and offers no global alterations to the reformist leadership. They criticise the right, but do not draw all the necessary conclusions from their criticisms. Above all, they do not consistently raise the need for a thoroughgoing socialist transformation of society as the only way out for the working class. Maybe "half a loaf is better than no bread." But in the harsh world of the class struggle, half a policy is sometimes worse than none at all. After Brighton, many supporters of *Tribune*, will be seriously examining the role of this tendency, and looking for a serious political alternative.

Tories in Turmoil

In reality, those Labour and trade union leaders who have been hypnotised by the "dazzling successes" of Thatcher have entirely missed the

point. Only months after their election victory, the Tory government is coming apart at the seams. The real significance of the "Parkinson affair" was that it showed up the depth of the divisions existing within the Tory Party.

Hegel once said that "Necessity expresses itself through accident." Long before Mr. Parkinson's toings and froings had ever been heard of, the frictions between Tory Ministers had already acquired an alarming character. The kept Tory press was already beginning to grumble about "this accident-prone government." And even the "Iron Lady" was beginning to creak a little at the joints.

What is the underlying cause of this strange malaise in the Tory Party? They cannot be unduly worried about the right wing of the Labour Party and the TUC who, instead of fighting them, spend all their time trying to "build bridges"—or, to put it in plain English, trying to do a deal with the enemy. If they have not succeeded to date, that is not their fault, but because the Tories see no need to make serious concessions to an opponent who surrenders without firing a shot. "Weakness invites aggression," as Len Murray discovered in his dealings with Tebbit, and, despite his high hopes, will re-discover with Tebbit's successor.

It is not the individual minister who decides, but the crisis of the system. The Tories will be forced to cut state expenditure, lose the nationalised industries and attempt to hand them back to the monopolies, begin to dismantle the NHS and try to take away trade union rights—not because of the whims of Thatcher and Tebbit, but because they see no other way out on the basis of capitalism. From a capitalist point of view, there is a certain logic in their arguments. There is no logic whatsoever in the position taken by Len Murray and the TUC.

Only mass action by the trade union and labor movement can halt the Tories' plans to destroy what is left of the welfare state, cripple the unions and drive down workers' living standards. That is the position of the supporters of *Militant* and one which will be borne out by events.

The doubts and vacillations in the

Party of a section of the Tory "wets" is not because they are more "humanitarian" or "reasonable" than the others (as Len Murray believes), but because they are more far-sighted. They understand that the present policies are a recipe for social convulsions and class struggle in Britain. And in that they are undoubtedly correct—far more correct than Hobsbawm, and his ilk—people who have lost all faith in socialism and the working class and whose only message for Labour is one of despair, reaction and abject surrender. Fortunately, there is no chance whatever that the working class of this country will go down that road. Unlike the drawing-room philosophers, the workers, the unemployed and the youth have no option but to fight. Those who have no stomach for a fight will just be thrust aside.

The mood in the factories and working class estates today is not at all like the despairing mood that existed at the time of the Social Contract. There is a sober-minded desire to take stock of the situation, to draw a balance sheet of recent experience. There is, perhaps, an element of confusion also. But things will rapidly become clear, as the workers—and the middle class—realise the true meaning of Thatcherism. This can generate violent swings of public opinion by which the basis of Thatcher's support can be swiftly undermined.

The speed with which the situation can be transformed is shown by the way in which the psychological effects of Thatcher's victory on the working class have already been shaken off. The few months since the general election already seem like an epoch. Despite the wailing and gnashing of teeth of the middle class "lefts", the workers have already passed on to the next item on the agenda. They have swung from a setback on the electoral front, to struggles on the industrial front, which could easily develop in the next period, into a general strike, or a situation of general strike proportions.

The fear of the ruling class at the prospect of a big battle on the industrial front is shown by the behaviour of the press. In the past, the papers played up every little strike, exaggerating its importance in

order to depict the British workers as "strike-happy". Now a curtain of silence has descended. Only the bigger disputes are reported, because they cannot be hushed up. Yet in the recent months, there has been a rash of strikes, particularly in small firms, which is a warning of what can be expected in the next period.

In the scale of history, an election victory or defeat is only a passing event. It is a snap-shot which shows the transitory state of mind of the masses frozen in a given moment of time. But history moves on, and the moods of the masses—especially of the middle class—are as changeable as the shifting sands of the desert. That is why it is so absurd to base everything on the single idea "the Tories have a big majority for five years". The position of this government, despite the size of its majority will be increasingly shaky as time goes on. Splits and fissures will open up in the ranks of the Tory Party, and these, in turn, will have a radicalising effect upon society, pushing the labour movement once again firmly to the left. That is why the apparent advance of the right at this year's Labour Party conference also has a purely ephemeral character.

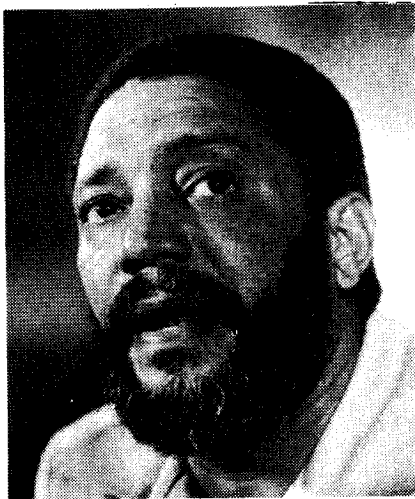
The Labour right and their allies on the "soft" left are, in reality, swimming hopelessly against the tide of history. The new waves of workers and young people who will come into the Labour Party as a result of the general radicalising effect of the capitalist crisis will want clear policies, and not half-hearted solutions to their problems. People like Healey, Hattersley, Shore and Mitchell represent the outmoded past of Labour, not its future.

The rising new generation of class fighters, trade union activists and young shop stewards will not join the Labour Party looking for jobs and careers, like the old right. But neither will they join it merely to "do good" to people. They will join the Labour party in order to effect a fundamental change in the social order, an order which has become an intolerable obstacle in the way of progress and which threatens the very existence of the most elementary rights and conquests of working people.

The ideas of Marxism will have a

particular appeal to these fresh layers of working class recruits. These, in turn, will re-ignite the fighting spirits of the older generation of Labour workers, who have, in their heart of hearts, not abandoned the ideas of socialism. This is the only message of hope for the future of mankind. It is a banner which, whatever may happen, we shall never surrender. □

Grenada Invasion Trial Run for Nicaragua?



Maurice Bishop, Grenadian Prime-Minister 1979-83

THE CHRONIC INSTABILITY flowing from the world crisis of capitalism was starkly revealed by the sudden invasion of Grenada by US forces.

On the eve of World War Two, Leon Trotsky predicted that US imperialism, as a result of its participation in the war, would gain a position of world dominance, but only at the cost of incorporating into its very foundations all the explosive material accumulated by capitalism on a world scale.

Now, four decades or so later, the strategists of capital are beginning to come to the same conclusion. At the present moment, the United States finds itself embroiled in the Lebanon, in Nicaragua—where it is fighting what is, for the moment, a proxy war against the revolution and now also in the Caribbean.

Clearly, the idea of Reagan is to carry out a rapid “police” operation, and quickly to withdraw his troops from Grenada, leaving behind a stooge government, propped up by “reliable” forces from other Caribbean states. He has undoubtedly been helped in this strategem by the blundering and bloodthirsty antics of the Stalinist clique which carried out the coup, provoking widespread indignation throughout the Caribbean. But that was merely the excuse. There is ample evidence to show that the invasion was planned many months before the coup. In reality, however, history shows that it is far easier to get into a situation like this than it is to get out again.

Reagan’s indecent haste to trample the Grenadan revolution underfoot, despite the effect which it will undoubtedly have on the rest of the Caribbean and Central and South America, and despite the cracks which it has opened up in the Western Alliance, with immediate and negative reactions from France, Mexico, Canada, and even Britain, shows the jittery nerves in Washington at the prospect of the spread of revolution, albeit in a deformed way, in its own “backyard”.

The invasion of Grenada makes a joke of all the pious hypocrisy of the western politicians and the mass media about the Russian “aggression” in Afghanistan. It shows beyond doubt that what moves the imperialists is not love of democracy, freedom or peace, but naked class interest, and unbridled lust for profits, power and privilege.

Likewise, the mumblings of Thatcher and Howe are not motivated by concern for the “sovereignty” of Grenada, but by fear of losing markets in the Third World if they openly supported the invasion. This pathetic attempt at influencing Washington only served to prick the bubble of “Britain’s greatness”, assiduously inflated by Thatcher since the Falklands conflict. Reagan simply brushed aside the British objections with all the attention of a man contemptuously flicking away a troublesome flea. By this humiliating blow to the prestige of its main representative, British imperialism stands exposed in the eyes of the

world for what it truly is—a third rate client state of America, whose views count for less than nothing in the important forums of world opinion.

The long-term effects of the American intervention will be incalculable. Even in the short run, Reagan’s illusions in the possibility of “re-establishing stability” (i.e. US domination) in the Caribbean will be rudely dissipated. The revolutionary ferment in the Caribbean and Central America, of which Grenada is one of the clearest expressions, is not caused by foreign “conspiracies”, but by the terrible conditions of mass misery, want and unemployment described in another article in this issue. This brutal action of the Pentagon was meant as a warning to the workers in other Caribbean states not to go down the road of the overthrow of capitalism, and not to push too hard for democratic and social rights. But these bully-boy tactics will be in vain. The invasion of Grenada will usher in a new and stormy period of unrest throughout the Caribbean. New explosions will be inevitable.

There is, however, a wider dimension to the problem. This was a trial run by the United States to test the reaction of the people and Congress to military intervention in the Caribbean. It is a preparation for a far more serious, bloody and protracted action, the aim of which is no less than the overthrow of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, where the Americans are already waging an undeclared war through the agency of the “Contras”.

In spite of the harsh lessons of Vietnam, American imperialism sees no other way out than to attempt to stamp out the revolution in Central America by armed force. The convulsive reactions of Reagan are determined by the crisis of capitalism and the instability of the situation throughout the entire area of the Caribbean and Central America.

The United States, in effect, now regards the Caribbean as an American lake, and Central America as an American colony. They will have to relearn the lessons of Vietnam the hard way. The world has changed drastically since the days when Teddy Roosevelt could order the making and breaking of small countries in the South by picking up

a telephone. It is impossible for a power even as mighty as the USA to oppress and dominate a people which is prepared to fight for national and social emancipation.

The impending events will have earth-shaking consequences within the United States itself, as Trotsky predicted long ago. The explosions being prepared in the Caribbean, Central and South America will have far more profound repercussions even than the Vietnam War, which, after all, took place in a period of general economic upswing, whereas the present conflicts are unfolding in a period of world recession.

The failed actor in the White House, who appears to be attempting to imitate the feats of John Wayne, using the whole world for a stage, is a grotesque and caricatured reflection of the convulsions of American capitalism. His escapades in the future will only serve to provoke an enormous movement of the American working class which will draw in its train the blacks, the "chicanos", the youth and large sections of the intellectuals, repelled by the brutality of US imperialism.

If the revolution in Nicaragua had been led by conscious Marxist internationalists, it would be impossible for US imperialism, despite all its powers, to trample underfoot the peoples who are fighting for national and social liberation throughout the zone. They would have eliminated the 60 percent of the economy which remains in private hands, established a healthy democratic workers' state and made a class appeal to the oppressed masses of the Caribbean and Central America to rally to their support and overthrow their taskmasters. The example of a genuine workers' democracy would have an enormous effect on the hearts and minds of the working class and all the oppressed layers of society in the United States and throughout the world.

Even on the present basis, the Nicaraguan revolution represents a gigantic step forward, which must be defended with might and main by the labour movement in Britain and all countries. The international workers must give unconditional support for the workers of Grenada to drive out the invaders and raise all the material

means of assistance to defend the Nicaraguan workers and peasants in their struggle to defeat the oppressor and fight for their emancipation from imperialist and capitalist slavery. □

Argentine elections "Arrival of the dream ticket"

THE ARGENTINE elections of 31 October mark a new and decisive phase in the developing pre-revolutionary situation in that country.

The victory of the Radical Party of Raúl Alfonsín has been widely acclaimed in the bourgeois press as a victory for "moderation". In reality, it represented the first, confused movement of the masses in the direction of the socialist transformation of society.

Alfonsín, a shrewd and skilful bourgeois politician, stood on a "left" platform, making demagogic promises of increased living standards, improved welfare benefits, the democratisation of the unions and a clear-out of the Army.

In contrast, the Peronist leaders—whose programme in all essentials was the same as that of the Radicals—hopelessly compromised themselves by their wheeling and dealing with the murderous army generals, whom they were prepared to let off scot-free. This, in addition to the murky past of a large part of the Peronist leadership—especially in the unions—caused a heavy loss of support to the Radicals, mainly among the middle class, professional people and students, but also among a significant layer of the traditionally Peronist working class.

Alfonsín skilfully exploited the weakness of the Peronists, putting forward a "left" image. The fact that he alone had criticised the Junta's invasion of the Falklands, in addition to his demagogic attacks on corruption enabled him to present himself as "Mr. Clean". *The vote for the Radicals was in no way a vote for capitalism, as is being implied by the capitalist press.*

The majority of the middle class people and workers who voted for

Alfonsín have compared him to Felipe Gonzalez in Spain.

He has presented himself as all things to all men. Nevertheless, the real position of the Radicals has been clearly understood by the serious Argentine press which has aptly described them as "the dream merchants".

Under conditions of economic chaos, with mass unemployment and inflation of 500%, the Radicals' election promises will be an albatross around their necks. They have already begun to backtrack on their commitment to punish those members of the armed services guilty of atrocities during the "dirty war" against the Argentine labour movement. This will cause a rapid loss of support and inevitably provoke a crisis in the ranks of the Radicals and big splits at a certain stage, beginning with the youth, many of whom are really looking for a socialist solution.

Once the reality of the situation becomes clear, the Argentine working class will react violently against the new government. In spite of themselves, the Peronist union leaders will be pushed into opposition to the Radicals. Under the explosive conditions of Argentine society, a general strike is implicit in the entire situation. It is highly unlikely that the Radicals will even run their whole term of office, and the stage will be set for a massive Peronist landslide at the next elections.

The immediate result of the election defeat has been to provoke a big crisis in the ranks of Peronism. Even during the election campaign, the representatives of the most corrupt and degenerate right wing, the unions, were booed and shouted down by the workers. In many districts Peronist workers have moved to take over the headquarters of the unions and even the party in order to forcibly eject the hated bureaucrats. *In this way the workers are attempting to carry out the internal transformation of their traditional mass organisations.*

The victory of the Radicals, and the complete shattering of the Junta, will serve to accelerate the pace of the revolutionary process. The Argentine working class, with its magnificent traditions of struggle, will move from

below to attempt to solve its problems on the industrial front. The middle class, students and others who voted Radical this time, will be swept behind the movement of the workers. A Peronist victory is inevitable in the next period, despite the illusion engendered by the temporary success of the Radicals.

The Peronists will come to power under dramatically different conditions to those of the past. The hold of the union bureaucracy is infinitely weaker. The workers are tired of being manipulated and are no longer prepared to accept anything on trust. That is precisely the lesson of these elections.

A Peronist government would come to power under enormous pressure from the working class. It could be pushed further than the leaders would wish. But under conditions of catastrophic crisis in Argentina there is no possibility of returning to the "good old days" when Perón gave the workers big concessions in wages and conditions. Very quickly, the Peronists would begin to split along class lines.

At this moment in time, the Army is divided, and demoralised. All talk about a possible right-wing coup is absolutely unrealistic in this situation. *With correct Marxist leadership it would be possible for the working class to take power without violence and bloodshed.* However, this extremely favourable situation will not last. Reaction will regroup, behind the stage-show of bourgeois democracy. Within the next few years, an open confrontation between the classes is inevitable.

Sections of the Left Peronists, especially in the youth, grouped around the Montaneros, who regard themselves as Marxists, are already raising the perspective of civil war, and calling for the creation of a mass workers' militia. Armed with correct Marxist ideas, methods and tactics, the Argentine working class would be invincible. A repetition of the mistaken tactics and policies of the past would pave the way for a new disaster. Either the greatest possible victory for the working people, or the greatest possible catastrophe—that is the only perspective for Argentina now. There is no going back. The Argentinian revolution has begun.

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Reviews

'The Chicago Boys'

Reviewed by Ed Bober

"THERE IS a good deal of similarity between the economic policies of Chile and those of Britain" said Cecil Parkinson, the late and unlamented Tory minister of Trade on a visit to Santiago in October 1980. The Chilean experience, he continued, "is very similar to what we are trying to develop now in Great Britain... we think that in two or three years, the new way of things will show its advantages. Unemployment will fall, the economy will grow and inflation will fall". This very revealing quote of the attitude of the British ruling class shows the importance for British workers of a study of the Pinochet Decade.

This short book, subtitled *The rise and fall of the Chicago boys*, contains plenty of facts and figures about the virtual laboratory experiment in monetarism which preceded "Reaganism" and "Thatcherism" by almost half a decade. It is the catastrophic end of the monetarist road in Chile which makes this period so important to study, as an anticipation of the future which faces Britain and the USA.

Prices were freed of all controls whilst wages were frozen; naturally, profits rocketed. Profit taxes were eliminated while taxes were slapped on consumer goods, forcing up prices in a situation which was already desperate for the working class and the slum dwellers. Firms which had been nationalised under Popular Unity were given lavish handouts

as compensation. Great chunks of the economy were privatised, including even social security insurance schemes. State expenditure was savaged, so that, for example, only the rich who could pay got a secondary education.

Like Thatcher, the "Chicago Boys" were optimistic that after a period of "tough medicine" the economy would begin to show signs of recovery. They stressed the need for "an iron will" to get the government through "the inevitable period of public misunderstanding". Milton Friedman himself, on a visit to Chile, declared: "Chile has two choices: a very high temporary level of unemployment, or a very long period of high unemployment."

But the end product, far from being a "leaner and more virile economy", was absolute economic collapse and the total discrediting of the "Boys" from Chicago University. Officially, unemployment now stands at 24% and if you include those on Minimum Employment Programme, 28%. Inflation stood at 40% in 1978 and 35% in 1980. It fell to 9% in 1981, but in 1982 was up again to 21%. Infant mortality is 38 per 1000 live births, malnutrition is rife amongst the under tens. This book lists pages and pages of figures which chart the abyss into which the Chilean masses have been thrown by monetarism and counter-revolution.

"In the urban shanty towns of Santiago", the authors point out, "unemployment has reached levels unheard of in Chilean history, in some cases 80% or more"... In the rich districts of Santiago street corner after street corner was lined with girls selling their bodies to get food for themselves and their families."

Whole industries were wiped out and Chile's social security system broke down and the government refused to pay benefits to redundant workers. Children went to soup kitchens and took the bread home to give to their mother so that she could give it back to them for supper. Out of a population of 11½ million, 800,000 are officially homeless or inadequately housed. This is Chile today after the policies of monetarism have run into a dead end.

Now the regime has lost its "iron will". Its policies have become panic stricken. In January 1983, after all the ranting about privatisation, the government took over control of nine key banks and finance houses because of their insolven-

cy and inability to function effectively in private hands.

But after the reader has taken what facts and figures he can from it, we are left with a very unsatisfactory book. It shows no understanding of the class struggle; it deals with counter-revolution in a totally one-sided way, reducing the whole process to a description of the economic policies of the regime; and insofar as it puts forward any political conclusions it makes all the mistakes of support for class collaboration which led to the defeat of Popular Unity in the first place. It even implies that defeat was unavoidable!

We are given just a tantalising glimpse of the heroic counter-offensive of the Chilean workers and peasants: "Massive demonstrations... co-ordinated demonstrations in Santiago, Valparaiso and Concepcion... (December 1982).

"...day of national protest; more than a thousand arrests... 24 hour protest strike by copper workers... General strike... (June '83)"

It gives quite a lot of information about the increasing isolation of the regime from even those layers which formerly supported it: the representatives of big business, who fear a new revolutionary explosion; capitalist politicians such as the Christian Democrats who are falling over themselves to acquire "democratic credentials"; those sections of the middle class who originally hailed Pinochet as a saviour; and even the extreme right-wing parties which are now re-emerging, along with disgruntled sections of the military as an "opposition".

The book mentions, without much elaboration, the establishment of the "Democratic Manifesto", "a cross section of Chile's old politicians"... calling for an end to the dictatorship. It uncritically points out that all three factions of the Socialist Party were involved in this.

The reader gets just a passing glance at the new generation of workers coming into struggle, many of whom were only children at the time of the coup. Describing the aftermath of one defeated strike at Madeco, for example, it quotes a strike leader: "Most of them are young people who have no experience of trade union struggles, of how unions have had to fight for their rights"

But despite its inadequacies it must be said that this publication has filled a certain gap. Not much has yet been published on this period and until a more scientific work is available the reader in English will be able to get plenty of useful information from this book, but no inkling of the fundamental processes involved, and certainly no scientific analysis from the Marxist point of view.



The Mexican Revolution

Reviewed by David Churchley

"THE HISTORY of a revolution is for us first of all a history of the forcible entry of the masses into the realm of sovereignty over their own destiny." The Russian revolution of 1917 still stands as the single most important political achievement of this century. The struggle of the Bolsheviks, the working class and the peasant masses serves as an inspiration to workers throughout the world. History since then has been full of revolutionary moments but scant regard has been paid to those revolutions that took place before 1917. In their earlier writings, both Lenin and Trotsky studied the movements of the masses in different parts of the globe as part of their preparation for seizure of power in Russia.

The Mexican revolution of 1910 is full of similar lessons to those of 1917 in Russia. Adolfo Gilly, a one-time member of the Argentinian Socialist Party, has written a historical interpretation of the revolution which has now been produced in sixteen editions since it was first written during his incarceration in Lecumberri jail between 1966 and 1970.

Gilly's book provides a detailed explanation of the heroic struggles of the Mexican people to change their country from a backward capitalist society to that of a just and democratic socialist system. The Mexican revolution is rarely referred to apart from superficial references to the revolution of different peasant leaders, such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata.

However, the individual significance of these leaders flowed not from their personal characteristics but from their role as figures personifying and reflecting the aspirations of the peasant masses and the working class. The Mexican revolution has been referred to simply as a peasant war but it is clear from Gilly's account that "the first great movement heralded the revolution and gave expression to the national discontent that stemmed from the

proletariat rather than the peasantry..."

Mexico had achieved its independence from Spain after a mass revolutionary war. It soon faced the full effects of the developing strength of North American capitalism, through a series of wars of conquest and land seizures.

Struggles for power between the ruling conservative and liberal groups are peppered throughout the period of the 1840s through to 1876. These struggles followed the course that Marx himself had mapped out on the basis of the experience of the French revolution. The then barely developed bourgeoisie relied upon mass support and plebeian methods to sweep away the institutions and out-moded structures which they had inherited from colonial times. But the reforms that were carried out simply concentrated the land in fewer hands than before. Land was seized by the Latifundists, church property and the Indian smallholdings were divided into individual plots and acquired at already low prices.

"This massive operation of plunder, which continued the practice begun in colonial times, was designed not only to form big agrarian properties, but also to create a supply of free day labourers owning nothing other than their labour power. In order to clear a path for itself, capitalism needed to liquidate the communal lands in Central Mexico and to rob the Yaqui and Mayo Indians of their rich valleys..."

As with other countries facing similar plunder, the peasants did not give up their land without a fight. They resisted, organised revolts, suffered setbacks and massacres and returned to their lands, only to be driven back to the mountains. Unlike the classical period of what is called capital accumulation, the process in Mexico took place during the period of world-wide expansion of capitalism. In some ways it resembled the plunder of the North American Indians, and in others the



colonial wars conducted by the imperialist countries such as Britain, France and Italy. "The colonial war (in Mexico) was waged by the Mexican land-owner bourgeois government in its own country and against its own people..."

The internal wars of the ruling class called forth a constant stream of peasant revolts. Leaders aspiring to a utopian idea of socialism came onto the scene and radicalised large sections of the masses. The uprisings were mercilessly crushed as capitalism thrust itself forward "dripping from head to toe from every pore with blood and dirt". Its methods were violence, murder, robbery, plunder, trickery and constant bloodbaths. The land hunger of the masses, the original motor-force of the revolution, later combined with the revolt of the working class in a general movement in favour of change, similar to that force that propelled the French to storm the Bastille, but was concentrated in a shorter period in Mexico. The struggle for democratic rights thus developed hand in hand with the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist regime. Another influence was making itself felt in the country, namely the expansive thrust of North American capitalism and its European counterparts. This found its expression in the massive extension of the railway networks, a vital factor in the transport of goods and wealth. In less than thirty years the rail network had increased by as many times. Between 1895 and 1910, the number of towns with more than 20,000 people rose from

twenty to twenty-nine with more inhabitants employed in the developing industries. Industry expanded at a rapid rate bringing with it investment and foreign capital. Mexican capital kept itself to the traditional industries of food, coffee and cotton.

With the strengthening of the capitalist economy came the development of the working class. The scene was set for a momentous struggle between the emerging classes of Mexican society. Not surprisingly, it was the railway workers who were first onto the scene. Changing peasants into workers, a fresh group, free from any trace of artisan mentality, the railway workers recorded over sixty strikes between 1876 and the revolution itself in 1910. Gilly, in a marvellous passage, explains the rise of the proletariat, its development and struggles with reference to the first chapter of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*.

One factor that affected the workers' movement was the influence of the ideas of syndicalism originating from the North American-based "International Workers of the World" movement. This was to affect the course of the revolution as it developed particularly in those moments which Gilly himself identifies as requiring an organised political force of the working class, similar to the Russian Bolsheviks.

With three major rail strikes, and the copper miners on two occasions almost achieving a general strike, the Diaz government was crippled. Plans to replace the president were set afoot amongst sections of the "liberal" ruling class, and in particular those who were more interested in developing industry.

This move found its expression in the agreement to stand Francisco Madero, a member of a rich family of landowners and industrialists, against Porfirio Diaz. When Diaz proved to be less than willing to accommodate this idea, Madero found himself calling for free elections and, to his horror, heading a popular movement for all sorts of reforms. He got a partial respite from the pressure of the masses when he was imprisoned but was soon released to find himself at the head of an army. Madero's activities were not the decisive factor in the uprisings that

followed. The peasant forces rose and entered the area of struggle.

In Morelos State Zapata's peasant column was already on the move and it was this region which was to see the establishment of a commune during the revolution. Zapata's forces maintained an independent position throughout the wars, not siding with the "liberal" elements of the ruling class. In the North, Villa's forces originally stood with the bourgeois revolutionary leadership but swung to the side of the workers and the peasants at a later stage, when the liberal elements attempted to derail the revolution for their own gain.

These two movements united against Madero when he achieved power and called for the disarming of the peasants and the giving back of land to the big landowners. These leaders themselves were heading a movement which was to achieve almost complete power but lacked any perspective whatsoever of workers' power and democracy. They maintained a peasant outlook even to the point where they continued urban-guerilla-type attacks on the bosses to get money and essential supplies when they were actually living in the presidential palace and controlling the reins of power.

"... Zapata did not consciously set out to destroy the capitalist system: his ideas sprang from the peasantry and not from a socialist, working class programme. The methods were revolutionary and the mass initiative posed a revolutionary challenge to capitalist power..."

With a shattering clarity Gilly goes on to explain, "... but the peasantry could not rise to a nationwide social perspective nor offer a revolutionary solution for the insurgent nation. A national revolutionary perspective, counterposed to the goals of the bourgeoisie, could only have come from the other basic class in society; the proletariat. Yet the proletariat lacked an independent leadership, party and class organisation.

American imperialism stood and watched with horror as the revolution unfolded, first in this and then that direction. The horror of seeing Zapata billeted in Mexico City in 1914 was almost too much for them, but upon receiving reports from their spies in the country the Americans

were cautioned against taking excessive direct action. To defend their interests they tried to split the revolutionary movement and curried favour with one leader, Carranza, who did indeed offer them a solution. The split in the ranks of the movement saw the ebb in the flow of the wave of revolution. A general strike by the workers in 1916 was brutally suppressed, and the history of the revolution following that event was one of defeat for the peasant armies and reforms imposed from the top in an attempt at compromising the workers' movement.

Despite the defeats, the workers returned again and again to their class organisations. The pressure of the masses was still evident and, despite the defeats, was strong enough to obtain wage increases and social reforms. These strikes were inspired by the successes of the Russian proletariat. A further coup overthrowing the Carranza regime highlighted the continuing instability of the country. In 1919 Zapata was murdered and the regime achieved some stability in 1920 but only through the device of a republican constitution that apparently enshrined the interests of all classes, but in reality maintained the rule of the bosses.

The revolution of 1910 put all the ideas of the past to the test. All the traditions and forms of workers' and peasants' defence were sorely tested in this period. Gilly makes the point that since capitalism in Mexico could only provide a bonapartist form of government, supposedly independent but in reality defending the dominant class' interests, the chances of consolidating democracy within the confines of capitalism would be unrealistic. The question of socialism was placed on the agenda by the tenacious struggle of Zapata's liberation army and the actions of the Morelos peasantry in establishing their commune, right in the middle of the bourgeois revolution. The present-day struggles of the Mexican working class, which has now acquired a dominant weight within society, are the worthy continuation of the heroic revolutionary battles fought out on Mexican soil over sixty years ago, and excellently explained in this book.

Latin America on the brink

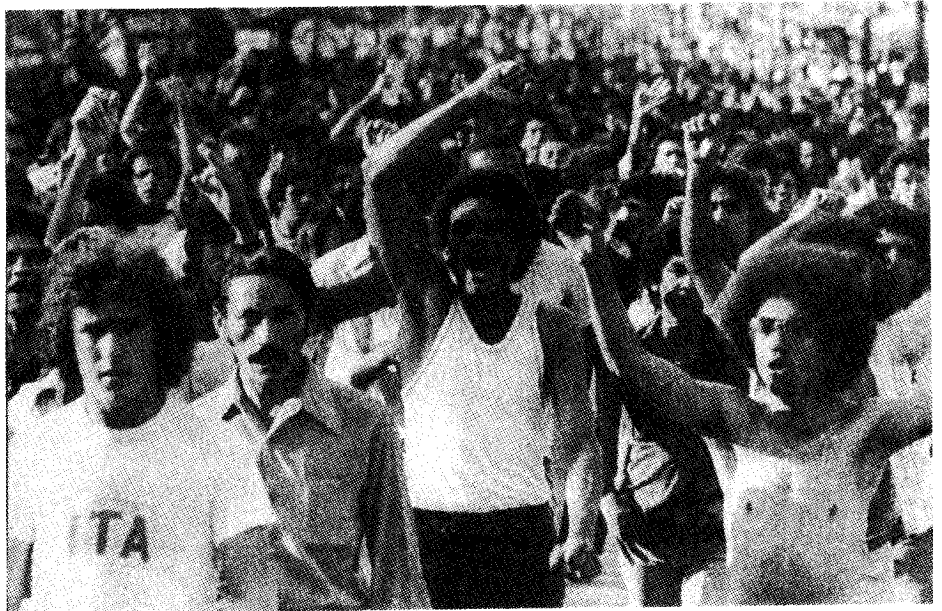
By Alan Woods

THE ENDING of the exceptional period of upswing in the world economy from 1950 to 1975, and the beginning of a new period of organic capitalist crisis, has opened up an entirely different situation on a world scale, a fundamental feature of which is the phenomenon—entirely new in the history of mankind—of the dovetailing of the revolutionary processes now unfolding simultaneously in the three main sectors of the world today, that is to say, the advanced capitalist countries, the Stalinist countries, and also the extremely important development of the revolution in the former colonial world.

It was Lenin who said that capitalism was horror without end, and a mere glance at the history of the colonial world from 1945 onwards, in Asia, Africa, in Latin America, reveals just that—horror without end: starvation, misery, wars and degradation, afflicting millions upon millions of human beings. And as a consequence of these insoluble contradictions, we have also seen the unfolding of the mightiest epic in all the annals of human history, with the mobilization of millions of former slaves, in the colonial revolution. Yet this phenomenon took place in the best period of capitalism, the period of 25 years of economic boom and growth in world trade. This was the best that capitalism had to offer the masses in Latin America, Africa and Asia. And it is true, that at least a small handful of colonial countries derived some benefit from this position, with the development of industry in a number of countries, in particular, in Latin America we had the case of Brazil and Argentina. But with the first onset of capitalist crisis, in formerly privileged nations such as Sri Lanka, which for a whole number of years had benefited from the boom, all of those gains, and in particular the existence of bourgeois democracy, now lie in a heap of smouldering rubble. From now on, whatever else may be possible, whatever social or political variant may occur, for the regimes in the colonial world in the next period, the one variant that is now absolutely out of the question, is the lasting consolidation of bourgeois democracy in Africa, Asia or

Latin America. The disastrous situation in the colonial world is summed up in the staggering figure of \$700,000 million of the accumulated debts owed by the colonial world to the advanced capitalist countries. And of that figure, no less than \$300,000 million is accounted for by Latin America alone. These figures demonstrate the utter hopelessness, the complete impasse, of capitalism on a global scale.

On the one hand, we can see the Achilles heel of the world capitalist system graphically reflected in the bloody welter of wars and upheavals in Central America, where the revolution is rapping at the doors of mighty American imperialism. It is an even more telling comment on the plight of imperialism at the present time, when we reflect that only just over a year ago, before the Falklands War, American imperialism was planning to use Argentine



Metal Workers on strike in Sao Paulo.

soldiers to intervene in Central America, both against the guerillas in El Salvador and against Nicaragua. And yet, in a very short space of time, only a question of months, following the defeat of Argentina in that war, the revolution has now arrived at Argentina, a far more serious threat to the long-term interests of capitalism and imperialism than any event in Central America.

It would be an impossible task, in the space of a single article, to deal with the question of the revolution in Central and South America, because at the present time, in the whole of that continent, from Tierra Del Fuego to the Rio Grande, there is not one stable capitalist country in the whole of Latin America. In the modern epoch, the first and most fundamental idea which has to be grasped is that the forthcoming revolution in Latin America will inevitably have a continental character. The whole nature of this unfolding epic of the Latin American revolution

serves to underline all the fundamental ideas of the brilliant theory of Leon Trotsky, the theory of the Permanent Revolution. And we will see in country after country a brilliant vindication of the idea of Trotsky, that not one of the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in Latin America can be solved within the framework of capitalism. The revolution must go on from the fight for democratic rights and the overthrow of dictatorship, to the tasks of the socialist revolution. But this aspect of the Permanent Revolution does not exhaust the question. As Lenin and Trotsky explained, and as can be seen very clearly in relation to South America, these revolutions, if they are to succeed in their aims, cannot stop at the frontiers—those artificial boundaries established by imperialism—but must continue in a chain of revolutions, which will engulf the entire continent of Latin America.

The Marxists have explained that in the present epoch, the victory of the proletariat in any major industrial country of the advanced capitalist west, or the Stalinist states, can start the beginning of the process of the world revolution. As an extension of this idea, in the case of Latin America, the triumph of the proletariat in any one of the decisive nations of that continent can also have a major effect, not only in the Third World, but also in the advanced countries of capitalist Europe, and even the deformed workers states of the East.

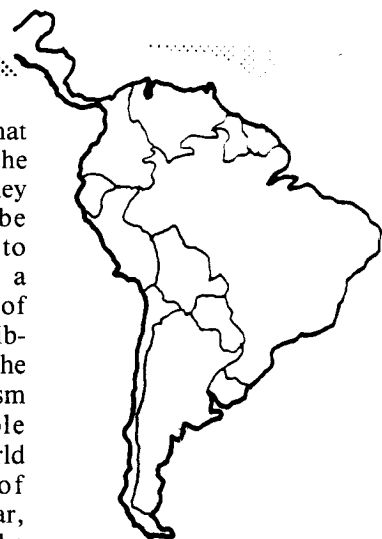
There is a feature of North American society which perhaps is not paid sufficient attention to, and that is the enormous importance of the Hispanic population, which along with the blacks represents a large exploited minority of the working class in the United States, one of the most oppressed sections of the proletariat, which would be extremely sensitive to any kind of revolutionary movements in South and Central America. Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the enormous concern of American imperialism is that the developing revolution would affect the hearts and minds, particularly on the Spanish-speaking workers of North America. In recent years the question of Central America has occupied the attention of the international labour movement, almost to the exclusion of the development of the revolution in the countries of Latin America itself. We have dealt with the question of Central America, both in the *MIR* and, more recently in the pages of the *Militant*. But now, with the revolutionary developments in Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay, we have to see the revolution in Central America, in the context of the wider picture, the development of the continental revolution in the whole of Latin America.

Central America, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean are central to the interests of US imperialism, both economic, strategic and political. But nevertheless, in a historical sense, the task of American imperialism in holding back the revolution in the colonial world, is hopeless. At the very time when the British fleet set sail for the Falkland Islands, Reagan was in Jamaica negotiating with Seaga, for the handing over of a large quantity of money, as part of the "Reagan Plan" to prevent the spread of "communism" in the Caribbean. Yet, even the most cursory glance at the economies of the

Caribbean region shows that the Reagan Plan, with the risible quantities of money involved, would be equivalent to attempting to bail out the ocean with a teaspoon. The impasse of the economies of the Caribbean pathetically reflects the hopelessness of capitalism throughout the whole hemisphere. In the world economic recession of 1979-82, the price of sugar, one of the main items of the region fell by 18 per cent just

in one year, 1979-80. What effect did this have upon the countries of the area? The Dominican Republic had largely managed to escape the effects of the earlier recession as a result of the high price of sugar, which represents about half of its exports. At the present time, the economic growth of the Dominican Republic is 0 per cent, 25 per cent of the active population is unemployed, and a further 25 per cent is under-employed! And yet that is a paradise if we compare it to Haiti, the country just next door, where in 1981, the per capita income was just \$338. However, that figure, as is always the case with averages, gives an entirely erroneous impression, because approximately 80 per cent of the population of Haiti has an annual income of only \$100, 70 per cent are illiterate, and more than 50 per cent of the active population is unemployed. Under the Reagan plan for the Caribbean, the amount of money for Haiti would be no more than \$5 million. That is an absolutely miserable sum of money which will have no effect whatsoever.

The explosive situation in the Caribbean area was already demonstrated 20 years ago by the Cuban revolution, and following the establishment of a deformed workers state in Cuba, we have witnessed the establishment of a similar regime in Grenada, the nationalisation of the economy in Guyana (formerly British Guyana), and also the coup d'etat in Surinam, which apparently is moving along similar lines. If we bear in mind these facts, then the absolute panic of American imperialism about the effects of the Nicaraguan revolution is absolutely clear. The strategists of capital understand that, under conditions of capitalist crisis these regimes will fall like skittles. Here perhaps, it is necessary to strike a note of warning, a cautionary note with relation to our analysis of the behaviour of American imperialism in this area. It is perfectly true that since the defeat in Vietnam, American imperialism has been powerless to intervene in Iran, in Ethiopia, in Angola, in Mozambique, and also in Nicaragua where they were unable to prevent the overthrow of the Somoza regime. But nevertheless, as we warned some time ago, the setting up of a special military intervention force for the Caribbean indicates that it would be a mistake to imagine that the possibility of armed intervention in Central America or the Caribbean can be ruled out, under certain conditions, as has been explained in a recent centre-page article by Ted Grant in



the *Militant*. However, even this possibility could now be cut across by the developing revolution in Argentina and Chile. It is necessary at all times to comprehend the revolution in Central and South America in its totality, as a single, indissoluble process.

In order not to be taken by surprise by events, it is necessary at all times to understand the underlying causes of the crisis in Central and Latin America. The fundamental factor is the world crisis of capitalism which has now assumed an organic character. There is no way out for the masses on the basis of capitalism—either in the advanced countries of Western Europe, Japan and the USA, or for the oppressed millions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The conclusions experienced by the colonial and semi-colonial countries in the last period merely show the advanced capitalist countries their own future, as in a mirror.

The first world recession of 1974-76, and above all the second recession of 1979-83 have hit the Third World countries far harder because of the relative weakness of their economies. With frightening speed, all the old illusions in the "Brazilian miracle" and the other "success stories" of these countries were shattered into fragments, leaving the masses, the politicians and the army generals face to face with crude reality. 1981 was the worst year for the Latin American economy since the Second World War. In that year alone, the gross national product of the whole continent fell by 1.7 percent. There was an average increase in inflation throughout Latin America of 60 percent, a deficit on the balance of payments of 38,000 million dollars, and an external debt of 240,000 million dollars. In the three years up to 1981, the terms of trade have fallen by no less than 30 percent, that is 10 per cent each year. This meant a loss of income, as a consequence of falling prices, of \$5,000 million. On the other hand, the economies of this area were hit by high interest rates, which represent a colossal drain on resources. The monstrous parasitism of finance capital on a world scale means that each additional point of interest causes a drain of resources of an additional \$1,000 million for Latin America. In 1981, a further \$5,000 million were lost in this way. These figures alone add up to a finished recipe for social convulsions on a continental scale.

The vital importance of Latin America in the context of the world revolution is due to the overwhelming strength of the proletariat in several of these countries. It would be a complete mistake to imagine that in South America conditions exist for classical guerilla struggle or that the revolution will be based mainly on the peasantry. In the last period there has been an inten-

sification of the process of urbanization throughout the Latin American continent. In Uruguay, 81 percent of the population live in towns and cities; in Brazil, 80 percent; in Chile, 79 percent; in Venezuela, 75 percent. In Peru and Mexico, 66 percent. In the case of Argentina, an absolutely crucial country for the socialist revolution in Latin America, 84 percent of the population live in cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants, and 35 percent of the population live in Buenos Aires. These figures reflect the absolute lunacy of the idea of guerilla warfare, of peasant warfare, of terrorism, which has been advanced by certain self-styled "Marxist", "Leninist" and even "Trotskyist" groups in Latin America—with disastrous results. This enormous concentration of population in the urban centres, this enormous specific weight of the proletariat, a thousand times more than in the Russian Revolution of 1917, creates enormously favourable conditions for a classical socialist revolution and the creation of democratic workers' states in Latin America.

This process of urbanisation has not in any sense meant an increase in the living standards as far as the mass of workers are concerned, even in the last period. On the contrary, what this process reflected was the enormous movement of millions of starving landless peasants, driven by misery and hunger into the cities, to eke out a miserable existence in the shanty towns or "favelas" as they are called in Brazil, which exist on the outskirts of every city in South America. If we take the decade of the '70s, before the recession, we see that officially 6 percent was unemployed. That figure is obviously false. If we included under-employment, the figure for unemployed and under-employed at the beginning of the '70s was 30 percent on a continental level. At the begin-

In memory of Simón Bolívar.

"Let us lay the cornerstone of American freedom without fear. To hesitate is to perish"—Simón Bolívar, March 1811. This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Simón Bolívar "the Liberator" who successfully led the struggle for the emancipation of Latin America from Spanish rule.

Born in Caracas, on July 24, 1783, the son of a wealthy aristocratic family, Bolívar's evolution was decisively stamped by the great event of the epoch—the French Revolution of 1789 to '93.

The young Bolívar avidly devoured the writings of the most advanced revolutionary writers of the age: Rousseau, Montesquieu and Voltaire, as well as the earlier European rationalists and materialists of the English school like Locke and Hobbes.

The echoes of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars which shook the foundations of European feudalism and absolutism reached the shores of Spanish America and kindled a spirit of revolt, much as the Russian Revolution

had a decisive effect in shaking the millions of colonial slaves out of the inertia of Centuries. All his thinking and active life, Bolívar was the living embodiment of that revolutionary spirit.

In a brilliant audacious military campaign, Bolívar smashed the Spanish forces and entered Caracas on August 6, 1813, where he was given the title of the "Liberator". But the Spaniards counterattacked, basing themselves on a backward section of the population, the "Llaneroes" who succeeded in driving the forces of independence from the city. Bolívar was forced to take refuge in Jamaica.

From here he hammered out the lesson to his countrymen: "Not the Spaniards, but our own disunity has led us back to slavery"...

Already Bolívar had developed a vision of a Federation of Latin America, where the pooling of all resources would enable the peoples of the continent to step as a decisive force onto the stage of history:

"How ineffable it would be if the Isthmus of Panama should become for

ning of the 1980s the figure for unemployed and under-employed throughout Latin America is 50 percent, one half of the population. The absolute living standards of the masses actually declined, even before the onset of the recession.

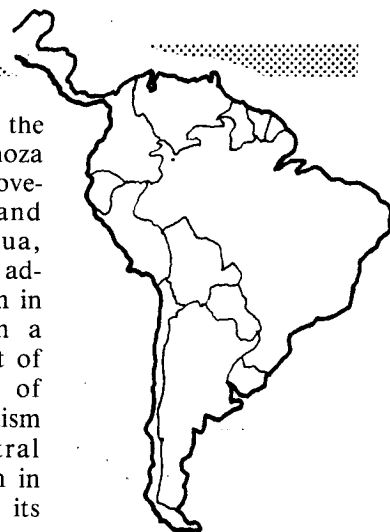
At the beginning of the 1970's, 62 percent of rural families and 26 percent of urban families were below the poverty threshold in Latin America. Whereas between 1970 and 1979, nominal wages rose in 21 countries of Latin America, the real price of food rose faster than wages. Hunger, misery, degradation, illiteracy—this was the best that capitalism had to offer, even prior to the recession. The very phrase "Latin American inflation" is sufficient to underline the explosion of prices which flowed from the fact that capitalism in Latin America went beyond its limits throughout this period. But now the chickens are coming home to roost. In order to attempt to expel the accumulated poison from its system, capitalism in Latin America is compelled to throw the whole process into reverse, to slash back ruthlessly on public expenditure, in order to drag themselves back from the brink of the abyss which they have approached through this colossal inflation. According to bourgeois economists, Latin America would require a growth rate of at least 6.9 per cent per annum in order to prevent the growth of unemployment in the '80s. This perspective is absolutely ruled out. What these figures demonstrate is the inevitability of a decade of convulsions, of revolutions, and counter revolutions, the like of which has never been seen in the history of Latin America.

As the harbinger of this revolutionary wave we had the titanic events in Nicaragua and El Salvador. From the

standpoint of Marxism, the overthrow of the Somoza regime, by the mass movement of workers and peasants in Nicaragua, represented a gigantic advance for the revolution in Latin America and on a world scale. As a result of the absolute rottenness of capitalism and landlordism throughout Central America, the revolution in Nicaragua—in spite of its deformed character—was capable of immediately sparking off guerilla wars in El Salvador and in Guatemala. This fact merely served to demonstrate the necessarily inter-dependent character of the revolution that is taking place in Central America and Latin America, which cannot stop at the frontiers. Had the Sandinista leadership consisted of genuine Marxists, then it would have been easy on the basis of the mass movement to establish a healthy workers state, and make an appeal to the workers and peasants of the other countries, linking up the revolution as a joint Central American revolution, then later, a Latin American revolution. Unfortunately, the leaders, of the Sandinista movement, poisoned with the pernicious influence of Stalinism, have fallen for the ideas of the "two-stages" theory of the revolution, "socialism in one country", and all the other nonsense of the Stalinists.

The Cuban bureaucracy and the Russian bureaucracy

played a direct and conscious role in preventing the Sandinista leadership from going all the way and expropriating capitalism completely in Nicaragua. Capitalism in Nicaragua, as in the whole of Central America, is absolutely rotten, corrupt and degenerate. There is no way forward on this basis for the Nicaraguan revolution. And yet the Sandinistas persisted in a vain attempt to maintain some kind of private sector in the Nicaraguan economy. It a mistake to imagine that capitalism has been eliminated in Nicaragua at the present time. Instead, we have an extremely peculiar state of affairs where, on the one hand, the old Somoza state has been utterly smashed (the state in the Marxist sense is armed bodies of men in defence of particular property relationships) and an entirely new state has been set up in Nicaragua controlled by the Sandinistas. And yet, according to the latest figures, 60 percent of the land remains in private hands. The economic



America what the Straits of Corinth were for the Greeks. May God grant that we can some day enjoy the good fortune of opening a congress of representatives of the republics, kingdoms, and empires which would discuss peace and war with the rest of the nations of the world."

Undeterred by defeat, by a supreme effort of will-power, Bolívar re-assembled the forces of independence and began the struggle again. Under indescribably difficult conditions, the revolutionary army crossed rivers, deserts and ice-covered mountains, dislodging the royalist troops from one stronghold after another, from the crucial Battle of Boyacá (August 17, 1819) to the surrender of the Spanish viceroy on December of 1824, by which control of Peru and Columbia fell to the revolutionary forces.

The high point of Bolívar's career also exposed the weaknesses in his political outlook. The way in which the liberation wars had been conducted—as a prolonged military struggle led by de-classed former aristocrats—and the absence of a strong bourgeois class capable of putting itself forward as the natural ruler of society, inevitably led him toward bonapartism—the rule of

the sword. These autocratic tendencies, in turn, caused conflicts with the other revolutionary generals.

Thus, in the absence of a powerful revolutionary class capable of carrying the bourgeois democratic revolution to a triumphant conclusion, Bolívar's idea of unifying the whole continent could be no more than a tantalising mirage.

The dreams of the "Liberator" turned into a squalid power-struggle between different cliques of army officers and creole aristocrats. In the midst of intrigues, civil wars and assassination attempts, Bolívar's life was played out. He died of tuberculosis on December 17th, 1830.

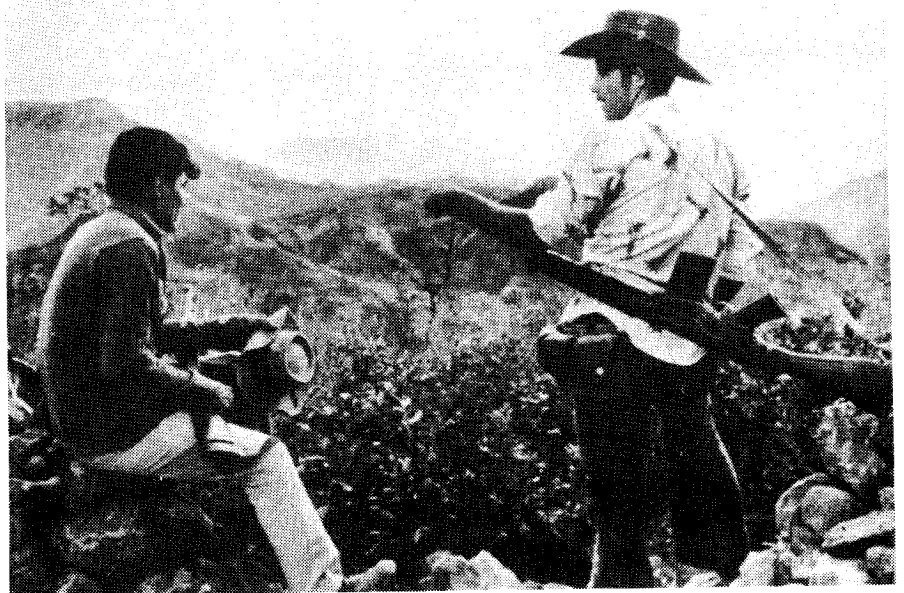
Today the name of Bolívar is remembered in Latin America as a rallying-call to the oppressed peoples to rise in revolt against tyranny and injustice everywhere. His vision of a powerful united Continent is inscribed on the banner of the Latin American proletariat, which is destined to fulfil the vow made by the "Liberator" on the heights of the Monti Sacro, to establish real independence and freedom from fear, oppression and exploitation under the Socialist United States of Latin America.

power of the bourgeoisie therefore has not been decisively destroyed in Nicaragua. Therein lies the danger.

This situation cannot exist for any length of time. Either the Sandinistas, leaning on the workers and peasants, will carry through the process to the end, and nationalise the economy, or else, it is not excluded under certain conditions, that the bourgeoisie might gather fresh forces around itself and extinguish the new state. The pernicious formula advanced by the Stalinists, and echoed by certain sectarian groups which have openly reneged on the ideas of Trotsky, that the state in Nicaragua represents the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" is false in theory and extremely harmful in practice. It is a sorry rehash of the old Stalinist-Menshevik idea of the "two stages" in the revolution, which Lenin decisively rejected in April 1917 and which has caused terrible damage wherever it has been applied, from China in 1927 to Indonesia in 1965. The Nicaraguan bourgeoisie is 100 per cent counter-revolutionary. The fact that there is no such thing as a democratic bourgeoisie in Nicaragua is indicated by the recent statements of the Nicaraguan bosses' organisation which, in effect, is openly supporting the Contras and demanding that the regime enter into an agreement with the counter-revolutionaries when the Somoza troops of reaction are already attacking the revolution on Nicaraguan soil. Nevertheless, in spite of the deformed character of the Nicaraguan revolution, it has inevitably exercised a powerful revolutionising effect on the psychology of the masses throughout Central America. And here we are faced with a dialectical contradiction. If the American imperialists could afford to wait, then they might stand a chance of achieving the restoration of capitalism in Nicaragua through the internal forces of counter-revolution. At the present moment, because of the horrific destruction caused by the civil war, 30 percent of the population in Nicaragua are unemployed and living standards are actually 20 percent lower than they were under Somoza. Because the Sandinista leadership have not wiped out the economic power of the bourgeoisie, at a certain stage, with the spread of discontent, it might be possible probably to overthrow the Sandinista regime even without external intervention. **But the whole essence of the situation is that United States imperialism cannot afford to wait. The enormous influence of the Nicaraguan revolution throughout the whole of Central America is the decisive factor in the equation.** In El Salvador the puppet army of the junta is being beaten back on all fronts by the guerillas. Without direct US assistance the junta in El Salvador would collapse within a question of weeks. That scenario opens up a nightmare situation for US imperialism throughout Central America. If El Salvador

goes, Honduras and Guatemala would immediately follow. And then Costa Rica, Panama, and even Mexico would be threatened with revolution.

It is true that there are divisions within the ranks of the American imperialists and there is a section which is opposed to the idea of intervention in Central America. That section of the American bourgeoisie whose interests are not directly affected by the situation in Central America are afraid of the enormous political and social consequences of a direct US involvement in El Salvador and Nicaragua. But in spite of that fact, all the indications are that Reagan is in favour of an intervention not just against the guerillas of El Salvador, but also direct intervention against Nicaragua. The Reagan Administra-



El Salvadorian guerillas.

tion has drawn up plans for an economic blockade of Nicaragua. We have seen the manoeuvres of the US navy off the shores of Nicaragua. We have also had the joint military manoeuvres of the United States and Honduran soldiers throughout the zone. We have the turning of Honduras into an armed camp—one of the poorest nations in the world has just received more military assistance in the last two years from the United States than in the whole of its previous history. And last but not least, we have the open support of American imperialism for the Contras, the ex-Somoza guard, in their invasion of Nicaragua. It may not be enough. The armed forces of Nicaragua, which are the most powerful in the region, will undoubtedly be able to defeat the Somoza guard without much difficulty. But what would happen in the event of the defeat of the Somoza guard if the fighting then spread to Honduras? Undoubtedly the Americans would be compelled to intervene.

Now, why should this be possible? After all America did not intervene in Iran, they didn't intervene in Ethiopia, they didn't intervene in Angola and Mozambique. Why should they intervene for the sake of a small handful of countries in Central America?

The answer to that question is precisely that Central America is not Asia, it is not Africa—it is "America's

backdoor". Two-thirds of the oil imported into the United States passes through the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. The United States imperialists understood that the domino theory was correct in South-East Asia and know that it is even more correct in the case of Central America. If El Salvador falls, then Guatemala will automatically fall. The coup d'état that took place this summer indicates the enormous instability of the regime in Guatemala. The victory of the revolution in Guatemala would bring the revolution right up to the frontiers of Mexico, the third biggest country in Latin America and the ninth largest in the world.

Undoubtedly Mexico is now one of the key countries of the revolution in Latin America. It is interesting to recall that Mexico up until recently was considered as a "success story", a stable, potentially prosperous and developed Latin American country. The agrarian reform was carried out seventy years ago on the strength of the Mexican revolution, in this potentially wealthy country with huge resources of oil, uranium and natural gas. The very peculiar political regime in Mexico, a product of the revolution, has guaranteed considerable political stability up until the present time. Theoretically there was a multi-party democratic state while in practice, it was a one party state run by the so-called Institutional Revolutionary Party. Only two years ago, on the basis of its colossal oil wealth and the oil boom, it appeared that Mexico was a good contender for a stable and normal bourgeois development. And yet, in a very short space of time, all of those illusions have been reduced to rubble. Mexico has the biggest debt in South America, which cannot be repaid. Inflation is over 90 per cent, Gross Domestic Product is expected to fall this year by 3.5 per cent. According to official figures the purchasing power of the average Mexican fell by 40 per cent in the last twelve months. Miguel de Madrid, the new president, following the advice of the IMF, has initiated general price increases on all the basic products. For example, the price of maize tortilla, which is the staple diet, has increased by 40 per cent. The price of bread has doubled. Since December 1982, petrol, telephone bills, post office charges, and electricity charges have all more than doubled. And the possibility of the extension of social convulsions to Mexico, that is to say the very frontier of the United States, must cause many sleepless nights in Washington.

For all of these reasons, a military pre-emptive strike by the United States against Nicaragua, while not certain, is not at all excluded. From a purely military point of view the operation would be relatively simple. They could occupy the country in a short space of time, but that would not be the end of the matter. Napoleon was a great man, a very great military expert who knew a lot about bayonets, and he once said "Bayonets are wonderful things, you can do a lot of things with them. The one thing which you cannot do with bayonets is to sit on them." The whole experience of the United States in Vietnam demonstrated that you cannot suppress an entire people when an entire nation stands up and says no. Military intervention in Nicaragua, instead of solving the

guerilla war, would extend the conflict throughout the whole of Central America. And even beyond that, a more serious result would be the enormous, incalculable, psychological and political repercussions of such an action throughout the whole of Latin America. In point of fact, one of the considerations, which has thus far stayed the hand of Washington in Central America, has been the developing revolution in Argentina and now in Chile. However important the developments in Central America, in a broader historical sense, these are merely the initial heat lightning of the far more important and decisive revolution in South America.

It is necessary here and now to recall that we were the only tendency in the international labour movement that stood absolutely firm against the lunacy of guerillaism in Latin America throughout the 1960's and part of the 1970's. Ours was the only tendency to stand squarely on the idea of the leading role of the working class, of the proletariat in the revolution in Latin America. And that position has been entirely vindicated by the developments of Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and other countries in the last few months.

Even over thirty years ago we saw the great, heroic revolutionary traditions of the South American proletariat in the revolution in Bolivia. In three days of armed struggle, the Bolivian proletariat smashed the army.

As in Catalonia in 1936 during the Spanish revolution, the Bolivian workers seized the factories and mines, the Bolivian peasants seized the land. Power was in the hands of the working class. The Bolivian proletariat with its marvellous revolutionary traditions wanted the transformation of society, they wanted the socialist revolution. Yet the disgraceful role of the petty bourgeois reformist leaders, and in particular the Stalinist leaders with their theory of "two stages" according to which the workers had to limit themselves to realising the so-called "democratic revolution", completely undermined that possibility. Nonetheless, the whole history of Bolivia following this so-called "bourgeois democratic revolution" (which was no such thing— it was the revolution of the workers) demonstrates precisely the impossibility of development on a capitalist basis in any country of Latin America. The utterly parasitic role of capitalism in the whole of Latin America is indicated in Bolivia, and in all the other countries, by the fact that the state has to prop up the entire economy by means of public investment. This is even the case in Brazil, in spite of all the nonsense which is talked about the role of private enterprise in that country.

In spite of the marvellous revolutionary traditions of the Bolivian proletariat, a section of the student and petty bourgeois youth, repelled by reformism, and influenced by the example of the Cuban revolution and the ideas of Che Guevara, took to the road of guerillaism. The



disastrous result of those movements was the reactionary coup d'état of General Banza in 1971. Even before Chile and Argentina, Bolivian capitalism embarked on the road of attempting to solve its problems by strapping society within the straitjacket of military rule. But, as *El País* the Spanish liberal paper commented wittily at the time of the attempted coup in Spain, "You cannot arrest unemployment and shoot inflation." A sure sign of the rottenness of capitalism in Bolivia, is the incredible fact that these generals towards the end of their rule were obliged to resort to international illegal drug trade, in order to maintain themselves in power. They based themselves on the cocaine trade. It wasn't such a bad racket, while it lasted! In just one year from the narcotics trade, they got \$3,000 million. Whereas the tin industry brought in only \$400 million, and the total foreign trade was only \$1,000 million. This illegal dealing brought in three times more than the total foreign trade!

As an indication of the enormous revolutionary potential of the Latin American proletariat, once again this regime was brought to its knees by the working class, through general strikes, political strikes, barricades and street fighting, in the period of 1979 to 1980. It was this movement of the Bolivian working class which compelled the junta to concede new elections which resulted in the election of Hernan Siles in 1980. Siles was quickly forced out by another coup, but at the end of last year, once again, on the basis of the enormous movements of the working class, the Bolivian junta was finally compelled to hand over power, and what amounts to a popular front government was formed with ministers from the UDP, the MIR, the Communist Party. Of course, the ministry of mines and labour naturally enough was occupied by the Communist Party! These people, like the Bourbons learn nothing and forget nothing. To complete the happy picture, for good measure, an army officer and a Christian Democrat were duly offered portfolios. The bourgeois commentators of the *Economist* just a few months ago were rubbing their hands in glee because this monster, the Bolivian proletariat, had finally calmed down as a result of the conceding of democratic rights and a democratically elected government. However, the real state of affairs was graphically shown by the reaction of Señor Siles who was still an exile in neighbouring Peru, when he heard that there was an offer of power. This "democrat" was somewhat less than enthusiastic, as shown by his initial comment: "They want to crucify me!". And looking at the state of the Bolivian economy we would have to agree with him! As in Chile and as in Argentina, the lunacy of monetarism has reduced the Bolivian economy to ruins. A devaluation of the money of 1,000%. Inflation at one stage was 600%. And this after 18 years in power! The Bolivian military were divided, disoriented and demoralised. And they are haunted by the spectre of another 1952. We have to be absolutely clear that to resort to bourgeois democracy under social conditions of this nature is an absolute utopia. There is no way out along that avenue. And the gentlemen on the editorial board of the *Economist* were rubbing their hands a little bit prematurely. This summer there was a massive demonstration of 100,000 workers in the streets of La Paz against the economic policy of the Siles government. A

quote from *Le Monde Diplomatique* of August 1983 written before this demonstration, already showed the fear of the leaders of the labour movement in Bolivia at the enormous discontent seething within the class, which cannot be satisfied within the limits of bourgeois democracy: "On this occasion," the article says, "trade unions seem to be overwhelmed by their rank and file," and then it goes on to quote a Bolivian worker: "We care little about politics and the change of government. What we want is the minimum wage and then all the rest." This was the kind of thing that you could hear in that inner sanctum of the workers movement in the mining district of Siglo Veinte. This demonstration which took place on the 2nd of August was calling for, first of all, the nationalisation of the banks, and secondly, the repudiation of all foreign debts. The whole problem in Bolivia is that the working class have the power, but they do not know that they have the power.

What strikes one when looking at the map of Central and South America is the complete absence of any ray of hope for the bourgeois, of the absence of any stable bourgeois country on the entire continent. The strategists of capital placed their hopes on Brazil as an apparently stable capitalist country which actually benefited considerably by the growth in industry under the economic world boom. They talked about the "Brazilian miracle," and on the face of it there was a miracle, with the important development of industry, for example, in Sao Paulo, which harbors the most important concentration of industry in the whole continent. And yet, like the famous "hut on chickens' legs" of Russian fable, as soon as the first cold wind began to blow, that structure fell with a resounding crash. At this moment in time Brazil's foreign debt amounts to \$75,000 million—second only to Mexico, and since 1979 the interest charges have been greater than the amortization of capital in Brazil.

This opens up a situation similar to that in Germany in the 1920's and like the Spanish revolution in 1931. Faced with an enormous popular unrest, and with the dictatorship exhausted, the generals were compelled to call an election, not a general election, but elections for the governors of the different states. Despite the scandalous rigging of the elections, the opposition parties, particularly the bourgeois MDB made considerable progress. A similar phenomenon to what took place in Greece after the fall of the junta, when Karamanlis originally got the advantage, or in Spain where the UCD originally obtained a majority. In the same way, as an indication of the break-up of the dictatorship, in Brazil the MDB, this bourgeois liberal party, now won the elections in Sao Paulo. What this really demonstrates, if we bear in mind that the UCD in Spain were in power for five years, is the extension of the same process of "italianisation"—of a long drawn out process of revolution—which we have seen in Europe, to Latin America also. For this reason, in these first elections, the Workers Party did not get a big vote. Nevertheless, as an anticipation of the shape of things to come, the so-called Democratic Labour Party of Brizola, which is a split of the old Labour Party of Goulart, overthrown in 1964, won the elections in Rio de Janeiro. Obviously the intention of the bourgeois is to hold up Brazil as an example of the slow gradual

reform movement from the top to prevent the revolution from below. But that perspective is completely untenable, as the subsequent developments have shown. At this moment in time there are between 25 and 30 million unemployed in Brazil. 777,000 of these are in Sao Paulo, and of these unemployed, no fewer than 444,000 have lost their jobs in the last eighteen months. Yet, despite this catastrophic position, the IMF have demanded a further slow-down in the economy of another 2 or 4% this year. Inflation stands at around 100%, and the living standard of the average Brazilian has fallen by about 5% in the last two years. Under conditions such as these, the idea of a slow gradual, controlled reform, is absolutely out of the question. The governors had scarcely had time

to warm their seats in their places before they were confronted with an enormous upheaval in Sao Paulo. 2,000 people tried to storm the "liberal" governor's residence in Sao Paulo and 70,000 metal workers struck in support of their demands. The situation is extremely volatile in Brazil. It could change very quickly. The only alternative for the bourgeois is to pile cuts upon cuts, which will inevitably mean social convulsions, reflected first of all through the ranks of the trade unions, and later through the Workers' Party.

In neighbouring Uruguay, the decomposition of the military dictatorship has now sparked off a big mass movement, indicated by two national days of protest. As in Chile and Argentina, the application of monetarist

El Salvador; Guerrilla leader confirms position of MIR.

Militant International Review Number 22 (June 1982) carried an article on El Salvador translated from the journal of the Spanish Marxists, *Nuevo Claridad: suplemento Latinoamericano*.

This article, while giving full support to the guerrillas against the monstrous right-wing regime in El Salvador, provided a detailed Marxist analysis of the situation in that country, and pointed out that, if the guerrilla leaders had held a correct Marxist policy, basing themselves on the movement of the urban working class in early 1979, they could have taken power in a classical socialist revolution, and thus avoided the costly overheads of a bloody civil war which has already led to tens of thousands killed, without having attained its objectives.

Naturally, the Marxist position on guerrillaism has not been well received among certain sections who, under the excuse of the undoubted need for international solidarity, refuse to address themselves to the equally pressing need for a clear Marxist analysis of the perspectives for the revolution in Central and South America.

It is therefore highly significant that the position put in the aforementioned article in our journal has now received corroboration from no less a source than the leadership of one of the principal guerrilla groups in El Salvador.

In the June issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Spanish Language Edition) published in Mexico, there appeared an interview with *Joaquin Villalobos*, commander-in-chief of the ERP, written by the well known Stalinist writer *Marta Harnecker*. The declarations of Villalobos bear out entirely the analysis made in the MIR and provide a crushing refutation of the arguments of those who, from the safety of their studies in Western Europe and the USA, have consistent-

ly advocated uncritical support for the tactic of guerrillaism in Central and South America, while pouring scorn on the classical Marxist position which rests upon the leading role of the urban working class in the socialist revolution.

We print below a verbatim translation of an extract from the *Le Monde Diplomatique* article:

Was the offensive of January 1981 a mistake?

Many people saw the January offensive as a military defeat for the FMLN. Others thought that the generalised besieging of barracks had been a mistake. How was it possible to attempt to attack the enemy in the very places where he was most dug in? Nevertheless, commandante Villalobos defends the tactics pursued, explaining their causes and consequences:

"The dispersal of forces when we besieged many barracks throughout the length and breadth of the land" — Joaquin affirms — "was a correct idea within the context of the concept of 'rousing the masses to revolt.' The initial objective", he explains, "was not to wipe out the army, but to rouse the masses to revolt, and on the basis of this uprising to go on to apply different tactics which would extend from the prolonged besieging of barracks with the help of the masses, right up to the application of measures which would compel the army to move and, in this way, attack it once in motion."

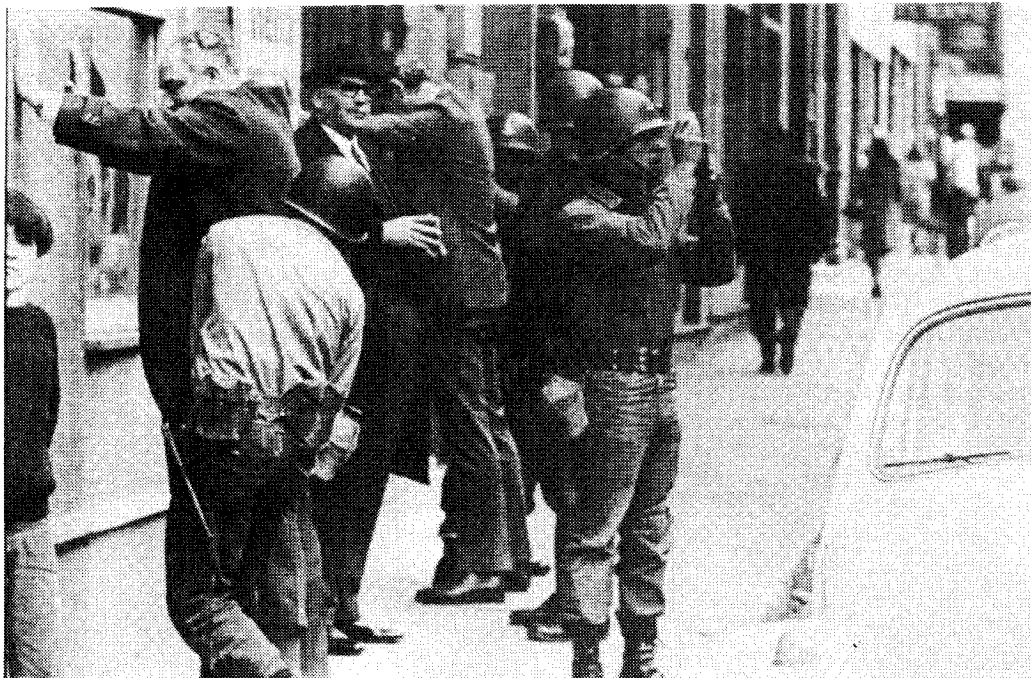
Nonetheless, he recognises that the FMLN at that moment in time did not possess a very developed technical capacity for the attacking of a mobile enemy, or even one in fixed position, "and the fundamental question at the time was to arouse the masses to in-

surrection, deriving the military problem from this."

He also accepts that the option of the insurrectionary road was intimately linked to the experience of the rising tide of the mass movement of the Salvadorian people, the biggest in Latin America, according to his estimate.

What happened in January was that "the right moment for the insurrection had already been lost. There were other situations in which it was possible to aspire towards the seizure of power by this means, as, for example, the situation that existed during March, April and May of 1979" — the maximum leader of the ERP affirms in a tone of absolute conviction — "In that period — especially following the assassination of Monsignor Romero — there was an enormous upswing of the mass movement. 'The revolutionary movement at the time had the capacity to paralyse the country without any necessity of resorting to military action. 90 per cent of the trade union organisation ('organismos gremiales') of the working class and the employees were following their instructions.' On the other hand there also existed 'a solid peasant movement, rooted in twelve out of the fourteen provinces ('departamentos') inside enemy territory. Both within the bourgeoisie and the army there were sections willing to do a deal with the revolutionary movement.'"

But what happened after that date? The army began to improve "a systematic and massive reign of terror" in the towns and launched big military operations against the zones where the revolutionary organisation had their most solid control in the countryside. "This gave rise to a fall-back of the mass movement and a wearing-out of the revolutionary forces." (The emphasis has been added.)



Armed police apprehend civilians in Uruguay.

economic policies has led to ruin, mass unemployment and misery. The splits in the ruling clique were revealed in an interview with one of the bourgeois "opposition" leaders, published in *The Times* on the 3rd of October this year, who claimed that:

"the military are worried by the prospect of Chilianization, of increasing violence. So they are thinking of reaching an agreement with us." He adds, "The problem is that they are divided, and their policies are incoherent. President Alvarez has emerged as a hard-liner, in favour of clamping down again and extending his presidential term for another five years. **Against him an important sector of the army wants to lift the lid on what they see as a pressure cooker which is in danger of exploding.**" (My emphasis, A.W.)

The army officers, sensing the ground shake under their feet, have lost all confidence in their ability to rule. One section seeks to hang on at all costs, while another frantically tries to take refuge behind the shirt-tails of the "moderate and responsible" opposition leaders.

The cowardly nature of the Uruguayan bourgeois liberals is adequately revealed by their willingness even to let the officers responsible for mass murder, torture and the most hideous atrocities go free, in exchange for a ministerial portfolio. It is hard to read the following words by one of these "heroes of democracy" without a shudder of revulsion:

"The officers argued," he explains "that they had to obtain information from prisoners, and that the information could save the lives of some of their comrades. Therefore they used methods of interrogation which go against the spirit and letter of our constitution (!). For them it was a matter of solidarity (yes, you read that correctly). Officers who did not use these methods were seen as traitors to their comrades. Now these guerrillas no longer exist, but those methods continue. Even the most

moderate officers will not tolerate any questioning of their role in human rights violations."

The cowardly bowing and scraping of the bourgeois "democrats" before the army generals will not prevent the masses from taking revenge once the working class moves to get rid of its oppressors. In reality, the army officers are a million times more perceptive than their liberal "opponents" when they liken the situation to a pressure cooker which is in danger of exploding. The fact that they do not even attempt to

prohibit the "pots and pans" demonstrations, which, as in Chile, have also spread to the middle-class district of Montevideo, is an open admission of weakness. The movement is too generalised. If the Alvarez wing of the military hang on too long, like Pinochet, they could provoke an explosion which would be difficult to control. But even if they attempt to move from the top—and even Alvarez has been forced to promise an election for November 1984—that could merely open the floodgate for all the accumulated, pent-up rage of the masses. In any case, the fate of Uruguay is intimately bound up with events in Argentina on the other side of the River Plate, where the revolutionary process has already begun.

Wherever you look in Latin America, there is no lack of inflammable material. The bourgeois have no real base of support anywhere in the continent. Take Venezuela, the fifth exporter of oil in the world. In this country 70% of the population live in abject misery below the poverty line. And with the falling price of oil Venezuela has also gone into crisis. If we turn to the formerly "solid" military dictatorships in the Southern Cone, as it is known, the absolute correctness of the analysis which we made of these regimes in the past emerges with complete clarity. When all other tendencies in the labour movement, from the right and left reformists and the Stalinists to the "**Heinz 57 varieties**" of sectarians were weeping and wailing about fascism in Chile, our tendency explained on the basis of sober-minded analysis that the Pinochet dictatorship was an inherently unstable regime, a regime of crisis, which, despite its brutal methods, could never succeed in crushing and atomising the working class in the same way as the fascist regimes of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco before the war. The events of the recent months have illustrated the position of the regime in Chile. History can sometimes play some cruel tricks and it has just played one on Pinochet. Because, as well as workers on the anti-government

demonstrations, there were also middle class housewives banging empty pots—the same housewives who banged those empty pots in 1973! Even the lorry drivers, who played a major role in the overthrow of Allende, have also been involved in the recent days of action against Pinochet. The crisis of capitalism has also driven these layers of society to desperation as revealed by the words of one of the lorry drivers, interviewed in a Spanish paper, who, when asked why he was supporting the strike, said,

“Well, you can’t win. Under Allende we had plenty of money but the shops were empty. You couldn’t buy anything. But now the shops are full of all kinds of goods but we have got no money to buy anything, so that’s why we’re supporting the strike.” In these few words is summed up the absolute bankruptcy of the economic strategists of capital. Chile was going to be the classical monetary experiment of how monetarist methods were going to save the economy. And it is true that initially inflation did fall. But the price of that was the devastation of the whole of the Chilean economy. In 1982, the Chilean Gross Domestic Product suffered an absolutely horrendous collapse of 14%. This figure must be absolutely unprecedented in the world. No less than one-third of the workforce is unemployed in Santiago. In the first three months of this year, unemployment increased by 300% and at the same time inflation, which was supposed to have been cured by this policy, is now increasing once again, which means they will get the worst of all worlds.

The Chilean dictatorship, like its counterparts in Uruguay, is like a pressure cooker with the safety valve clamped down. The workers and peasants have lived through the nightmare of repression with over 50,000 murdered, tens and hundreds of thousands of people arrested, tortured and beaten. **Yet once the working class decides to move, no amount of police, no amount of armies, no amount of bullets can stop them. It is an undisputed fact that the motor force of all change that has taken place in the Southern cone and the whole of Latin America in the last few months and years has been the proletariat. Undoubtedly if there existed a genuinely revolutionary leadership in Chile at the present time the Chilean working class would be on the eve of the seizure of power.**

We have said many times that Lenin laid down four basic conditions for a revolutionary situation: firstly, the ruling class should be split, divided, disorientated and unable to continue its rule in the old way. Within the Chilean ruling class and even within the Junta the divisions and splits have acquired a comic aspect. Christian Democratic bourgeois leaders who supported the *coup d’etat* in 1973 are jostling each other to get a place in the long queue of former supporters of the junta fighting to obtain their democratic credentials. Pinochet obliges by putting them in jail, just for a few days, of course, and then releasing them to the glare of press publicity. “Conversions” are taking place far more miraculously than when Saul fell off his horse on the way to Damascus. General Leigh, one of the principle organisers of the coup, who has also miraculously become a “democrat”, the bourgeois which is implicated in all the crimes of the

junta, now go on bended knees to beg Pinochet, “Please can we have democracy. Please can we have reform.”

From a bourgeois point of view they are absolutely right of course, but there is just a slight snag—General Pinochet, after ten years, likes being in power! It is quite amusing to read the statements of General Leigh weeping and sobbing: “We have a President who just won’t listen!” And Leigh has understood more than Pinochet. He has understood that if they do not get concessions from the top now, then they undoubtedly risk a revolutionary explosion, which might mean losing control of the situation entirely.

The second condition that Lenin put forward was that there should be a ferment among the middle layers of society who would vacillate between the ruling class and the proletariat. The movement of the middle class housewives and the movement of the lorry owners now clearly indicates that this regime has no social basis of support whatsoever. The third condition is that the working class should be prepared for the greatest sacrifice and the greatest struggle. We have seen in the recent months the enormous heroism of the Chilean working class beginning with the copper miners, against all the odds, “storming heaven” in the words of Marx, in their struggle against the dictatorship.

Unfortunately, Lenin’s final condition for a revolutionary situation is still absent in Chile—the existence of a revolutionary leadership of the working class. Yet the objective condition for bringing about a socialist revolution in Chile could hardly be more favourable. Because if Pinochet insists, as he has done up to date, in clinging onto power, a social explosion is undoubtedly on the order of the day in the next few months in that country.

The bourgeois would clearly love to ditch Pinochet (hence the attitude of the leaders of the Christian Democrats), but like the Old Man of the Sea, the generalissimo clings to its back, and despite its moans and complaints, forces it to stumble along on the road to disaster.

As predicted by the Marxists, the regime has been left suspended in mid-air the moment the workers began to move. Far from a fascist regime, it is a regime of disintegrating bonapartism, which has only lasted in power for so long on the basis of the temporary inertia of the masses. Now this situation is ended. Once the working class senses its own power—and that is always the result of mass class action—no amount of police and bullets can stop it. The arrests and killings no longer have the same effect, and the masses have lost their fear. The hundreds of arrests after the earlier days of action have not prevented new and more widespread movements, in which the masses of the middle class have been drawn behind the proletariat. At this moment of writing, there has been a new demonstration—on the 11 October—with



100,000 participants, accompanied by an increasingly widespread strike movement.

Already, at the first signs of mass opposition, the international strategists of capital have become alarmed at the prospect of an explosion in Chile. On the 17 May, six days after the 11 May day of action *The Times* wrote: "If unemployment continues to grow and unrest spreads, General Pinochet may be put in a position where his critics can no longer be silenced by fears of imprisonment, torture or exile. The only solution then might be a change of government able to introduce new economic policies."

These few lines clearly express both the anxiety of the international bourgeoisie and the cold, calculated cunning of the strategists of capital. The capitalist class is not particularly concerned about the **forms** by which it rules society. The question of "dictatorship" or "democracy" for these people is entirely a secondary matter, **provided that their rent, interests and profits are left untouched.**

This is the explanation for the touching concern which is suddenly being expressed by all the capitalist governments at the "violation of human rights" in Chile. These scoundrels who applauded and actively supported the Pinochet regime with all its murders and tortures, now hypocritically unite in a chorus in favour of "democracy". The same US embassy, which in September 1973 acted as the organising centre for the counter-revolution, now keeps open house for the stream of Christian Democratic and other "oppositional" guests who seek the blessing of Washington for the kind of "democratic" (i.e. bourgeois) alternative advocated by *The Times*—if Pinochet should falter.

In this way, a terrible trap is being prepared for the workers and peasants of Chile. Fearing that the first line of defence of banks and the monopolies, represented by the armed thugs of the junta, is overthrown by the movement of the masses, these cunning schemes are busily preparing a **second line of resistance represented by the Christian Democrats and the other so-called "democratic" forces.** The idea is to send the masses back to the school of bourgeois democracy, where they will learn a harsh lesson, with exhortations to accept "austerity" and "sacrifice" in order to "consolidate democracy". This, in turn, would prepare the way for the return to a new, and even more vicious dictatorship within four, five or six years, on the basis of the demoralisation and despair of the masses.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the main workers' organisations have fallen into the trap prepared by the class enemy. The leaders of the SP are participating in a joint "opposition" platform, including the Christian Democrats and bourgeois radicals. The "Communist" Party only remains outside this body because it is not allowed to join! Other than that, there are no differences. "He who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it." The Pinochet regime is finished. Its final collapse may be measured in months rather than years. But if the leaders of the main workers' parties—the SP and CP—persist in this present attitude, then, once again, victory will be snatched from the grasp of the Chilean working class. A coalition government of class collaboration with the bourgeois "democratic" parties will lead to a new catastrophe for the masses. On the basis of bankrupt

Chilean capitalism, no way forward is possible. However, the lessons of the last ten years have not been lost on the working class. Above all, the active layers of the SP and CP, especially the youth, will be highly critical of the policy of class collaboration with the Christian Democratic leaders, whose hands are stained by their support for the crimes of the junta. The entry of the workers' leaders into a coalition government will very quickly lead to internal crises and splits within these organisations. The rank and file will not be prepared to accept a sell-out, and will demand the implementation of socialist policies, in defence of the interests of the workers and peasants, for the punishment of those guilty of terrible crimes against the people, for the nationalisation of the property of the quisling bankers and capitalists who collaborated with Pinochet.

In this way, the road will be open for the re-arming of the workers' organisations on the basis of revolutionary Marxism—the real tradition of the Chilean labour movement—as the basic pre-requisite for the conquest of power.

There is one country on the Latin American continent which, at this moment in time, is of absolutely vital strategic importance to the revolution, and that country is Argentina. Because of its key position, its developed economy, and above all because of the specific weight of its proletariat, with great revolutionary traditions, in many ways, it is similar to those of the Spanish proletariat in the past.

Along with Chile, Argentina shows the absolute bankruptcy of monetarism, as practiced by the most notorious Friedmanite witch-doctor in Latin America—Martinez de Hoz. In every field, his policies had exactly the opposite effect to that intended.

The declared aim of de Hoz's policy was the "fight against inflation". Yet inflation is now running at 300%. He was going to "restore the profitability of industry". Yet industry was operating at only 55% of capacity in 1982, and has got worse since then. He promised (with tongue-in-cheek, no doubt) to "preserve wage levels". But with wages frozen and runaway inflation, wages have suffered a complete collapse. Taking 1975 as a base of 100, wages in 1981 stood at the level of 44, and now, obviously, the situation is still grimmer. Like Thatcher and Reagan, he was going to "limit public expenditure". Yet, current public expenditure went from 22% of the Gross National Product in 1976 to 31% in 1981. The only sector to benefit from this monetarist lunacy was parasitic finance capital. In just one year—1978—interest charges tripled. There has been a chain of bankruptcies. Unemployment has soared. The external debt had reached \$40 billion even before the Falklands' War. The Friedmanite medicine of the "cheap dollar" led to the destruction of the national industry to the point where the foreign trade of this once prosperous exporting country does not even cover the interest on foreign loans. This is how the Argentinian variant of Thatcherism "solved" the economic crisis! The witch-doctors of monetarism could well adopt as their motto the celebrated phrase of the Roman historian Tacitus: "And when they have created a wilderness, they call it peace".

For example, in 1975, the peso was 28 to the dollar.

In 1982, there were 20,000 pesos to the dollar. This single fact reflects like a thermometer the chronic sickness of the capitalist regime in Argentina. At the same time, alongside the mass unemployment and the starvation, and the misery, there sits this hateful incubus, the horrible corruption of the military regime in that country. At a time of national catastrophe, military expenditure has increased from 2.5% of the Gross National Product, in 1974, to 4.5% in 1982. That is to say, it has almost doubled, while everything else has collapsed. It is quite amusing that Martinez de Hoz, this ferocious monetarist, said that another one of his aims was to pass "from a speculative economy to a productive economy". Yet the years of military rule have seen the unbridled spread of the most terrible corruption, swindling, and embezzling at all levels of activity, both state and public.

Just in the period from 1976 to '79, a minimum of \$20,000 million disappeared from the Argentine economy through embezzlement. We will just cite one small anecdote to illustrate the situation. About two years ago, an Argentinian newspaper published the fact that the general in charge of the railway lines had at his disposal private railway carriages for the exclusive convenience of his pet dog. This canine representative of the military caste had to be received with full military honours at every railway station. The station manager had to come out and salute, open the door for him, and treat him with full military honours! In fairness to the regime, as soon as it was published, they took immediate action—they arrested the journalist!

This little incident is an indication of the most hideous and unparalleled corruption, which is visible to anybody in Argentina, and co-exists with the terrible collapse of the living standards of the masses. Wages in Argentina in 1975 were 45.4% of the GNP. In 1978 the figure was 28.6%—a collapse of wages. The Falklands War, as the Marxist tendency anticipated in advance, had a similar effect in Argentina as the war with Japan in 1904–'05 had for Tsarist Russia. It served to expose the morass of inefficiency, and monstrous corruption, and undermine totally the ruling clique.

Militant explained in advance that an Argentine defeat in the Falklands conflict would inevitably lead to the social revolution in Argentina, and that has been shown to be correct. The Argentine regime is a hundred times more rotten, and a hundred times more isolated than the Franco regime ever was in the last two or three years of the life of that dictator. All of the factors exist for a classical revolutionary situation in the Argentine all, that is, bar one, the revolutionary leadership.

The splits and divisions within the Argentine junta go far beyond anything that has ever been seen in any comparable dictatorship in recent history. There is no honour among thieves, and there is certainly no honour whatsoever among these "gentlemen", each one of whom is trying to pass the blame for the military defeat and the economic crisis onto his fellow officers. Months ago, *El Pais*, the Spanish liberal paper, published an interview with an Argentine officer, one of those monsters personally involved in the slaughter of unarmed prisoners at the time of the repression. This "officer and gentleman" was tearfully apologising, and was now very

sorry for these young people he had personally murdered and dumped in the River Plate, but hastened to add that he had an insurance policy, a list to be stashed away in a bank of other officers involved in similar events, just in case they put him on trial... These splits in the military élite are sufficient evidence for the existence of a classical revolutionary situation in Argentina. The decay in the army was graphically revealed a

few months ago, in a demonstration organised by the military to celebrate the Falklands victory, when a group of veterans, many of them limbless, in wheelchairs, organised a protest denouncing the leaders and the officers, and yet not one of those demonstrators was arrested. **In other words, there would be nothing to stop the Argentinian proletariat, once they moved to take power.**

And yet in spite of everything, we see the cowardly behaviour of the leaders of the so-called "Multipartidaria", the leaders of the opposition who are striving with might and main to reach a deal with the military, even on the question of the missing persons in order to head off the movement of the working class. It is the cowardly and treacherous nature of these so-called liberals and "democrats", and this alone, which prevents the decisive victory of the working class. Their whole psychology was revealed in an article published in *Le Monde Diplomatique* of November of last year, which says the following, "In spite of the unpopularity of the ruling class, the parties have not yet managed to work out an alternative policy capable of mobilising the population and giving it hope", and it goes on: **"Faced with this opportunity, the parties and trade unions either could not, or would not adopt an independent attitude which would have enabled them to fully assume their role as popular forces concerned with isolating the adversary in power."** This bourgeois commentator concludes, **"The Junta could see its own weakness, but in the absence of an alternative solution did not feel itself to be excessively threatened."** These "opposition" leaders, like the reformist leaders in Russia in February 1917, like the reformist and Stalinist leaders in Spain in 1936, have no faith whatsoever the masses and no understanding of the situation in which they find themselves. These wretched, petty bourgeois opportunists, have only one idea in their heads, and that is to hand over power to anybody, except the working class. Fly to Madrid to beg "Isobelita" to return. Find some bourgeois, some professor, some "democratic" general, and hand over power to him! In spite of everything, and in particular, in spite of themselves, these elements will be pushed, kicking and screaming by the working class and forced to assume power in Argentina in the immediate future.

On the face of it, one might imagine that we are going back to 1973, when Perón returned from Spain to assume



the leadership of the Peronist movement. It is as though the film of history is being replayed. But history never repeats itself exactly the same way on two occasions; 1983 is not 1973. The history of the last ten years has not passed in vain as far as the Argentinian working class youth is concerned. This ruling class and the military are a thousand times more demoralised and disorientated now than they were in 1973. On the other hand, the Argentinian working class has never enjoyed greater strength, greater cohesion and greater confidence in its own power. At least temporarily, the disease of terrorism has given way before the movement of the masses in Argentina. But there is a third element in this situation that is a decisive difference from ten years ago, and that is that now the workers, or at least the more active layers, will be increasingly sceptical of the role of the old Peronist leaders. Undoubtedly, the politically untutored masses will still have considerable illusions in the myths of Peronism. However, an important layer of the advanced workers, and especially the youth, are in the process of drawing conclusions far more advanced than the old ideas. For their part, the Peronist official leaders are permeated through and through with pessimism. This was revealed in a brief quote, from a statement made by one of them, D Bittel, in a speech on the 13 May of this year: "More than once we have seen in opinion polls that people say that the military are bad, but now the politicians are coming back who are the same or worse. The truth is that not all citizens are desperate for the return of the politicians, because many do not believe in them." The leaders of the Peronist trade union organisations are terrified of the perspective that opens up following the formation of the Peronist government, and, in these circumstances, there will inevitably be an enormous process of ferment, of radicalisation and above all of splits, and the beginning of a process of differentiation between the left and right within the Peronist movement, particularly in the unions and in the youth. This in turn will open up enormous possibilities for the spread of revolutionary Marxist ideas within the Peronist movement in Argentina.

The essence of a revolution is the direct intervention of the masses in the life of society and politics. But the masses decide to take their destiny into their own hands only as a last resort, when it becomes clear to all that the existing order of things has become utterly intolerable, is incompatible with their very existence. Then the idea becomes generalised: "Things can't go on like this any longer".

Such a profound break in the psychology of the masses has already taken place in Argentina. The elemental movement of the mighty Argentinian proletariat, which has burst upon the scene in the massive demonstrations, strikes and general strikes of recent months, show that **THE ARGENTINE REVOLUTION HAS ALREADY BEGUN.**

The parallel between the movement unfolding in Argentina and the situation which existed in Spain following the fall of the monarchy in 1931 are both timely and instructive. The analysis then made by Leon Trotsky of the situation in Spain—taking into consideration all the differences and variations—has a direct bearing on the events in Argentina. And above all, the fundamental con-



People besiege a bank in Argentina.

clusion of Trotsky retains its full validity for the Argentine revolution:

"Social life in Spain was condemned to revolve in a vicious circle so long as there was no class capable of taking the solution of the revolutionary problem into its own hands. The appearance of the Spanish proletariat on the historic arena radically changes the situation and opens up new prospects. In order to grasp this properly it must first be understood that the establishment of the economic dominance of the big bourgeoisie and the growth of the proletariat's political significance definitely prevents the petty bourgeoisie from occupying a leading position in the political life of the country.

The question of whether the present revolutionary conclusions can produce a genuine revolution, capable of reconstructing the very basis of national life, is consequently reduced to whether the Spanish proletariat is capable of taking the leadership of the national life into its hands. There is no other claimant to this role in the Spanish nation." (Trotsky *The Revolution in Spain*—my emphasis, AW).

Before drawing these conclusions, the Argentinian masses will first seek to find a solution to their problems within the framework of the old order, pursuing the line of least resistance, in the old, well-trodden path of Peronism. But the Peronist leaders will come to power under completely changed conditions. Perón was able to give big concessions in the past on the basis of a strong economy, under conditions of capitalist world upswing which created a demand for Argentine exports, such as beef. Now all that has changed. The economy is in ruins. The monetarist quackery has been tried and found wanting. The alternative of Keynesian deficit financing, where inflation has already reached 300%, would cause a complete catastrophe. A "siege economy" under modern conditions would have the same effect. On a capitalist basis "all roads lead to ruin."

The perspectives for Argentina are not the peaceful "consolidation of democracy", but new convulsions,

crises and class war. The old Peronist myth of "class harmony" and "National Unity" will not survive for long under these conditions. The Peronist movement will inevitably split along class lines.

Already, even before the formation of a Peronist government, the workers have spontaneously moved from below to begin the task of transforming their traditional organisations, beginning with the unions. Old Peronist union bureaucrats have been pushed aside and replaced by younger, more militant elements. In some areas, the workers have even occupied the union buildings to physically eject union leaders who collaborated with the Junta.

The formation of a Peronist government despite the character and bourgeois policies of the leaders will have a powerfully radicalising effect on the masses. Despite the so-called "law of self-amnesty" by which the generals seek to avoid punishment for their crimes against the people, it is not ruled out that the masses will take the law into their own hands. If they do not get out quickly (as the notorious Astiz already has), they could find themselves decorating the lamp-posts of Buenos Aires. The mood of the masses would be similar to that of the Spanish workers after the victory of the Popular Front in 1936.

The Argentine ruling class and the military are broken and demoralised. With proper leadership, the Argentinian workers could take power tomorrow, without bloodshed and civil war. But this exceptionally favourable situation will not last.

The crisis and decay of Argentine capitalism spells frightful social dislocation, upheavals and chaos. If the proletariat, under a conscious revolutionary leadership, does not act decisively to cut short the death agony of the system, then a nightmare situation will arise. Within three to five years, on the basis of an open confrontation between the classes, the ruling class will see no alternative but to take to the road of civil war in order to crush the workers' organisations and destroy the embryo of the new society within the old. A new Junta in Buenos Aires would make the former one look like child's play by comparison.

Within the ranks of the Peronist Youth the idea of preparing for the inevitable struggle is already being discussed by the most advanced layers. It should not be forgotten that the Montoneros, the armed wing of the Peronist Youth, who regarded and still regard themselves as Marxists, were not a terrorist group in the same sense as other groups in Latin America, but a significant tendency within the mass organisations of Peronism, which under correct leadership, could have evolved into a genuine workers' militia.

The events of the last decade have drawn a line of blood between the classes in Argentina which no amount of hypocrisy or demagoguery can erase. If the leaders of Peronism were Marxists instead of bourgeois careerists and mafioso-type gangsters, the working class could now take power peacefully, without a civil war. But the refusal of the reformists to take power and their class collaborationist policies, as Lenin explained, ultimately make violence and bloodshed inevitable.

The Marxist criticism of individual terrorism has

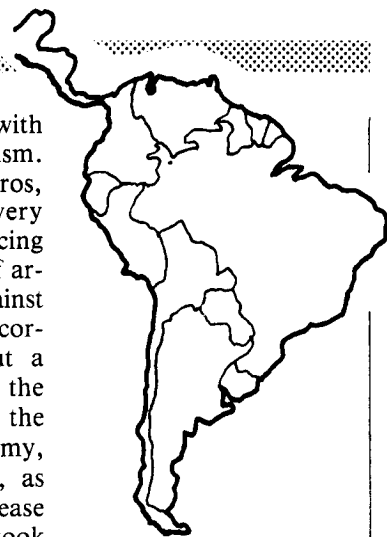
nothing in common with sentimentality or pacifism. The idea of the Montoneros, who represented a very heroic and self-sacrificing section of the Youth, of arming for the struggle against reaction was in itself, correct. But arms without a programme to win over the masses and appeal to the rank-and-file of the army, would be of little use, as demonstrated by the ease with which the generals took power, ruthlessly exterminating the Montoneros, in spite of their heroism.

What is needed first and foremost is a programme and a policy capable of winning over the masses. All the problems of the workers—wages, hours, conditions, democratic rights, the "missing persons" must be taken up in the form of transitional demands, including the demand for the arming of the workers against the danger of reaction. There is a burning hatred in the hearts of the masses against the oppressors which finds its expression in the amorphous Peronist slogan: "Against imperialism. Against the Oligarchy. Against the Landlords." But this idea must be given concrete content. The anger of the masses against "the generals who sold the nation" must also be directed against the landlords, bankers and capitalists who propped up the Junta. For the expropriation of the property of the British and American Imperialists! For the nationalisation of the Quisling bankers and capitalists! For the purging of the army of all fascist elements, the trial of the murderers and torturers by a people's court, trade union rights for soldiers and the election of army officers!

All these slogans must be used in a skillful way to win the masses to the idea of the socialist transformation of society. Behind the confused ideas of Peronism, what the Argentinian workers aspire to is workers' power. And all these partial, transitional demands must be summed up in the idea of the ARGENTINE WORKERS' REPUBLIC, a real workers' democracy, based on the control and administration of society at all levels by the working people themselves.

An Argentine Workers' Republic would act as a beacon to the workers and peasants struggling for their emancipation throughout the continent. Its attractive power would be irresistible. The neighbouring regime in Uruguay, now hanging by a thread, would fall immediately, sending shock waves to Brazil, which would not be far behind. The revolutionary movement in Chile, in any event, is only one step behind that of Argentina. The conditions for the success of the socialist revolution are now not only ripe, but rotten ripe on a continental scale.

Such is the situation brought about by the impasse of capitalism that the victory of the proletariat in any one of the countries under consideration here would spark off an immediate chain reaction. In particular, the victory of the mighty Argentinian working class would shake



the foundations of capitalism on a world scale.

It would be a repetition of the events of the period from 1917 to 1921 on an immeasurably higher scale. The revolutions which took place in the colonial world following World War Two—China, Cuba, Vietnam and so on—did not have a particular appeal for the working class of the advanced capitalist countries because they took the form of monstrously deformed bureaucratic, totalitarian states. This was inevitable on the basis of peasant wars and guerilla struggles, where the leading role was not played by the working class. In the absence of a conscious Marxist leadership and the hegemony of the working class, a guerilla war based on the peasantry, in the event of success, would inevitably lead to bonapartist rule, either of a bourgeois or proletarian character, but never to socialism, which implies the conscious movement of the working class.

The fundamental difference between the revolutions in Central America and the revolutionary process now unfolding in the Southern Cone of Latin America consists precisely in the crushing preponderance of the proletariat in the revolution.

The victory of the working class in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay or Brazil would necessarily have an entirely different character to the revolution in Cuba or Nicaragua. It would only take the form of a healthy workers' democracy, a regime similar to that which existed in the first period of the Russian Revolution under Lenin and Trotsky. After the terrible experience of military dictatorship, the Argentinian and Chilean workers would never tolerate the imposition of a one-party totalitarian police state, once having eliminated the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The Russian workers' state degenerated on bureaucratic lines because it was isolated in a backward peasant country with a very narrow industrial base. Argentina, despite the ravages of the "Chicago Boys" is still one of the most industrially developed countries of Latin America, alongside Brazil. The democratic socialist planning of the economy would rapidly develop the enormous economic potential of this land so highly favoured by nature, and enable it to play the role destined to it by history, a role which the Argentinian bourgeois has always dreamed about, but has never been able to fulfill. On the basis of undreamed of prosperity, a socialist Argentina could rapidly introduce a 35-hour week, then a 30-hour week, with the equivalent of a £100 a week minimum wage for all, as the material prerequisite for the participation of the masses in the development of democracy and culture. A crash housing programme would rapidly eliminate the festering slum districts and give new life and hope to the most benighted and despairing sections of society, raising them to a level worthy of true human beings.

Such a gigantic conquest would send an electric shock through the entire world, not just the colonial countries, but to the advanced capitalist countries, and in particular the USA.

A socialist Argentina would be the prelude to the creation of a Socialist Federation of Latin America—an ideal and a hope, with profound historical roots, at least as old as Simon Bolivar's wars against the Spanish oppressor. Many decades of Balkanisation have taken their

toll. The living body of Latin America has been sundered for so long that it is no longer possible to refer with complete accuracy to the Latin American Nation. And yet, deep in the recesses of the consciousness of the masses of this continent there still lies a glimmer of the old aspiration and drive towards unity. For, without that unity, Latin America would forever be incapable of realising its enormous potential. It is no accident that the pioneers of the Chilean Socialist Party inscribed on its banner the idea of the Socialist Federation of Latin America. On the basis of the dovetailing of the economies in a common plan of production for the whole continent, what miracles could be achieved! Here is a continent racked by misery, disease and starvation, yet with untold reserves of mineral wealth, of vast expanses of rich agricultural land and forests, of huge rivers to provide irrigation and hydro-electric power—in short, of everything that is required to turn Latin America from a backward corner of our planet into the advanced guard of civilisation and human progress.

Mexico, for example, is the world's biggest producer of arsenic, the third of barite and antimony and the fourth of sulphur. It has huge untapped resources of oil, coal, tin, iron, manganese, phosphates and radioactive minerals. Yet only fifteen percent of the surface area of this country has been explored, and experts consider that sixty-five percent contains mineral wealth! Within a period of five or ten years—just a couple of five-year plans would be sufficient to transform the lives of the people of this country which is the third biggest in Latin America, and the ninth in the world.

Brazil's mineral wealth is proverbial: 25% of the world's reserves of iron, and big reserves of manganese, nickel, bauxite, tin, lead, copper, chrome, uranium, phosphates, titanium, and precious stones, and possibly the biggest reserves of platinum in the world. Brazil's potential for hydro-electric energy is enormous: its capacity is 30% greater than the whole of Western Europe, yet on a capitalist basis this potential cannot be fully realised. The full development of Amazonia would, of itself, be sufficient to give every man, woman and child in Latin America a standard of living superior to that of the most developed capitalist nations on earth.

A Socialist Federation which combined the vast human and material resources of Latin America would be a colossus in every respect. Not only would US imperialism be powerless to intervene, but it would signify the beginnings of the socialist revolution in the USA itself.

The stormy developments in Argentina and Chile have placed the socialist revolution firmly on the order of the day in these countries and in the whole continent. The proletariat is the only class capable of leading society out of the impasse in which the crisis of capitalism has thrust it. Either the present struggles will lead to the most dazzling prize, opening a new and glorious chapter in the history of humanity, or to the most terrible of defeats. In the truest sense of the expression used by Leon Trotsky when he spoke of Spain in the period 1931–37, Latin America is now the key to the international situation.

September 1983

A letter from Chile

THE 13 OCTOBER saw the sixth day of action against the Pinochet military dictatorship.

The military junta was determined at all costs to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its takeover. But all its efforts, founded on the rock of the biggest mass protest Chile had seen to date—five days of mass struggle in all the “poblaciones” (shanty-towns) of Santiago and numerous clashes in all the provinces.

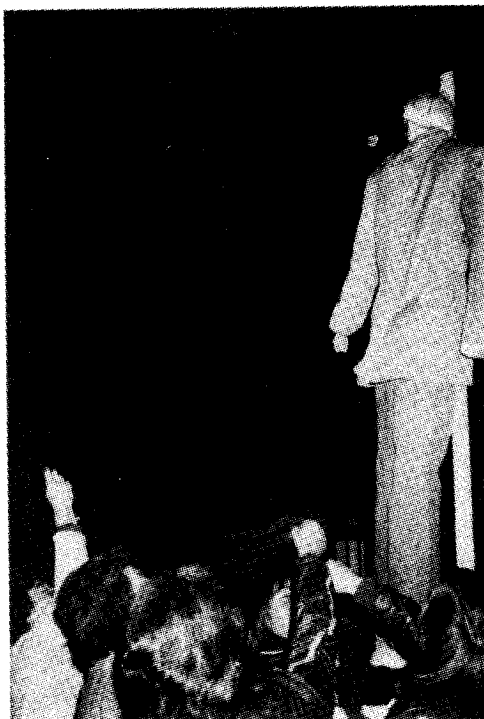
After six months of continual protests, there has been a qualitative change in Chile. In reality, the beginnings of change go back even further—to the end of 1982 and the first weeks of 1983, with the “hunger marches” which culminated in the first demonstration in nine years, which took place on the first of May with more than 2,000 participating in Santiago.

From this moment on, following the appeals of the copper miners, the first Day of Protest against the regime took place. This movement, sparked off by the most powerful section of the class, had the inevitable effect of bringing onto the streets, first the youth, and then, slowly but surely, arousing the fighting spirit of the rest of the working class. In this way, between the second and third Days of Protest, strikes were called, involving not only the copper miners, but also other sections of the class, such as the print workers, building workers and isolated factories in other sectors. Although this did not actually amount to a general strike, it represented a significant step towards the generalisation of the struggle, and a notable increase in the participation of the working class.

As a result of this process, the bourgeoisie became aware of the danger which was in store for them, and voices began to be heard among

the capitalists suggesting that the government would have to change course.

In the first instance, the Junta—which is not exactly the brightest section of the ruling class—decided to meet the rising wave of protest by stepping up repression. This ended in the massive military intervention in



Pinochet effigy is hung.

the fourth protest, with the introduction of a curfew after 6 pm. But, in reality, all the “poblaciones” had already been occupied by the army the day before the protest. Santiago was occupied by a force of 18,000 soldiers.

The consequence of this lunacy was, in the first place, dozens of people killed, especially among the youth, and hundreds with gunshot injuries. There were cases like that of a shanty-town dweller with 80 small-bore bullets and shot-gun pellets lodged in his body. But it also had the effect of deepening the divergences in the ranks of the capitalist class and giving rise to a mood of unease within

the army itself. Thus, the new Jara government—allegedly formed to commence a “dialogue

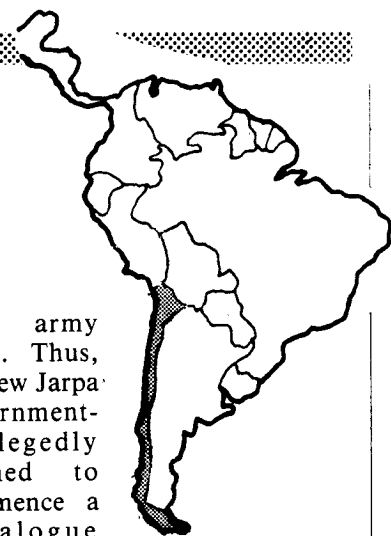
with the opposition”—came into office one day before this fourth protest in August with its hands stained by the workers’ blood.

Although this action might be interpreted as an “act of strength”, it really laid bare the extreme weakness of the regime. The army’s intervention did not serve to stem the advance of the struggle. If Prime Minister Jara has offered to begin a “dialogue”, this is not a proof of good intentions, **but an admission that the class balance of forces has been decisively changed and a clear indication of the steady advance in the organisation, self-consciousness and will to struggle of the working class.**

This “dialogue” represents the bourgeoisie’s striving to set aside the dictatorship, while leaving intact the army and other institutions of the state in a caricature of a formal bourgeois democracy, with the bankers and capitalists in control of the process, in order to prevent the working people from taking over. And since brute force alone cannot suffice to stop the mass movement, the most astute section of the ruling class, grouped around the Christian Democrats, has enlisted under the banner of the “fight for Democracy”.

The most important of the bourgeois parties, the DC (Christian Democracy), is doing everything in its power to make the people forget the fact that it was the Christian Democrat leaders who prepared the ground for Pinochet’s coup by declaring the Popular Unity government to be “unconstitutional” and funding a ferocious anti-government campaign in the mass media.

It was these people who backed the coup and gave it their unconditional



support thereafter. A decisive proof of this is that the repression hardly affected them—except in isolated cases—up until quite recently, when the regime has begun to lash out in all directions. Even so, the treatment of the Christian Democratic “opposition” leaders can hardly be likened to the mass murders and tortures of the Socialist and Communist workers following the coup in which these “Democrats”—let us never forget it—stood on the opposite side of the barricades.

Today these gentlemen parade themselves as “lifelong democrats”. With “friends” such as these, the workers and their organisations need no enemies! These bourgeois wolves who now find themselves in the lamb-skin of “pacifism”, bourgeois “patriotism” and “Universal Love”, in reality are the most perfidious and cunning—and therefore the most dangerous—foes of the working class.

These shift and skilful politicians realised the danger represented by the hornets’ nest which their “own people”—the leaders of the copper workers’ union—had unintentionally stirred up. It was they who, after the 23 of June, firmly opposed any new mobilisation of the workers’ movement, in an attempt to limit the Days of Protest in the future without any concrete action, leaving the shanty-towns to their own devices.

Because of the role which is still played by the Christian Democrats in the tops of the unions (they have the majority in the CNS, CNT, Copper-workers, and other unions, as a result of the murder and imprisonment of the Socialist and Communist leaders, the dissolution of the CUT, the former Unified Trade Union Centre, and the privileged status afforded them for years under the dictatorship), the workers’ movement was paralysed in its main centres during the fourth and fifth protests.

Unfortunately, this strike-breaking role of the Christian Democracy was facilitated by the lack of criticism and the absence of a clear class alternative on the part of the Socialist and Communist leaders, who have an important influence in the underground workers’ movement.

But this did not mean that the struggles had ebbed. The fifth protest



Santiago poor-quarter.

did not take place in a day, but was drawn out over five days of continuous struggles, at times lasting all night, between the workers and unemployed in the shanty-towns and the police and “carabineros”. Unofficial sources have estimated that there were more than fifty people killed in these days, practically all from gunshot wounds, but few of them were killed directly in clashes with the police, but murdered by armed paramilitary or “civilian” gangs—which also shows the fear of the regime and the armed forces themselves.

Unfortunately—and this is why the results of the struggles are so painful to the working class—the burden of the protests, above all the fourth and fifth Days of Protest, has rested almost entirely upon the shoulders of the young people and shanty-town dwellers. The youth has now lost all fear of repression, since the overwhelming majority in the “poblaciones” can neither work nor study. Shanty-towns such as “La Hermita”, with 90,000 inhabitants, have almost 80 percent of the active

population out of work.

This means, in practice, that almost the whole of the youth has to eke out a living from selling chocolate, crisps or pencils in the “micros” or “liebres” (public transport). These young people have absolutely nothing to lose. This is why they plunge heroically into struggle, launching themselves against the lines of armed police, or “pacos”, with their faces covered by handkerchiefs soaked in vinegar, as a meagre protection against the clouds of tear-gas, amidst a rain of smoke-gas canisters and bullets.

For the workers, however, the situation is quite different. Today, the very fact of having a job is almost a privilege, because of the very high unemployment: 33 per cent of the active population, 1,300,000 between the unemployed and those engaged in government work-schemes where they can earn between 2,000 and 4,000 pesos by sweeping the streets or making rag-dolls.

A worker knows that if he loses his job, he will have nothing. Taking all

this into account, it is clear that the accumulated fears of ten years cannot disappear from the minds of workers with the same rapidity as among the youth, above all if we bear in mind the total lack of a clear class alternative on the part of the leadership of the majority of the workers' organisations, whose policies and attitude have served to disorientate the workers rather than encourage them to take the road of struggle.

The Socialist Party is more than divided, it is practically atomised, into five or six factions, most then subdivided into different tendencies and sub-groupings. As for the political positions of the leaders, not only do these not differ in substance from those of the Christian Democracy, but even its most publicly-known leaders are carrying out a policy of open collaboration with the DC and the Jarpa government, participating in "discussions" with the latter.

The "Communist" Party has adopted an ambiguous, opportunist policy. To its own rank-and-file it talks of "insurrection", whilst all its public declarations make clear its real intention—of entering into the so-called "Democratic Alliance"—a bloc of workers' parties with the so-called "democratic" wing of the bourgeoisie, captained by the Christian Democrats.

The rest of the groups of the Chilean left—MAPU, MIR, IC, etc.—suffer from the same confusion, while their base of support is infinitely narrower.

This absence of a real socialist class alternative is creating illusions among big sections of the workers and the youth in what could be achieved by a bourgeois "democracy". The lack of an independent political perspective for the working class allowed the capitalist class to stem the advance of the workers' movement during the fourth and fifth Days of Protest. But the process has only been delayed, not halted. The workers and the youth are learning from their own experience what the real aims of the movement ought to be, and by what methods they can be secured.

With the lack of leadership, the struggles which lasted for five days in the fifth protest finally began to give rise to despairing and aimless gestures of violence on the part of a section

of the most oppressed masses—such as the breaking of shop windows and traffic lights, the indiscriminate stoning of buses and cars and attempts to loot shops. A clear leadership, based on a revolutionary class programme, could have avoided this situation by concentrating the anger and pent-up frustration of the masses on the central objective: overthrow of the dictatorship, and workers' power. But the leadership of the main workers' organisations offered no such perspective. Some so-called "left" groups even glorified these blind outbreaks as the correct methods of struggle for the oppressed masses to use, thereby demonstrating their complete lack of understanding, and lack of a revolutionary alternative.

Nevertheless, in spite of the leadership, the workers and the youth are instinctively seeking new avenues of struggle and superior and more effective forms to fight for their emancipation. After a brief interval which followed the fifth protest, there began a series of marches, strikes over wage negotiations and mass rallies.

The first strikes have been small-scale and isolated occurrences. They have taken place in Valparaíso (Hocke) as a result of the attempt to shut down a chocolate factory; in the printing trade over wage demands; in the Trade Union Federation of the important workers' district of Vicuña Mackena. Two sections (Miraflores and Dycar) involved in the wine trade, with a total workforce of 93, were on strike for three and seven days respectively, (an interview with the strikers appeared in *Militant* No. 672) which only won 80 per cent of the cost of living index for the next two years. Possibly, by the end of October there will be further strikes organised by this Federation around wage demands. But more important than the concessions on wages actually won by these struggles is their effect in raising the consciousness, organisation and self-confidence of the workers on the basis of their own experience. In the above mentioned strikes in Miraflores and Dycar, not one of the strikers or their leaders had ever participated in a strike before. They were almost all young people, yet their degree of militancy and

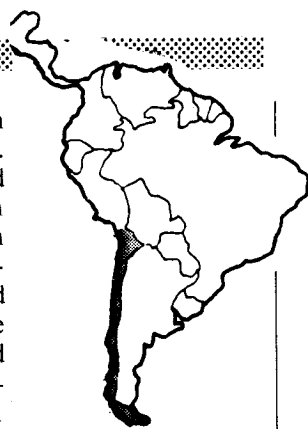
organisation was excellent. Not only did they form their own strike committee, elected by the workers and clearly differentiated from the negotiating body, but, to a man, all the strikers were actively involved in one or other of the nine organisational sub-committees set up in the course of the strike: fund-raising, cleaning, security, propaganda, soup-kitchen, etc.

The workers' marches began suddenly after the 20 of September. In the port of San Antonio (100,000 inhabitants) a rally convened in honour of the memory of four dockers' leaders murdered after September 1973 became transformed into a march through the city involving 2,000 people. There were also marches of the students in Concepción, Valparaíso, where there was also a march of about 1,000 dockers towards the end of September.

In the fifth protest, the demonstration had not gone beyond the boundaries of the shanty-towns. But now, gradually this has begun to take place in open defiance of the repression. Furthermore, the word "gradually" must be interpreted only in a relative sense, since on the 6 October in the most important thoroughfare in Santiago, a rally took place of about 25,000 young people who took over the streets for about four hours, shouting slogans and singing songs against the dictatorship and Pinochet before the police made up their minds to move in at around nine o'clock at night.

Once again, the aim of the Christian Democracy was to prohibit the displaying of the flags and placards of the different parties. At the start of the demonstration, a group of Christian Democrat Youth tried to remove these party banners from the hands of the Socialist and Communist Youth, but invariably came off the worse in these encounters and failed to achieve their objective.

This peculiar conception of "Unity" in which nobody is allowed to ap-



pear openly under their own banner and programme—a false and artificial “Unity” which has been accepted in silence by the workers’ leaders—in practice was completely ignored and overridden by the young workers, unemployed and students. Thus, once again, in spite of the workers’ leadership, the worst fears of the “democratic” bourgeois politicians were confirmed in practice—that the real representatives of the most dynamic and militant layers of society are to be found in the ranks of the workers’ organisations.

The type of slogan which was chanted also has an important symptomatic significance: “Van a ver, Van a ver, cuando los obreros llegán al poder”, (“They’ll see what will happen when the workers get into power!”).

But this rally was only a prelude to another and even bigger one. The “Democratic Alliance”, made up of the Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Radical Party, a few socialist groups (such as the “Consensus” faction) requested permission to hold a demonstration on the 11 September, in order to play down the importance of the demonstration that had been called for the 13 September, and to divide the forces of the working class opposition.

The military governor of Santiago refused permission, and the “Democratic Alliance” neither called the demonstration nor protested. Perhaps these “leaders” imagined that, by not acting, there would be no movement, but, if that was the case, they could not have been more mistaken. On the 11th, according to the bourgeois press there was a concentration of 30,000—which, in reality, could have been more than 100,000. The mood was almost one of freedom. At six o’clock in the afternoon, the place was absolutely full, and the columns of hundreds and hundreds of people seemed to be endless. On the buses you could hear people talking openly about the rally and making uncomplimentary remarks about the “pacos” (“cops”).

Officially, the rally was convened by a phantom organisation, PRO-DEN, with a hundred members, headed by a Christian Democrat, Lavandero. In reality, it was called by

everybody—and by nobody. The demonstration “convened itself”—as the expression of a pressing need felt by the workers and the youth.

It was a golden opportunity for the workers’ organisations to seize the initiative. Up until now, the leaders had always argued that the Christian Democrats were “allowed” and therefore able to hold press conferences and do what they liked, while the left wing was persecuted and arrested—which was, in any case, only relatively true. This was an ideal moment for the workers’ organisations to call the demonstration, to make an appeal to the masses over the heads of the bourgeois “opposition”. In reality, the opportunity was not taken up, or it was taken up in a most confused and ambiguous way.

The dialogue between the Jarpa government and the leaders of the “Democratic Alliance”, initiated after the fourth Day of Protest was broken off in the course of the fifth and sixth protest, as a result of the mass movement and the dozens of victims. In any case, it was a “dialogue with the deaf”, from the very beginning. More than a “dialogue”, it was a monologue. How could they make “mutual concessions”? The “Democratic Alliance” only wanted the resignation of Pinochet as a prior condition! Pinochet, for his part, has not the slightest intention of resigning to please these “opposition” leaders, and a section of the ruling class and the army generals are also terrified of the consequences of his standing down. Not only Pinochet, but many officers of the army, police, “carabineros”, CNI (formerly the DINA, the notorious secret police) who have been mixed up with repression, realise that the responsibilities for what has happened over the last ten years have not been forgotten, and can only fall upon their heads. The idea of a “peaceful transition”, which would leave intact these institutions is fraught with far more difficulties than was the case in Spain.

Events have reached such a pass that the interests of the bourgeoisie are difficult to defend. Jarpa is doing what he can to arrive at a “compromise solution”. If the dictatorship

falls, it could give rise to an explosive situation, in which the bourgeois leaders of the Christian Democrats and the “Democratic Alliance” would have no guarantee of remaining in control. But if the regime tries to maintain itself on the basis of repression, it could be worse still for them. For these reasons, its only hope is to keep the “dialogue” going, and hope for the best. A “democratic opening”—but without giving up control. Give way in appearance, in order to defend the interests of capital, of private ownership of the land, industry and the banks. This would be a possible solution—were it not for the presence of General Pinochet who has become an embarrassment to the ruling class, placing his personal survival and the vested interests of the military clique before those of the capitalist class as a whole. Trying to find a way out of this entanglement of insoluble contradictions is a bit like trying to square the circle!

Behind all the nonsense of “dialogue” and the vain search for “consensus” only two forces have any relevance: General Pinochet and his bayonets, and the working class. All the rest is illusion, lies and hypocrisy.

If the first side prevails, and “Pinocchio” insists on maintaining himself through repression, the bourgeoisie may attempt to get rid of him by means of a coup. In reality divisions have now entered into the very fabric of the army and the Junta, under the pressure of the mass movement. Mattei—the airforce general—has not only been compelled to come out publicly against the utilisation of soldiers for acts of repression, but even to say that he “would be prepared to sit down and talk to the Marxists”—in flat contradiction to the statements made daily by Pinochet. Such declarations provoked the anger of Merino—another member of the Junta—who said on television: “I couldn’t care less what Mattei said.”

These deep internal divisions are not the result—as some would like to pretend—of the “pacts” and “agreements” which, apart from anything else are non-existent, but of the struggles of youth, which are rapidly accelerating. The paralysing

effects of the bloody defeat of 1973 have now all but disappeared, with the entry of new generations on the arena of political and industrial struggle.

The dictatorship's lack of a mass social base from the very beginning, prevented it from carrying out the total obliteration of the workers' organisations, as happened in Germany, Italy and Spain before the war. In reality, it had to limit itself to the elimination of the most dangerous workers' leaders—the majority, Socialists—replacing them with stooges and yes men of the regime. However, beginning with the trade union elections of 1980–81, a process of renovation got underway, and has had far-reaching consequences. Today the movement is being led by young people. Seguel, the national leader of the copper workers is 29 years old. The union leader in the important El Teniente mine is only 23 years old. And these cases are typical of almost the whole trade union movement here.

That is a factor which is destined to give the bourgeoisie a big headache in the future! And it will also cause serious difficulties for those reformist leaders who have learned nothing from the past. At the present moment in time, participation in the political organisations is, logically, reduced to a very small percentage of the working class and the youth. This will obviously change in the future.

The situation on the trade union front is, however, radically different. The unions exist in a large number of workplaces and the majority of the workers are members. This does not mean that there are no employers who have taken full advantage of the possibilities given to them by the military regime, and there are firms with 200, or even 400 workers of whom only two possess a work contract, a measure designed to prevent trade union organisation and keep wages and labour right down to the minimum possible.

If there is one thing the present regime has done it is to unify the conditions of life for the majority of the population. Up to 1973, and in some sectors until the Labour Law of 1981, there existed considerable differentials between the working class, with even some "privileged" layers—the copper workers, the dockers, bank



Labour MPs on protest outside Chilean Embassy in London.

workers, oilmen, etc. With this new law, these workers saw the destruction of what little was left of their conquests. In other words, the regime has unified the workers' conditions by slashing the purchasing power of those who still maintained something, but without raising the level of those who never had anything.

A hair-raising example was cited by a dock worker who, having three children to maintain, had to go to work in the mine of El Teniente. He worked 18 hours a day for 25,000 pesos a month, which, after paying pension contributions and tax, was reduced to 15,000. He could only stand it for four months—and only then because he had children to feed!

Until 1973, the dockers had an average salary of 50,000–60,000 pesos a month—at least the stevedores earned that much. Afterwards, although it fell, there was still work on the docks—until the law of 23 September, 1981 gave rise to a situation of casual labour to cover up unemployment. With a surplus of manpower and a slump in trade (and, therefore in transport) they now work an average of five shifts of eight hours per month with an average monthly salary of 1,500 pesos. (These facts were testified to by workers in the port of San Antonio). And these wages in practice depend upon the type of cargo, as they have gone so far as paying these five shifts at 500 pesos or, worse still, 22 pesos for an

eight-hour shift.

Among the bank employees there have been more than 9,000 sackings in the past 20 months, and their purchasing power has fallen to half its 1978 level.

We could deal in turn with each section of the working class and we would not find a single one which has maintained a living wage. The average national wage is around 8,000 pesos. At the same time the bourgeoisie itself recognises that a month's shopping of 17 basic food products (bread, butter, tea and so on) for a family of five costs 9,800 pesos. If we add on necessary transportation costs, health, clothes and rent, the absolute minimum cannot be much less than 15,000 pesos a month.

Many of the political leaders talk about the need for democracy. Of course, the workers are opposed to the dictatorship, but the working people are struggling to find a way out of the blind alley of misery and hardship imposed by capitalism. "Democracy" will be judged by the masses on whether it shows a way out of mass unemployment and starvation—which will forever be impossible while the bankers and capitalists retain their power.

In 1982 the wealth produced by the country amounted to the same as in 1969. But the Gross National Product in 1983, according to the president of the metal employers' association, Fantuzzi, will fall to the level of 1965.



Funeral of a police victim.

The economic crisis—"helped along" by the monetarist policies of the military—has pushed the country back 18 years. In 1982, the *per capita* GNP fell by 19 per cent. According to the optimists, it will experience a further fall of 3 per cent this year. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the economic recession of 1981–82–83 has dismantled one-third of the Chilean economy.

Taking this situation into consideration, what possibility is there to find a way out of this crisis on the basis of capitalism in the 1960s, unemployment in Chile was never less than 14 per cent of the active population. The capitalist class have shown their complete incapacity to develop society. The interests of the working class can only be served by a complete revolutionary transformation of society.

In Chile, the bourgeoisie had its chance, and showed that it was powerless to carry out its own historical tasks: economic and social development, real independence, agrarian reform, and political democracy. The ruling oligarchy—which is no more than a local agency of world imperialism—can only play a reactionary role.

Only the working class, armed with a **socialist programme**, and basing

itself on class independence and the mobilisation in struggles of all the oppressed layers of society around this programme, can show a way out of the crisis.

The only government capable of carrying out such a programme is a **workers' government**, based on the traditional mass organisations of the class. Only with the active participation of the greatest number of workers in the running of their factories, electing committees and checking up on the activities of their representatives, and extending the same system on the model of the **CORDONES INDUSTRIALES** (elected workers' committees which sprang up towards the end of the life of the Popular Unity—*Editorial Board*), and involving all the other layers of the working population: students, shanty-town dwellers, peasants and also the soldiers, only by these means will it be possible to achieve a real democracy—a **workers' democracy**—as the product of the conscious participation of the masses in the socialist reconstruction of society.

Santiago 15 October, 1983

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