

# Chile: The Real Story of the Allende Years



*Chile: An Attempt at Historic Compromise—The Real Story of the Allende Years*, by Jorge Palacios. Published by Banner Press, Chicago, 1979. 512 pp. \$5.95

The publication of a U.S. edition of this book by Jorge Palacios, a founder and leading member of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile, throws a strong light onto what until now has been a mystery for many people: why the U.S. ruling class overthrew the Chilean government of Salvador Allende, a naked act of aggression which cost the U.S. far more politically than what it stood to lose economically through the nationalizations of U.S. companies carried out by the Allende government, and on the other hand, why the U.S. was able to overthrow Allende, despite the backing of the majority of the people for his government.

Many people—although not enough—already know about the CIA-provoked coup of September 11, 1973 that toppled Allende and led to the murder of 30,000 Chileans. Palacios' book adds valuable exposure and documentation of exactly how the U.S. ruling class plotted and carried out that notorious crime.

But what fewer people know about—and what is the focus of Palacios' book—is the other criminal in this case, a criminal who has tried to cover up what really happened by posing as a victim—the pro-Soviet revisionists who set the Chilean people up for this ambush. Today, these same forces are still in the field maneuvering, both in Chile and in other parts of the world, especially Western Europe.

That is what makes this book the "real story of the Allende years." And what it reveals is both the bloody hand of U.S. imperialism and the slightly less visible hand of the Soviet Union, which tried to use the Allende government as a pawn to achieve a "historic compromise"—a Soviet social-imperialist foot in the door to what has been until now U.S. imperialism's exclusive "sphere of influence."

One incident described in the book poses a sharp question. Exactly a week before the U.S. unleashed the military takeover, Chile witnessed the biggest demonstrations the country had ever seen. In Santiago alone, almost a million people—a third of all the city's men, women and children—marched through the streets to support the Allende government against the attack everyone knew that the reactionaries were preparing. The chants of "The people, united, will never be defeated" had barely died away when these same streets were filled with the tanks and armored troop carriers of the armed forces. In some of the factories which had been the strongest centers of revolutionary activity, on some campuses, in the *poblaciones* (squatters' camps) and farms that peasants had seized from the landlords, there was fierce resistance as the people held out for awhile with whatever weapons they had. But they were not able to stop the coup nor keep the U.S.-backed military

from temporarily consolidating an openly fascist dictatorship in Chile.

Why not? In a country where the parties that called themselves Marxist enjoyed the following of the majority of working people, a country where to be a worker means to be automatically suspected of being a Marxist, a country where the ideals of liberation and socialism had such strong popular support that a government that promised these things came about through presidential elections, why did the people suffer such a sudden, swift setback?

What went wrong was political misleadership—the misleadership of the revisionist Communist Party of Chile, the dominant force in Allende's Popular Unity (UP) coalition, although Allende himself was not a CPer. According to the revisionists, through elections the people could take over a government and its institutions which had been designed and used for centuries to oppress the people and use this government to bring about liberation and socialism. As it turned out, the Allende government soon became bogged down hopelessly in the courts, the parliament and the rest of the bureaucracy, while the ruling class whose property Allende tried to take from them by their own laws prepared to use the armed forces which they had always relied on to crush the Allende government and the people's movement. Nothing could be clearer proof of the fact that it is guns and not elections that determines which class holds power than what happened in Chile.

But what has been mysterious to many revolutionary-minded people is not the wrong line held by the Chilean CP on the road to revolution, nor the fact that it didn't work (although to this day the Chilean CP and its partners worldwide still claim that Allende fell as a result of "an unfavorable alignment of forces, exploited by the enemy" and not because of any errors). The big mystery has been why the UP government all but committed suicide: refusing to mobilize and rely on the masses to stop the rightist offensive, even when workers had already organized themselves and stopped one round of rightist strikes and sabotage; going along with a gun control law allowing the armed forces to take away the few weapons people already had, and more than that, to stage raids on factories and farms as a show of force to demoralize the people; and finally, bringing into the cabinet and making government ministers out of the very generals who were about to overthrow the government.

Why, two days before the coup, when everyone knew for months and more what the armed forces were up to, did the CP newspaper *El Siglo* declare: "There is and there can be no an-

tagonism whatsoever between the people, their government and the armed institutions"? Why, when the tanks finally rolled and Allende, machine gun in hand, was fighting to the death to defend the presidential palace, did the CP refuse all pleas to mobilize the people against the coup with the excuse, "First let's see if they dissolve the Parliament"?

Palacios asks, in the introduction, "Were the leaders of the 'C'P, the real inspirers of the Popular Unity and of the government's policy, so naive that they believed that they could march to socialism by promoting the political and economic 'suicide' of the ruling circles, and this by remaining in the framework of the law? Did they believe in the 'constitutional' and 'purely professional' spirit of an army which had massacred more than 10,000 workers since the century and which, faced in 1964 with the possibility of Allende being elected, made offers to the U.S. Embassy to stage a *coup d'etat*? ... All these questions and many others remain without any answer from those who continue to pretend that under the Allende government there was a real attempt to establish socialism in Chile. The policy of Popular Unity leaders (particularly those of the 'C'P) who claim to be Marxists is even more paradoxical if we consider that the reactionary opposition forces, together with the CIA, developed their offensive against the Allende government with tactics much closer to 'Marxist' tactics than those of the so-called Marxists: they combined legal and illegal struggle..."

#### Pillars of CP Strategy

The secret behind this bizarre situation lies with what Palacios calls "the real motivations behind the two basic formulations, the two pillars of the Chilean 'C'P's strategy that were decisive in this experience: the so-called 'peaceful road' to power, and the efforts to achieve a sort of "historic compromise" with the leaders of the pro-Yankee populist forces" (the pro-U.S. Christian Democratic Party).

First, Palacios explains, the aim of the revisionists was never revolution and socialism in the first place. What they sought—and still seek—is not a radically new society and an end to exploitation, but simply a piece of the action—a bureaucratic state capitalism that would allow the top CP leadership to become a part of the Chilean ruling class alongside other more traditional exploiters of the Chilean people. The very strength of the illusion that Chile's bourgeois democracy was anything

more than a veiled form of dictatorship was in large part due to the CP's long-standing attempts to confine the working class movement to economic struggle around wages and working conditions and to center the people's political activity around the farce of elections.

As Palacios puts it, "the revisionists are servants of the big bourgeoisie and their role is to safeguard the bourgeois order, even when they become disloyal and ungrateful servants (especially since the rise of social-imperialism) who would like to take the place of their masters and become exploiters themselves."

This is how the CP leadership saw Allende's 1970 election victory—as an opportunity to use the mass movement against the big bourgeoisie, the landlords and U.S. imperialism to take over the power and the goodies enjoyed by these reactionaries and rule themselves, along with other bourgeois elements they thought they could get to go along with this "compromise." These revisionists even threatened their rivals by declaring that only they could control the working masses, and, by implication, protect the ruling class from something far worse—revolution.

The Chilean CP is the smoking gun in this mystery—a gun in the hands of the Soviet social-imperialists. Palacios argues that the Soviets recognize Latin America, like Western Europe, as the U.S.'s "sphere of influence," in which an open challenge to the U.S.'s dominance "could mean that the U.S. would abrogate to itself the right to intervene in any conflict which might arise in Eastern Europe (like the Czechoslovakia conflict, for example), a region of Europe where the USSR has serious potential problems." Therefore the Soviets sought to use the Chilean CP not to grab power by and for itself, but rather to bring about a "historic compromise" with pro-U.S. ruling class forces in which the CP would be a junior partner—for the purpose of course of one day being in a position to seize complete control.

The Soviets refused to give Allende much economic aid and the CP refused to allow any real mobilization of the masses to defend his government. Such actions would have interfered with their plans. What they really sought was to

Continued on page 16



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# Chile

Continued from page 5

use the UP government as a wedge to force the pro-U.S. Christian Democrats who had been replaced by the Allende regime to come to some sort of an agreement with the CP to create a government that the U.S. would have to accept.

This in essence, is the same strategy being carried out today by the revisionist parties in France, Italy, Spain and elsewhere. This is what gave Chile so much importance to both superpowers. Just as the U.S. had used Chile as a "guinea pig" for its Alliance for Progress strategy for hanging on to Latin America after Cuba, so now the Soviets were using it to test out (and open the door) to their "historic compromise" strategy for contending with the U.S. within the U.S.'s own bloc. And in turn, this is what made the U.S. imperialists so determined to put a stop to it.

The ugly fact is that for the Soviets and the Chilean CP, the Allende government was expendable. That's why they put so much emphasis on deliberately disarming, demobilizing and demoralizing the masses—so that when the U.S. made its move it would all be over quickly and the CP could soon return to "business as usual" in what they thought would be some kind of position of power along with the Christian Democrats. But at the same time, that's also why the U.S. was forced to go for such a bloody *coup*, such an open act of aggression and naked terror—in order to thoroughly smash the CP and its pro-Soviet plans, as well as to wipe out the mass movement which in many ways was breaking out of the bounds that the Allende government tried to put on it. The USSR had nothing to lose—and the U.S. had an empire to protect.

Palacios concludes his book like this. "Our intention in this book was none other than to analyze and expose the role played by the falsifiers of Marxism and by falsified socialism in the tragedy that the Chilean people are experiencing. They are not for the time being the main enemy of our people; but to fight the main enemy and advance toward genuine socialism, it is essential to unmask them, to break with their reactionary orientation and to help the people get rid of their influence."

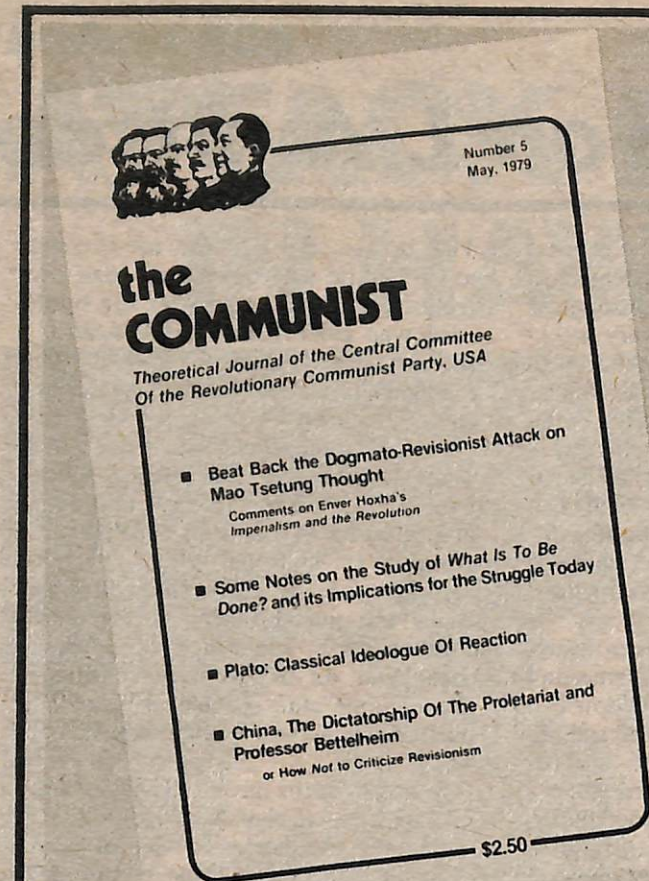
For us in the U.S., while conditions are quite different, certainly revisionism is no less a danger—and the question of Chile has been one of the revisionists' favorite nesting places. This gives Palacios' book a special importance here.

# Afghanistan

Continued from page 11

become a crime punishable by death for an Afghani to refuse to turn in his weapon after such campaigns. Many have left their villages and gone into the surrounding countryside to join the revolution, bringing their rifles with them.

Further complications for the Soviets lie in the fact that the U.S. is clearly attempting to fish in troubled waters and influence the struggle in Afghanistan through its subordinates in the government of Pakistan. Pakistan has been aiding right-wing Moslem feudal elements, landlords who wish to throw out the Soviets in order to regain their land holdings which they were stripped of by the regime, while, as in Iran, pro-



The latest issue of *The Communist* contains a number of articles which represent a valuable contribution to the class struggle on the theoretical front:

- Full reply to Hoxha's wretched attack on Mao Tse-tung Thought. When revisionism triumphed, for the moment, in China after Mao's death, many revolutionaries looked to Albania with hope. But now this article shows how Enver Hoxha's new book is really a stab in the back and betrayal of Marxism and revolution.

- Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* and its role today. This book of Lenin's played a crucial role, not only in preparing the way for the Russian Revolution, but in other times and places. What Lenin says here has been the subject of debate among revolutionaries throughout the 1970s.

To coincide with the publication of the U.S. edition of this book, Jorge Palacios will be making a coast-to-coast speaking tour during the month of October, sponsored by Frente Del Pueblo, a mass organization of the Chilean resistance abroad as well as within Chile. *The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA* is actively building support for this tour, along with many others who see these programs on Chile not as occasions for weeping and lying to the people, but for drawing deeply upon lessons paid for in blood.

gressive Moslem clergy have taken the side of the people in the struggle. The West is backing the most backward sections, whose interests lie not in fighting against imperialism but in uniting solidly with one imperialist power against another. One such group is the Moslem Brotherhood, a notorious CIA-financed organization. Some of these rightist forces based in Pakistan are getting aid from U.S.-backed Saudi Arabia as well as revisionist China.

But the Soviets' main worry in Afghanistan today is not U.S. meddling; their chief concern is smashing a mass revolutionary movement which threatens their puppet regime. If Amin proves to be skillful to this end, he will certainly earn the praises of the Soviet Union. If he doesn't... well, there can always be another "election."

and on what the workers should settle for. All have gone hogwild over the "save Chrysler" crusade. Some have come up with almost comical schemes to keep Chrysler in business. Strange "communists" these, that go around promoting the idea that capitalism can be made to work—in fact must be made to work! Such militant fighters who talk about fighting big battles against GM one moment and "save poor Chrysler" the next.

One interesting and revealing note is how many of these opportunists lined right up behind Fraser's oil postcard mail-in. Of course they all had a number of criticisms but they were from the standpoint that Fraser didn't go far enough! The Revolutionary

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- Charles Bettelheim was the President of the France-China Friendship Association, but quit in protest against the revisionist takeover in China. Now he has written an analysis of the counter-revolution in China. But is his criticism really based on revolutionary Marxism, or not?

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# Auto

Continued from page 6

ple to stay in the quicksand, but to flail about wildly in it—a guaranteed plan for sinking deeper still. These types make a very nice loyal opposition to Fraser. For all their seeming opposition to the UAW International they actually put forward the exact same line with a little militant coating. Many like the CPML and the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters (also known as the Mensheviks who split from the RCP a while back) openly propagated the lie that a decent contract can actually be won if the auto workers fight hard enough. They only disagreed with the UAW leadership on what it would take to win

Workers Headquarters for example called it "the biggest political job action in years. The right combination of rank-and-file agitation and some guts by union leaders produced some effective actions." Of course they had some criticism for the anti-OPEC stuff and for the UAW leadership for keeping "the initiative out of the hands of the rank-and-file." Perhaps the rank-and-file should take the "initiative" and form "America First" clubs and get into some real political struggle. Naturally the politics all these swamp dwellers are concerned with are those of Fraser and the capitalists.

In response to Fraser's treachery and the pitiful parroting of his trash by a host of opportunists part of the NUWO leaflet to the auto workers is very appropriate:

"Why waste our time chasing after bullshit illusions, piecemeal reforms that are snatched back as soon as they are gained. Our interests lie in challenging, defying the very system of wage-slavery itself. And these interests will not be satisfied, except by eliminating this capitalist system, and wiping out the social and economic basis for twisting human labor into someone's private gain."