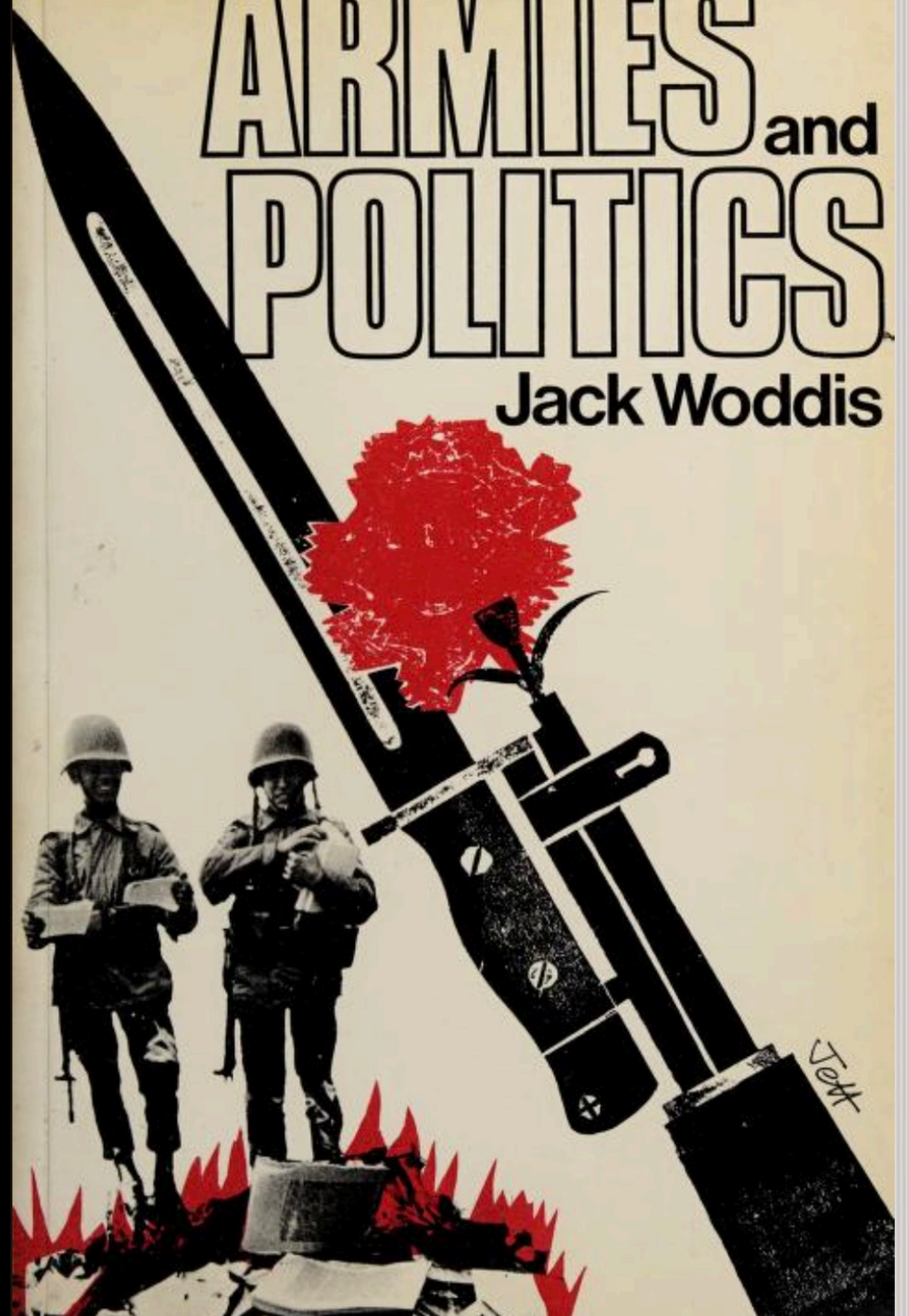


ARMIES and POLITICS

Jack Woddis



II

Chile - Why the Coup Succeeded

Considerable attention has been devoted above to the counter-revolutionary coups in Sudan and Indonesia. Both of these coups took place as immediate ripostes to a *military* move from the left. In this sense, these two examples were not typical of right-wing coups which, more often, are mounted against a progressive government which has been in office for some time, rather than against a military move from the left to assume power.

It is doubtful whether any coup in recent years has attracted such world interest, or provoked such discussion and controversy in the international revolutionary movement, as the military coup on 11 September 1973 against Chile's Popular Unity Government, headed by President Salvador Allende. This government was regarded by the US monopolies as the biggest challenge to their position in Latin America since the Cuban victory. It was in no sense a threat to the people of the United States, with whom Chile was only too anxious to maintain normal relations; but since the Popular Unity programme, and the steps to implement it taken by Allende's Government, involved radical changes in Chile's economic structure, involving the nationalisation of key industries owned by US companies, these big firms, including ITT and Kennecott Copper, were determined right from the beginning to prevent Popular Unity from achieving its aims.

Secondly, the major US firms and the US Government itself feared that a success in Chile for Popular Unity would prove contagious, and that similar trends would develop in other Latin American countries. There was, after all, a *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front) gaining ground in Uruguay,¹ and significant changes in Peru, Panama, Ecuador and Venezuela, although in none of these countries had the progressive transformation taken the same form as in Chile, nor had it reached the same relatively advanced stage.

Furthermore, the coup against Allende aroused wide controversy in the international revolutionary movement, in other progressive circles and even beyond, because the Popular Unity period was regarded as a

test case of the possibility of a people going over to socialism without an insurrection against the existing Government, State and constitution, and without civil war. In other words, a test for the possibility of a *relatively* peaceful revolution; *relatively*, because at no time, as we shall see, did the leaders of the Chilean Communist Party fail to emphasise that intense struggle was needed, neither did they categorically rule out the possibility that even the taking up of arms might become necessary.

This anxiety about the possibility or otherwise of the 'peaceful road to socialism' was not confined to those favouring socialism. Its opponents, too, and especially the big international firms, were equally concerned. In a number of capitalist countries similar perspectives have been written into the programmes of the respective Communist Parties, and in several cases, as in France, Italy, Spain and Japan, significant progress has been made towards such an objective. A victory for the 'peaceful road' in Chile would encourage those striving for the same road elsewhere. Further, it would represent an important ideological victory for socialism, since its opponents always attempt to claim that socialism can only come to power by the forcible and bloody imposition of such a system on the people and not by popular acclaim, including an electoral victory.

Because such major political and even theoretical questions were at stake, the coup against Chile's Popular Unity Government was followed by a very wide-ranging and intense debate, with sharp polemic not only between left and right, but equally fierce partisanship being displayed between different viewpoints within the left, as well as in debate with ultra-left assessments.

The arguments from the right need not detain us too long. The performance of Pinochet's fascist junta in four years has largely exposed its case. The excuse that the coup was motivated by an intention to 'end economic chaos' (which itself was created largely by the internal and external enemies of Popular Unity), cannot stand a moment's serious examination. Inflation after the coup soared to an annual rate of 400 per cent by mid 1976, with unemployment estimated at 20 per cent.

The pretence that the military had to intervene to 'safeguard freedom', and 'restore law and order' - the traditional excuse of all counter-revolutions - cannot be seriously sustained either. The 'freedom' exercised by the jailers and torturers of the Chilean people has been too well documented by UN agencies and other important bodies for there to be any doubts on that score. The violence on the streets and the violations of law and order in the last days of Allende's Government

also comprehensive proposals covering a variety of social questions, education and culture, all designed to provide people with higher material standards as well as a much richer and fuller life. Central to all these changes was the democratic activity of the people at every level of society and through every institution and people's organisation. The full use of their power by the people was a constant theme in the programme.

The most far-seeing of those who worked out the programme had no illusions as to the scale of the task they were projecting, the obstacles they would meet, and the extraordinary effort that would be required in order to carry it out. They therefore regarded it as central to their strategy to gather together the full power of the people to the point where it would be strong enough, numerically, organisationally, in the disposition of its strength in the economy and the State, and in ideological influence and in activity, to impose its will on the ruling class and compel it to retreat from its positions of power or be removed.

As far back as 1956, fourteen years before the electoral victory of Popular Unity, the Tenth National Congress of the Chilean Communist Party put forward the following idea:

The possibility of our revolution being carried through by peaceful means, i.e. without it being necessary to resort to civil war, depends on two essential factors: the power and resistance of the enemy classes, and the ability of the working class to unite around itself the majority of the country and win power for the people, by electoral or some similar means.

The Chilean Communist Party's point of view concerning the possibility of avoiding civil war thus rested on two key propositions. First, the power and resistance of the class enemy. Second, the capacity of the working class to unite the *majority* of the people around itself. These propositions will be examined in more detail later, but it should be noted, at this point, that they were two of the essential conditions for avoiding a coup.⁴

The problem of uniting the majority of the people around the working class faced Popular Unity very acutely before, during, and after the presidential elections in 1970. The success for Popular Unity in these elections provided the Chilean people with an opportunity to start putting their programme into practice and so commence a restructuring of society. This opportunity, however, was fraught with complexities and difficulties. Popular Unity, it should be appreciated, never had an electoral majority, although the use of elections, Parliament and the Constitution was a key component of the strategy which lay behind its

programme. This strategy was in no sense only a 'parliamentary' one, since it envisaged the democratic participation and activity of the mass of people in extra-parliamentary actions as the key form of struggle. However, elections were part of the strategy, and acceptance of their verdict a natural consequence.

In the 1970 elections Popular Unity's presidential candidate, Salvador Allende, obtained 36.3 per cent of the votes. The Nationalist Party, the party of extreme reaction, obtained 35 per cent,⁵ and the Christian Democrat Party, which had been the previous ruling party and was backed by considerable sections of the bourgeoisie while enjoying the support also of a large part of the urban and rural middle class, and even a section of workers and peasants, received 27.8 per cent of the votes. These latter two parties, holding 62.8 per cent of the votes cast already in combination held a strong majority of seats in the Assembly and in the Senate which had been voted in previously during the period of the presidency of the Christian Democrat leader, Frei.

Thus, from the very start, Popular Unity and Allende faced a big problem. They had emerged as the strongest single electoral coalition, and therefore were entitled, according to Chilean constitutional practice, to present Allende for endorsement as President by the Chilean Parliament. Yet Allende had no majority, neither in the Assembly nor in the Senate. How, then, was he able to secure endorsement? Here lies a partial clue to subsequent events. The Christian Democrat Party, because of its variegated class and social composition and because of its attempts to hew a path for itself between the ultra-right Nationalists on the one hand and Popular Unity on the other, had sought to secure a popular base by being all things to all men and presenting a certain 'liberal' and even 'radical' face to the people. Even under Frei it had attempted to use slogans of 'revolution' and 'freedom'. In 1970, two distinct wings had emerged within it - a conservative wing around Frei, and a more progressive grouping around Tomic, the Christian Democrat presidential candidate in the 1970 elections. Due to the influence of Tomic and that of his supporters, the Christian Democrats decided to endorse Allende as President when the matter was voted on in Parliament. This gave Allende his assured majority and so he became President.

From a political standpoint, as well as from an arithmetical and procedural point of view, Allende and Popular Unity were in a very vulnerable position. Although the President, under Chilean law, had considerable executive power in his own right, Popular Unity's

minority position in Parliament and its dependence on the goodwill of the Christian Democrats, meant that President and Government were faced with the prospect of instability and considerable pressures from forces outside Popular Unity and even inimical to it. This gave the right-wing and ultra-right plenty of scope to obstruct the Popular Unity Government whenever it moved to bring forward the necessary legislation to implement its own programme; and as the struggle sharpened in 1972 this obstruction was extended to blocking Government efforts to deal with black-marketeering, hoarding, speculation, corruption and violence.

This came about because the Christian Democrats, quite early on, shifted their position. Although they voted in Parliament for Allende to be President, and subsequently voted in support of the nationalisation of the copper companies (the vote on this was actually unanimous, even the Nationalists backing it, so widespread was the support for this measure), they gradually changed their attitude. The right-wing trend in the Christian Democrat Party became more dominant, and a virtual alliance was formed with the Nationalists, the two parties mobilising their Parliamentary voting majority persistently to oppose the Popular Unity Government and the President.

This complex of relationships is key to an understanding of the unfolding of the coup, and was one of the reasons for its success. It had a direct bearing on the situation in the armed forces; it contributed to the economic difficulties; and it led, in the end, to a situation in which considerable numbers of professional people and technicians (for example, pilots, doctors, administrative workers) and small owners (truck-owners and shop-keepers) were mobilised for struggle against the Government. In these circumstances it was easier for the ultra-right to bring its forces on to the streets and commence its campaign of violence and terror. These points will be considered later, but they are made here because it is against this background that one has to consider what the Popular Unity Government was actually able to achieve.

When Allende began his term as President, Chile's economy was in a most unhealthy state. Between 1955 and 1970, gross national product per capita rose by only 0.7 per cent, while the foreign debt soared from \$569 million in 1958 to no less than \$3,700 million in 1970. Prices were continually rising and unemployment was going up.

At the end of its first fifteen months in office, the Allende Government was already able to record remarkable progress. A report⁶ published in March 1972 and drawn up by the parties of Popular Unity showed

statistically and factually what important changes the new government had been able to introduce. The initial key measures, of course, were those taken to break the stranglehold of the big monopolies, including those in foreign hands and especially those of the United States, and to abolish large-scale landlordism. These changes, as was pointed out earlier, were not intended to change the system immediately to a socialist one; they were conceived, rather, as radical democratic steps that would help to bring about an important shift in the balance of economic power in the country, assist the further growth of the economy and make possible a better life for the people, thereby helping to influence the political power balance and so open up possibilities of advance to socialism.

In these first fifteen months a major segment of the economy was nationalised. Apart from copper (formerly in the hands of the US Kennecott Copper Corporation and the US company, Anaconda), industries taken over included coalmining (formerly in the hands of private Chilean owners), steel (previously owned by US Bethlehem Company), nitrates (formerly held by the US firm, Guggenheim), the four main textile manufacturing undertakings, and a substantial share of cement and fishing. The main banks, too, were taken over by the Popular Unity Government.

Land reform was carried through on a considerable scale. Large estates totalling 6½ million acres were taken over in the period ending February 1972. This meant that in little more than a year Allende's Government had distributed as much land to the peasants as the previous Frei Government had done in six years. By the end of 1972, Popular Unity had completed its land reform programme and the latifundio system had been largely broken.

These changes of ownership in industry, finance and land, combined with the economic and social benefits granted to the people and the perspectives which the regime had opened up for them, and helped by the considerable measures of economic planning (in no sense complete, bearing in mind that a substantial sector of the economy was still in private hands) that the Government was able to introduce in this first comparatively short stage, had a stimulating effect on the economy. By the beginning of 1972 national productivity had risen by 9 per cent and industrial productivity by 13 per cent. (In the last year of Frei's government industrial productivity had risen by only ½ per cent.) The rate of unemployment was cut back from 8.3 per cent to 3.8 per cent, and 200,000 new jobs were created – and this in a country with less than

ten million people is no mean achievement in such a short space of time.

1971, the year of copper nationalisation, saw copper production rise to 730,000 tons, an increase of 40,000 tons over the previous year.⁷ Striking advances were registered in other sectors of the economy, unprecedented levels of output being achieved for steel (615,000 tons), cement (1,300,000 tons), refined petrol (5,600,000 cubic metres), and electricity (5,690 million kWh). Nitrate production went up by 23 per cent, and that of coal by 10 per cent.

In the light of the attempts made prior to the coup and subsequently by sections of the British press to accuse the Allende Government of having 'hopelessly mismanaged the economy', the significant progress made in the first fifteen months should not be ignored. This, it should be remembered, was a period of relative political stability and before the measures of the CIA, the US State Department, and the big US firms to 'destabilise the economy' of Chile really got under way. How this 'destabilisation' operated will be considered later; but in its first period of office the Popular Unity Government was able to cope with the economic pressures, and to secure an upturn in the economy. As a result of economic growth and on the basis of the large degree of State ownership and State control of the key sectors of the economy, it was possible, right from the beginning, to bring substantial benefits to the Chilean people.

While prices still rose the rate of increases was lowered and, furthermore, wage increases more than compensated. Thus, people's purchasing power rose by 30 per cent and actual consumption went up by 20 per cent. The shift in the balance of income distribution was marked, with the share of the national income going to the working class rising from 51 to 60 per cent. At the same time, family allowances went up by 50 to 100 per cent, depending on category; and old age pensions rose by 35 to 67 per cent, again depending on category. Steps were taken to provide every child under twelve with half a litre of free milk – and this coincidentally at a time when the British Tory Government was abolishing such distribution in our schools. At a time when in relatively rich Britain the price of school meals was going up, in Chile, free breakfasts and free lunches were being steadily extended for all children in kindergartens and schools.

In education, too, Chile under her Popular Unity Government quickly began to stride forward. By 1972 educational expenditure was the highest in its history. Technical-professional teaching increased its enrolment by 38 per cent and university enrolment went up by 28 per

cent. Plans already prepared for 1972 provided for no less than 250,000 young people to receive education in the universities and technical-professional institutes. An equivalent figure for developed, industrialised Britain would be between 1¼ and 1½ million. In housing, 100,000 new houses were begun in 1971, a number without precedent in Chile's history; and again, to make a comparison, that would mean in British terms about 550,000 houses.

There were, of course, acute economic problems. A number of mistakes were also made in the handling of economic questions. These were utilised by the internal and external opponents of Popular Unity who made the maximum use of economic weapons to 'destabilise' the economy in order to spread confusion and discontent, consequently creating the political conditions which opened the way to the final coup. The mistakes of Popular Unity, including those of the Communist Party, are examined in more detail below when we come to analyse the causes for the success of the coup. But first it is necessary to consider the actual course of the coup and its preparations from the very first days of the formation of the Popular Unity, even before Allende's election as President.

In a general study of this nature it is not intended to provide a factual and detailed account of all the events connected with the coup in Chile. That the US monopolies and State Department, the CIA, Kissinger and Nixon were all involved in the plot against Chile, a plot which was denounced by President Allende himself from the rostrum of the United Nations a year before it took place, is now so well documented, especially with the official US Senate report⁸ on the activities of the CIA, that I shall only provide a few essential points necessary for analysing the coup and its course.

The US plot against Chile began long before Allende was elected. The US State Department and major companies had been involved in all the moves against the left and democratic movement in Chile for many years, including plots against the Chilean Popular Front of the 1930s and 1940s, against the People's Front and the later Popular Action Front of the 1950s and 1960s (with Allende being the successive but unsuccessful Presidential candidate for both these latter formations), and finally against Popular Unity when it was set up in 1969.

The US ruling class had watched over the years most anxiously as the Chilean working class strengthened its unity and began to attract other classes and strata of the population to its side. As the 1970 elections drew near, moves against Chilean democracy were increased; and, as usually

happens in these circumstances, pliable agents for this US-inspired plotting were to be found amongst the extreme right-wing forces in the army hierarchy. On 21 October 1969, a group of officers led by General Roberto Viaux attempted to use the Tacna Regiment to create a situation of chaos arising out of problems connected with army pay. The intention was to utilise the resulting tension in the armed forces to provide the opportunity for a military coup which would thus prevent the 1970 elections being held.

This plot failed, and the reasons for its failure are significant for what happened in later coup attempts, including the one that eventually overthrew the Popular Unity Government. The 'Tacna' coup failed for two reasons. First, the organised workers went into immediate action at the call of the Confederation of United Workers. The country was paralysed by a general strike, accompanied by mass occupations of factories, depots and essential services. Second, there was no readiness on the part of the majority of the armed forces, including the officers, to support the coup. Not only were they deterred by the powerful reaction of the workers. They had the strongest reservations about the whole venture even prior to 21 October. After all, a military coup in 1969 would have been a coup against the Christian Democrat President, Frei, and his Government. The Christian Democrat leadership at that time was not prepared to support such a coup to forestall Popular Unity. This position of the Christian Democrats was not unknown to the armed forces. Many of the officers had family ties and political sympathies with the Christian Democrats. Whatever the officers might have thought about the forthcoming elections and Allende's chances of winning, the thought of acting in those conditions against the political supporters of both the Christian Democrats and Popular Unity, that is against the majority political forces in the country, was a step that must have appealed only to the most extreme right-wing of the officer corps. In these conditions, a narrow civilian-political base for the coup meant a restricted military base, too, confirming once again that how an army acts politically is determined, to a large degree, by the total political situation in the country and by the political balance of civilian forces at the given time.

But the 'Tacna' coup was not to be the last effort of the United States against Allende and Popular Unity. The election year, 1970, saw fresh evidence of US plotting against Chilean democracy. A large-scale anti-communist smear campaign was launched with financial help from the US companies in Chile, especially the Anaconda copper company,

whose involvement was proved when three young Communists discovered documentary evidence of it in one of the offices of the anti-communist campaign in Santiago.

US involvement in Chilean elections, as has been noted above, dates back a number of years. The US Senate Select Committee Report itself admits:

Covert US Government involvement in large-scale political action programs in Chile began with the 1964 Presidential elections.⁹ As in 1970, this was, in part, in response to the perceived threat of Salvador Allende. Over \$3 million was spent by the CIA in the 1964 effort.¹⁰

As the 1970 elections in Chile loomed closer, the US stepped up its intervention against an Allende victory. On 25 March 1970 the 40 Committee¹¹ endorsed a joint proposal of the CIA and the US Embassy in Chile 'recommending that "spoiling" operations - propaganda and other activities - be undertaken by the CIA in an effort to prevent an election victory by Allende's Popular Unity (UP) Coalition'.¹² For this activity, a sum of \$135,000 was authorised by the 40 Committee. Two months later the sum was increased to \$390,000. This was apart from direct sums made available by big US companies, for the same purpose. Proposals submitted by the US Ambassador to Chile, Edward Korry, for \$500,000 to be made available for use in the Chilean Congress 'to persuade certain shifts in voting on 24 October 1970' (i.e. the date when the Congress and Senate were due to vote in the new President), were deferred until the results of the 4 September elections were known. As things turned out, this blatant attempt to buy up votes of public representatives came to naught in the immediate post-election period; but in view of the way in which Christian Democrat members of Congress and Senate later switched their position, it is not unreasonable to assume that the half a million dollars were later used to subvert elected deputies and so contributed to the eventual overthrow of Allende's Government.

The success of Popular Unity in the 4 September election led to still more frantic efforts by the US State Department and the CIA. Three days after the election results were known, that is on 7 September 1970, the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence circulated an intelligence assessment of the impact of Allende's election victory on US interests. Interestingly enough, the assessment admits that a Popular Unity Government headed by Allende would not 'significantly alter' the 'world military balance of power'. Nor would there be any resultant 'threat to the peace of the

region'. It even states that 'The US has no vital national interests within Chile'.¹⁵

What, then, motivated the fears and hostility of the US ruling circles towards Chile's democratic aspirations? The assessment talks about 'tangible economic losses' – presumably this refers to anxieties regarding Popular Unity's aims to nationalise major US companies in Chile; trade was not necessarily involved, since Chile was only too ready to continue trading with the United States. The CIA assessment also mentions two other sources of anxiety over Allende's victory. It would, states the report, 'create considerable political and psychological costs'. There would be strains inside the Organisation of American States (OAS). Further, it 'would represent a definite psychological advance for the Marxist idea'.

Within a week of the actual publishing of this CIA Intelligence assessment, President Nixon held a meeting with his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Henry Kissinger, the CIA Director Richard Helms, and Attorney-General John Mitchell,¹⁴ to discuss the situation in Chile. Handwritten notes of CIA director, Richard Helms, taken at that meeting on 15 September 1970, indicate the nature of the discussion and the clear intention of President Nixon to stop Allende at all costs:

One in 10 chance perhaps, but save Chile!
worth spending
not concerned risks involved
no involvement of Embassy
\$10,000,000 available, more if necessary
full-time job – best men we have
game plan
make the economy scream
48 hours for plan of action.

No wonder Helms drew the conclusion, as he explained in his testimony to the Select Committee, that Nixon 'wanted something done, and he didn't much care how and that he was prepared to make money available'.¹⁵

Kissinger's testimony basically admits the same intention on the part of the US President and his colleagues:

The primary thrust of the September 15th meeting was to urge Helms to do whatever he could to prevent Allende from being seated.¹⁶

A cable sent on 21 September from CIA headquarters to the CIA Chief of Station in Santiago explains:

Purpose of exercise is to prevent Allende assumption of power. Parliamentary legerdemain has been discarded. Military solution is objective.¹⁷

The Select Committee Report, in its summary, states without equivocation:

On September 15, 1970, President Richard Nixon informed CIA Director Richard Helms that an Allende regime in Chile would not be acceptable to the United States. *The CIA was instructed by President Nixon to play a direct role in organising a military coup d'état in Chile to prevent Allende's accession to the presidency*¹⁸ (italics added).

Internal documents of the big international monopoly, the US International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (ITT), first revealed by *Washington Post* journalist, Jack Anderson, on 21 March 1972, provide further evidence of the US plot against Popular Unity, with the significant addition of the obvious direct collaboration of the CIA with the big US monopolies themselves. It is, of course, no coincidence that John McCone, a former Director of the CIA, is one of the members of the directing board of ITT.

Almost immediately after the Presidential elections, Nixon's plan to 'make the economy scream' was put into action. A number of steps were taken by US subsidiaries in Chile and by Chilean companies with US links to shake the economy. Capital began to leave the country, there were closures of enterprises and threats of more. There were a number of bombing attacks by right-wing terrorist groups. Rumours of a coup began to circulate. As the Anderson papers later revealed, and as the Senate Select Committee in substance confirmed, all this was part of a prepared plot to 'destabilise' Chile and so create the conditions and the political atmosphere that would favour the carrying out of a military coup against Allende. Involved were the US State Department, the President, the CIA, major US monopolies such as ITT, and right-wing neo-fascist groupings in Chile, including right-wing ultras in the armed forces.

The ITT documents, as well as the Senate Select Committee Report, reveal only too clearly what was plotted. ITT officials had secret meetings with CIA agents, William Broe and Enno Hobbing. State Department assurances of support were confirmed. The US Ambassador in Chile, Edward Korry, 'received a message from the State Department giving him the green light to move in the name of the President. . . . The message gave him maximum authority to do all possible . . . short of a Dominican type of action (i.e. the sending in of US marines, as was done

in 1965 to crush democracy in the Dominican Republic and pre-empt the results of the elections at that time) to keep Allende from taking power'.

The plot involved economic pressure 'aimed at inducing an economic collapse', and the instigation of 'massive internal disorders' with attempts to provoke the left into hasty action, all intended to create a situation which would 'justify an armed forces intervention'. The Chilean army was 'assured full material and financial assistance by the US military establishment'.

In the event the coup at that time did not succeed, although it claimed the life of the Army Commander-in-Chief, General René Schneider. Why this particular attempt failed is not only interesting from the point of view of understanding the role of the military in politics in Chile, but is also instructive for our understanding of the reasons for the success of Pinochet's coup in September 1973.

The steps being prepared at the time¹⁹ by the CIA and the US President for a coup against Allende were most devious. There were, in fact, two main lines of attack. In the run up to the key meeting of Nixon and his co-plotters on 15 September, both the CIA and Ambassador Korry provided assessments of the situation, expressing reservations as to the possibilities of a successful military coup at that time. The CIA's view was categorical: '*Military action is impossible; the military is incapable and unwilling to seize power. We have no capability to motivate or instigate a coup*' (Memorandum for Dr Kissinger/Chile - 40 Committee Meeting, Monday - 14 September 1970).²⁰

Faced with this extreme difficulty to mount a coup to put the military in power, the US leaders were thrashing about to find a political way to achieve the same goal, with the military providing the necessary physical backing to a 'civilian' solution. One proposal, the so-called 'Rube Goldberg' gambit, was to elect the Nationalist leader, Alessandri, as President on 24 October, by a combination of Nationalist and Christian Democratic votes in the Congress; this to be followed by the immediate resignation of Alessandri, thus leaving the Christian Democrat leader, Frei, free to run for a second term for the presidency.²¹ A contingency fund of \$250,000 was set up to be offered to Frei for this option.

A variant of this political line of action, known as 'Track I', was to 'bribe Chilean Congressmen' as well as to provide for 'propaganda and economic activities . . . designed to induce the opponents to Allende in Chile to prevent his assumption of power, either through political or military means'.²² Track I, or the Frei gambit, involved 'a voluntary

turn-over of power to the military by Frei', who would then have been eligible to run for President in a new election. Extraordinary pressure was brought to bear on Frei to secure his agreement. Apart from the offer of funds, he was informed that crippling economic measures would be taken against Chile if Allende was allowed to take office as President on 24 October. Ambassador Korry, for example, warned Frei that 'not a nut or bolt will be allowed to reach Chile. . . . Once Allende comes to power we shall do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost deprivation and poverty.' Hence, for Frei to believe that Chile would be allowed to muddle through was 'strictly illusory'.

As the Select Committee Report makes clear, 'the use of economic instruments as levers' was applied with both Frei and the military to persuade them to cooperate with the 'Frei gambit'. A major obstacle to this gambit (apart from Frei's own reluctance to condone a coup while he was still the President and made hesitant, too, by his assessment of the situation at the time in the armed forces as well as in the country at large), was the attitude of General Schneider. For this reason Korry urged that the Army Commander-in-Chief 'be neutralised, by displacement if necessary'.

While the push along Track I was proceeding, and unknown to most of those participating, a second line of approach, Track II, was being proceeded with. Track II activities were the follow-up to Nixon's instructions of 15 September. The objective of Track I and Track II was the same - the prevention of Allende's assumption of office as President. Both Tracks involved the military and the preparation of a coup. In practice, as Kissinger admitted in his testimony before the Senate Committee, Tracks I and II overlapped in many ways. Yet there was a certain difference. Track II provided for 'a more direct role for the CIA in actually organising such a coup' (Kissinger, 8/12/75, p. 13).²³ Further, Track II provided for the CIA's 'active promotion and support for a coup without President Frei's involvement'.²⁴

The botched-up affair that actually took place on the eve of the 24 October meeting and which resulted in the murder of General Schneider during an attempted kidnapping was a total failure as a coup. There were even divided counsels in the CIA as to its feasibility, mainly because of the situation at the time inside the armed forces. Following the 15 September meeting, CIA Director Richard Helms, according to his testimony before the Senate Committee, regarded the possibility of pulling off a coup such as Nixon was demanding to be at that time 'just as remote as anything could be'. The 'time frame' was far too short; and the Army was

'constitutionalist'. CIA Deputy Director for Plans, Thomas Karamessines, argued that the Chilean military were 'unwilling to do anything. And without their wanting to do something, there did not seem to be much hope.'²⁵

The 'Constitutional Coup', that is the 'Frei gambit', with Frei inviting the military to take over, dissolve the Congress and proclaim a fresh election, could not go ahead. As the CIA Santiago Station explained 'neither Frei nor Schneider will act'. Frei was reluctant to 'tarnish his historical image' (Chile Task Force Log, 8 October 1970). General Schneider, whatever his political views may have been, regarded it as his responsibility to ensure that the armed forces safeguarded the constitutional process in Chile. Even the coup-minded officers were reluctant to act at that time. Thus the way to a direct military coup solution with the backing of some civilian political forces was also blocked. The CIA therefore had to face the fact that the only thing left was 'a straight military coup'. Given the opposition of General Schneider and his second-in-command General Prats, and the reluctance of high-ranking coup-minded officers, it became necessary to make 'overtures to lower echelon officers' and thus to promote an army split.

A three-fold programme was set in motion by the CIA to prepare for such a coup, create the atmosphere and conditions for it, lay the ground for justifying it, and organise the practical military steps to carry it out. Cables sent from CIA headquarters to Santiago in October indicate the nature of the programme, which included collecting intelligence on coup-minded officers; creating a coup climate by propaganda, misinformation, and terrorist activities intended to provoke the left into giving a pretext for a coup; and informing the coup-minded officers that the US Government would give them full support in a coup, short of direct US military intervention. The preparations were also to utilise the economic difficulties, both to provoke discontent and to provide an additional justification for the coup since it could be alleged that 'the economic situation was collapsing'.

In October 1970 a number of factors that would have made a coup bid successful were not present. Despite the provocative terrorist actions organised by terror squads, the workers refused to be provoked. The majority of capitalist interests in Chile were not prepared to back the coup card at that time, as clearly indicated not only by Frei's personal reluctance but also by the general readiness of the Christian Democrat leaders to endorse Allende as President. Neither was there a unanimous rush by the major US monopolies with interests in Chile to put their

funds and their influence behind the ITT initiative. Further, as we have seen, in the upper ranks of the armed forces there was no enthusiasm for military intervention. The Commander-in-Chief, General Schneider, made it abundantly clear that he would abide by the Constitution, and other high-ranking officers supported him. Even those who were coup-minded took a long, cool look at realities and decided to wait for a more propitious occasion.

The CIA was therefore reduced to relying on lower-ranking officers, in the hope that their action might trigger off a bigger reaction in the armed forces as a whole. In the event, the attempted kidnapping of General Schneider on 22 October and his being mortally wounded in the attempt, flopped badly. There was an immediate declaration of martial law. General Prats, a strong supporter of the 'Schneider Doctrine' of upholding the Constitution, was appointed Commander-in-Chief. The forces represented by Popular Unity, and even beyond, rallied round Allende. In the circumstances, and apart from their own previously worked out position, the Christian Democrat deputies voted for Allende on 24 October.

It has been necessary to spend some time on the failed coup of October 1970 because many of its features appeared in September 1973 in new forms, and in different circumstances. Moreover, the reasons for the failure of October 1970 help to explain the reasons for the coup success in September 1973. It should be appreciated that although the coup failed in 1970, the basic strategy which lay behind Track II was not abandoned. The CIA continued to work on these lines and eventually put the plans into final operation in September 1973.

This much, in fact, is revealed in the Senate Select Committee Report. The Committee apparently received conflicting testimony on this point. Kissinger appears to have given the Committee the impression that Track II was wound up by President Nixon after the murder of General Schneider, and prior to the 24 October vote of the Chilean Congress. In view of Kissinger's record, readers may have their doubts about the trustworthiness of his testimony on this point, especially as the Committee states that it does not have the President's 'new "marching order" in its possession'.²⁶

As against Kissinger's testimony, the Committee was given evidence from CIA officials who 'believed that there had been no such definite end to Track II. It merely tapered off, to be replaced by a longer-term effort to effect a change of government in Chile.' The testimony of leading CIA official Karamessines is most explicit on this point:

Mr Karamessines: I am sure that the seeds that were laid in that effort in 1970 had their impact in 1973. I do not have any question about that in my mind either.

Q: Was Track II ever formally ended? Was there a specific order ending it?

Mr Karamessines: As far as I was concerned, Track II was really never ended. What we were told to do in effect was, well, Allende is now President. So Track II, which sought to prevent him from becoming President, was technically out, it was done. But what we were told to do was to continue our efforts. Stay alert, and to do what we could to contribute to the eventual achievement of the objectives and purposes of Track II. That being the case, I don't think it is proper to say that Track II was ended.

Despite Kissinger's protestations, the subsequent course of events tallies with Karamessines' testimony rather than that of the Secretary of State. The seeds sown in 1970 'had their impact in 1973' and Popular Unity was overthrown.

The full details of how the plot against Allende's Government was carried forward over the three years from the time of his inauguration are not yet known, but it can be assumed on the basis of what has come to light so far that the US pressed ahead with its plans on all fronts. From a study like that of Philip Agee²⁷ it can be assumed that continuously, daily, even hourly, the CIA carried out its operations in a comprehensive and virtually synchronised fashion, employing economic levers to 'make the economy scream', 'black propaganda' to spread confusion, armed thuggery and terrorist acts to cause chaos, create panic, and provoke the working class and the left generally as well as providing an excuse for the military right-wing to act. An additional aim in all this was to produce the kind of psychological atmosphere that would bring about hesitation and division within the armed forces themselves, thus facilitating the work of the coup-minded officers. Simultaneously, the CIA must have been active in establishing contacts and winning influence in various departments of the State, especially the armed forces and the police, and in penetrating the student bodies and universities, as well as radio, television, newspapers and journals. Comprehensive lists of Popular Unity supporters for eventual arrest and even murder must have been prepared; and, in the light of Agee's disclosures, this must have involved not only close working of the CIA with the Chilean police, but also with the postal, communication and immigration authorities so that phone conversations could be tapped, mail opened, and a watch kept on arrivals and departures especially at Chile's airports.

Central to the attack pressed home against Chile's legally elected Popular Unity Government was economic aggression. The United States was well placed to damage Chile's economy which was heavily

dependent on US investments, trade and credits. Previous Governments in Chile had readily accepted this dependent relationship since they regarded it as essential to maintain themselves in power. Prior to 1970 the United States invested heavily in Chile, a total of 1,500 million dollars being so invested over the previous decade. These investments yielded huge profits to US monopolies. It is estimated that in 1969 the net return on US capital in Chile was 23 per cent, almost double what was being earned in other Latin American countries. Practically the whole of this profit went to the United States, and very little was ploughed back into Chilean industry. For Chile the consequences were a distorted economy, a high inflation rate, heavy unemployment and widespread poverty, ill-health and bad housing. Not surprisingly, the foreign debt soared from 569 million dollars in 1958 to 3,700 million in 1970.

Some 40 per cent of all Chile's imports came from the United States; for capital goods the figure was 65 per cent. Machinery, transport equipment, machine tools, as well as manufactured goods, chemicals, food and livestock came mainly from the United States. For servicing and spare parts, too, Chile was dependent on the US. All these purchases were financed largely from US credits provided by such agencies as the Export-Import Bank and American private banks, and from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, both of which were effectively under US control. As Senator Kennedy put it so succinctly: 'The World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank are our (i.e. US) tools to wield however we wish.'

Chile's utter dependence on US credits — in 1970 no less than 78.4 per cent of all her short-term credits came from the United States — provided the US monopolies, the State Department and the CIA with a powerful weapon to use to 'induce economic collapse'. By an abrupt and brutal cutting off of credits, the US was able to create real economic difficulties for the new Popular Unity Government, already battling with serious economic problems inherited from the previous Frei administration. Nixon made no secret of his intention to use economic weapons to baton the Chile Government into submission. He openly threatened that any move to nationalise US companies would be met both by cutting off bilateral economic 'aid' as well as by using the powerful influence of the US to block loans from 'multilateral banks'.

The Export-Import Bank set the example and refused a request for a \$21 million loan for the state airline Lan-Chile to purchase three Boeings. . . . Then in August 1971 the bank told Chile that no further loans of any kind would be given and that all loan guarantees to US commercial banks and businesses

dealing with Chile would be ended. . . . Before Allende, the Inter-American Development Bank had given \$310 million in loans to Chile. Since 1971, virtually nothing. . . . Since then only two tiny loans have been granted, both to right-wing universities. The previous generosity of the World Bank evaporated equally suddenly in 1971.²⁸

The private banks followed suit. Deprived of its main source of former credit, the Chile Government had to fall back on its dwindling reserves. This process became more dangerous when the world price of copper fell. To make things worse, the US copper companies added their own forms of pressure, following their being nationalised. They refused to provide Chile with spare parts which were vital for the normal operation of the mines; and their copper specialists quit the country altogether. In 1972, the Kennecott Copper Corporation was able to secure a temporary seizure of Chilean copper exports then lying in West European ports.

Inside Chile, opponents of Popular Unity, especially the former ruling oligarchy, organised additional forms of economic sabotage. Thousands of head of cattle were slaughtered and smuggled over the border to Argentina. The hoarding of available goods by both well-off consumers and by shops and other enterprises reached staggering heights. An organised black market began to operate alongside the artificially induced shortages.

There were strikes in the copper mines amongst higher paid sections of production workers and administrative staffs, instigated by the opposition parties in support of extravagant claims which the economy could not easily sustain. There were strikes of lorry owner-drivers, too, whose exaggerated fears about their future because of the creation of a State-owned truck service were played upon by political forces striving to bring the government down. In a country like Chile, which relies very much on long-distance lorries to distribute goods, these strikes, with those of shop-keepers, naturally aggravated the economic crisis – and this in turn increased the political tension and polarisation. Goods started to be in short supply, although large sections of workers and peasants had begun to enjoy a higher standard of living than they had ever had under previous administrations.

One most damaging economic effect was a steep escalation in the already chronic inflation. 'Inflation was the reactionaries' main trump.'²⁹ When Popular Unity took office in October 1970 inflation was raging, having increased by 22 per cent in the first six months of the year. In the first six months of 1971 the new Government was able to bring down the

inflation rate to 11 per cent, while at the same time increasing real wages. But the US economic offensive, the credit squeeze, hoarding, the black-market, the stimulation of panic-buying by spreading rumours about the impending scarcity of particular goods, the lorry-owners' strike of October 1972 – springtime in Chile – which created difficulties for the 1973 harvest through holding up supplies of seeds and fertilisers, all contributed to creating serious shortages and escalating inflation. The second lorry-owners' strike in 1973 made matters even worse.

Speaking on 31 August, virtually on the eve of the coup, to six hundred leading voluntary worker-inspectors, whose task was to organise popular committees to combat the black market, the Minister of the Economy stated: 'Inflation has recently escalated to 114 per cent as a result of the intensification by the right wing of its campaign of speculation and black-marketeering. At the same time, the Government has its hands tied because Parliament refuses to pass the necessary legislation to deal with this.'

This latter point illustrates one of the major dilemmas facing the Government, as was pointed out earlier. Allende had become President and Popular Unity had taken office under conditions in which it did not have a majority in the country's elected bodies, the Assembly and Senate. Thus, although pledged by the nature of its programme and politically committed by its own strategy to work for the carrying through of a change to socialism by utilising the country's institutions in a constitutional fashion, backed by the mass actions of the people, the Popular Unity Government was acting in circumstances in which it did not have control of many of the key levers of the constitution. The President had wide powers accorded him under the existing constitution, but the majority in Parliament, the legislative body, was against Popular Unity. The State apparatus, both in its administrative side, as well as the armed forces, the police, and the judiciary, was largely unchanged, especially in its hierarchy. Yet to make State changes in the face of a hostile Parliament was extremely difficult.

It is well to remember these things, not only in order to understand some of the key factors which made it possible for the US and internal reaction to topple the Allende Government; but also to avoid making over-sombre and pessimistic predictions concerning the strategy of many Communist Parties in Western Europe who also envisage utilising constitutional procedures, including Parliament, in combination with popular extra-parliamentary activities, to bring about fundamental and radical changes opening the road to socialism. The difference in these

latter cases in Europe is that they are based on having a progressive majority in Parliament, and so possessing legal authority for introducing the charges envisaged in their programmes. This, in itself, would in no sense sweep aside all the massive problems that such popular governments would face, but at least would mean that they were not encumbered with the unyielding obstacle of a hostile Parliament which in Chile, at every step, blocked the efforts to cope with the crisis and carry through its programme.

Chile's runaway inflation was clearly influenced by factors other than those of 'normal' economic difficulty. It was fanned by the United States and by domestic opponents of Popular Unity for definite political purposes – namely to cause political tension in the country, and to hamper Popular Unity's efforts to win to its side sections of the middle strata – farmers, shopkeepers, truck-owners, professional people – who were affected most by the inflation, since the workers were, to a considerable extent, protected by periodic wage adjustments which made up for the increased cost of living. The real aim of the economic attack on Chile was to create political conditions for the military coup. As William Shawcross noted in the *New Statesman* (21 September 1973), the dollar squeeze (it was, of course, not this alone) achieved what ITT official William Merriam had predicted in 1971 to Peter Peterson, the architect of Nixon's Chile policy. 'It produced "economic chaos", the class polarisation and violence Allende sought to avoid, and finally convinced the armed forces to "step in and restore order".'

In the light of the facts now known, in the light of the evidence laid before the US Senate Select Committee that Nixon, Kissinger and the CIA had decided already in September 1970 to organise a coup against Allende, and that a key element in the preparations for the coup was to 'make the economy scream', the attempts made after the September 1973 coup by a number of national newspapers in Britain to put the blame on the Allende Government for its alleged 'hopeless economic mismanagement' were at best ill-informed judgments, if not downright hypocrisy.

Naturally the question arises, was there, then, no mismanagement? Did not the Allende Government contribute to its own downfall by the way it handled economic questions? There were undoubtedly economic weaknesses, some of which were in a sense inflicted on the Government by the leftist mistakes of forces outside it. There were other weaknesses which arose in part from the Government's own inability to achieve a complete unity of purpose and action behind a coherent economic strategy.

The revolutionary economic policy was opposed by opportunists clinging to the traditions of anarchism and bourgeois politics, advocating concessions to unbridled 'economism' (camouflaged, of course, by revolutionary rhetoric), neglecting efforts to boost production and labour productivity, and underestimating the importance of planning. They preached spontaneous development and voluntarism, dismissed financial problems, remained complacent in the face of runaway inflation, and held sectarian views based on narrow group interests.³⁰

Millas considers that 'tolerance towards opportunism' had serious effects on the economy, producing a situation in which consumption rose in the first year of the Popular Unity Government by 13 per cent, and imports of semi-finished and manufactured goods by 22 per cent, while the gross national production (GNP) rose by only 8.5 per cent. And this, it must be remembered, was in the first year which was, in many ways the most successful from an economic point of view. The consequences of this 'opportunism' in the economy were soon seen in a catastrophic balance of trade and in soaring inflation. The amount of money in the hands of the population trebled in the first year; in the following two years it shot up again to six times what it was at the end of 1971.

In Millas's view there were a number of additional economic factors which aggravated the economic situation. These included an excessive expansion of the State sector beyond what had been laid down in the Popular Unity programme, with many small and medium enterprises being taken over by the State, often to be run at a loss, thus hindering the Government's economic strategy. There was a tendency to embrace wage-levelling, combined with a hostility to specialists, who either quit the country or became actively hostile to the regime; either way, their capacities to assist the economy were not won.

Incorrect policies were pursued in agriculture, equal wages being introduced for all rural workers regardless of the nature and results of their work. There was insufficient help and attention given to the lands which had been taken over. Because of these and other weakness, the alliance of the peasants and industrial workers went forward falteringly.

Mistakes were made, too, as regards the involvement of factory workers in managing production.

A major shortcoming of the revolutionary leadership was its acceptance of a system of indirect worker participation in factory management under which workers elected to trade union bodies could not be represented on management bodies. This weakened the trade union movement and hampered working-class participation in the solution of problems.³¹

These errors and weaknesses have to be seen, of course, in a general framework of intense struggle and very considerable achievement, as was noted in the *El Arrayan Report*.⁵² But failure to overcome these shortcomings played their part in alienating sections of the population from Popular Unity, deepening the divisions in the country, thus contributing to the conditions which made the coup possible.

Yet the economic aggression by external and domestic reaction, assisted unwittingly by mistakes of the popular forces, was not the only form of attack. Parliament, as has been already noted, was utilised to block progressive and necessary legislation. The parliamentary majority in the hands of the Nationalists and Christian Democrats also enabled these parties to put forward unjustified parliamentary motions to secure the removal of Popular Unity Ministers, thus causing delays in government administration and compelling Allende to seek constant changes in government personnel. As can be readily understood, it was usually the most capable and devoted Ministers who were victims of this ploy.

The courts, too, were brought into play against the Allende Government. The hierarchy in the judiciary were economically, socially and politically very much on the side of the previous system, and throughout the three years of Popular Unity Government made their preference only too clear. A particularly scandalous perversion of justice was their consistent protection of right-wing terrorists.

The mass media, the press, radio and television, were mainly in the hands of those hostile to Popular Unity. Most of the press, much of it sensational and libellous in a way far worse than anything existing in Britain, was owned by big monopolies. This was true also of most radio and television stations which maintained a daily torrent of lies, distortions and rumours, all directed to spreading confusion among the people and enmity towards Popular Unity. Even when President Allende went on the air to expose downright lies against him and his Government, the majority of radio and television stations would retaliate with a fresh flood of lies, exaggerations and distortions.

A major weapon against the Government was violence and terror which, as has already been noted, was employed against Allende even before the 1970 elections. Violence continued against the Popular Unity Government throughout its three years of rule. At the end of 1971, when women from the wealthier parts of the capital, Santiago, took part in the so-called 'march of the empty pots' in protest against an alleged shortage of food, as if by pre-arrangement fascist gangs utilised the situation to

roam the streets, armed with lead pipes, clubs and chains in order to spread fear and chaos. Apart from assaulting individuals on that occasion, the gangs also attacked the offices of the Communist and Radical Parties, as well as the Ministry of Health. This was the first open attempt since the advent of the Allende Government to provoke the armed forces into restoring 'law and order', but it failed.

In 1972, taking advantage of the first lorry-owners' strike, violence and terror was used again, primarily by the openly fascist organisation, 'Fatherland and Freedom'; and as the months went by, the violence was stepped up. The situation deteriorated so much that by September Allende was warning the country of an impending threat of civil war, which was being prepared with the aid of 'advisers with a lot of international experience'. He added that 'anyone who reads the documents of the ITT will find laid out the whole plan of provocations'. On 14 September, providing more details of the plot, he referred to the fomenting of street riots, the blowing up of roads and the cutting of railway lines.

The terror activities of 1972 failed like those of 1971, but the right-wing gangs never gave up, and taking advantage of the economic difficulties of 1973, right-wing and fascist forces increased their use of violence against the Popular Unity Government. On 29 June units of the 2nd Tank Regiment in Santiago, under a Colonel Roberto Souper, attacked the Presidential Palace and tried to seize power. They were quickly crushed by the army itself under General Prats. There were some strange aspects to this attempted 'coup'. There is some basis for believing that it was not so much a direct and serious attempt to take power but rather linked to the preparations for the subsequent coup of September, and that its main purpose was in part as a dress-rehearsal, to test out the Government's defences, and in part as a deliberate provocation in order to judge better which soldiers, officers and units were likely to be loyal to the Government and which were more dependable supporters of the putschists themselves. There is evidence that on the day of the September coup a number of officers and soldiers whose loyalty to the Government had been clearly expressed on 29 June were effectively isolated and arrested by the coup organisers. The coup in the country, in fact, was prefaced by a coup in the army as we shall examine below.

Two weeks after the failed coup of 29 June, General Roberto Thieme, the secretary of the fascist 'Fatherland and Freedom' movement, made an open call for an armed offensive against the government, making clear that his supporters had been involved in the 29 June attempt. There is

evidence that the CIA was funding and in other ways backing the 'Fatherland and Freedom' movement. The *Observer* correspondent (15 July 1973) commented that 'widely published documents show connections between Patria y Libertad (Fatherland and Freedom), the leading association of industrialists, and two CIA agents, in the organisation of the recently ended El Teniente copper mine strike, which cost Chile nearly 80 million in lost foreign exchange'.

The second lorry owners' strike began in July. This time the accompanying acts of terror were even worse than previously. In a television broadcast on 14 August, which itself was cut short by the blowing up of three high tension cables by terrorists, Allende declared that the wave of terror, which was bringing the country to the verge of civil war, had already cost the country 5 dead, 31 seriously injured, 71 attempts against lorries, 37 against buses, 37 attempts on railway lines, and 110 attacks on bridges. A raid with automatic weapons was made on the home of the general secretary of the Socialist Party, and trade unionists were amongst those killed. Roberto Thieme, openly boasted: 'Our purpose is to accelerate the country's chaos and to provoke a military take-over as soon as possible.'³³

Later, after the 11 September coup, the *Economist* (15 September 1973) appeared to excuse the conspirators and blame the Popular Unity Government on the grounds that the Government had 'eroded faith in the country's democratic institutions', and led people to feel that 'Parliament had been made irrelevant', a feeling that was 'increased by violence in the streets'. Yet all the evidence shows that the Government was trying to proceed democratically, on the basis of the country's constitution, and that the violence in the streets was not that of the Government nor its supporters but was organised by the Government's opponents, especially the openly fascist bodies. 'Almost all the violence since the election of Salvador Allende has been caused by the far right' (the *Observer*, 15 July 1973). The same verdict was given by Dwight Porter in the *Financial Times*: 'The present wave of violence certainly comes from the right' (9 August 1973). In line with the scenario prepared by Nixon, Kissinger, the Committee of 40, the CIA and the Pentagon, not to mention the ITT and other multi-national firms, the violence was aimed to produce a situation of chaos and economic dislocation, and so provide the right-wing element in the armed forces with the traditional excuse of all counter-revolutionary coups, the need to 'restore law and order'.

This excuse, in fact, was made by *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* in

justification of the coup in the days immediately following it. Yet every justified step which the Popular Unity Government took, or attempted to take, to maintain order and curb the illegal violence was denounced by its opponents as a breach of the constitution and blocked in Parliament where they had a majority. When, however, the army leaders made the supreme breach in the constitution by launching an armed attack on the legal Government, killing the legally elected President, and illegally seizing power, sections of the British press argued that these draconic, illegal and unconstitutional measures were necessitated by alleged unconstitutional acts of the Allende Government.

Thus far we have examined how leading political, economic and military circles in the United States, under the combined thrust of various departments of the State and under the instructions of no less than the US President himself, joined forces with domestic reaction inside Chile to overthrow Allende's government. Further, we have considered the use these forces made of economic measures, the mass media and open violence and terror in order to create the conditions in which the fascist-minded sections of the military hierarchy would best be able to act.

But a big question still remains to be answered. Why was it that the armed forces which helped to stop the army coup of October 1969, which refused to go along with the attempted coup of October 1970, and which quickly snuffed out the 'coup' of July 1973, were nevertheless decisively on the side of coup of 11 September 1973? Clearly by 11 September 1973 changes had taken place *inside* the armed forces; and since this book is a study of the role of the military in politics it is necessary to probe into the reasons for this internal change.

This internal change was a decisive side of the equation. If, as we noted at the start of this study, political power is the ability to compel by force if necessary, then the situation inside the armed forces, one of the main instruments of force, is obviously a key question. But we have also noted earlier that whether an army acts, or the way in which it acts, including the direction in which it turns its guns, does not depend simply on the desires of military leaders, nor on those of political forces anxious to utilise the services of the military. The army is influenced by a whole complex of wider considerations - economic, social, political and ideological; and, in the last resort, it is these which explain the army's behaviour. In this connection one should not ignore the character of the Chilean armed forces:

... in this century the social composition of the [Chilean] army has changed. The armed forces are now just one more middle class institution, with the same outlook and aspirations as bank clerks, school teachers, and civil servants. If they were allowed to vote, it is likely that their votes would reflect the same divisions as exist in society as a whole.³⁴

This characterisation by Gott is perhaps too sweeping and takes too little account of the impact of the army as an institution on its members; but broadly speaking, the point about its social composition and political sympathies is correct. Yet, what conditions the outlook and behaviour of the men in uniform is not their social origin in its direct and 'pure' sense, but the reaction on them of their class and social counterparts in civilian life, the way these latter think and act, and the expectations which they place on the army.

To appreciate why the Chilean army lurched to the right in the period prior to September 1973, why it was possible for the counter-revolution to organise a 'coup within the coup', that is to seize control of the armed forces as a prelude to seizing power in the country, it is important to consider the strategy of the Communist Party of Chile and the stand taken by other political parties, both those within Popular Unity and those outside it, including the ultra-left MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) on the one hand, and the Christian Democrats on the other.

Ever since the 1930s the Communist Party of Chile had striven, in one form or another, to build a broad alliance of forces based on the working class rallying around itself other classes and social strata: peasants, professional people and technicians, small and medium farmers, traders, manufacturers – in fact, all non-monopoly sections of the population. In this way a majority of the people could be won, not necessarily for the immediate changeover to socialism, but in support of a democratic, transitional phase which would have the aim of ending the domination of Chile by foreign, and especially United States, monopolies, breaking the back of the large semi-feudal and capitalist landlord class, ending the economic grip of the major Chilean capitalist enterprises, and extending democratic liberties, especially by involving the working people in directly managing their own affairs and helping to run the economy and the State.

It was envisaged by the Communist Party that this alliance of class and social forces would have its political counterpart in the unity of left and democratic parties. This found expression in the Popular Front victory of 1938, the formation of the People's Front in 1952 which later was

enlarged into the Popular Action Front (FRAP), for which Allende was the presidential candidate in 1958 and 1964. By 1969 the coalition of democratic and left forces was able to unite and set up Popular Unity.

It was the view of the Communist Party that a government of such political and social forces would be able to embark on major social transformations. These structural changes, and the shift in the balance of class forces which they would involve, would provide the possibility of the Chilean people passing from the democratic, anti-imperialist phase of their transformation of society to the opening up of the road to socialism without a civil war. The *possibility* of such an advance, not its certainty; for the Chilean Communists, who had been compelled to spend over twenty years of their existence underground, and who remembered only too well the shooting down of miners by the military in the last years of Frei's presidency, never ruled out the danger of a military coup, nor the necessity which might arise for the people to take up arms to prevent or defeat such an attempt.³⁵

As early as December 1970, shortly after Allende's election victory, Luis Corvalan, General Secretary of the Communist Party, emphasised in an article that although the Popular Unity parties had formed a new Government and were, as he put it, consequently 'in control of the political-power mechanism', the landlords and big industrialists still held strong positions not only in the economy, but also in the legislature and judiciary, as well as in the important sphere of the mass media. Thus the question of power had not yet been resolved, and significant areas of the State, including the armed forces, were still heavily subject to the influence and control of forces inimical to Popular Unity. Explaining the necessity for the Chilean people to consolidate and enlarge the spheres of power they had won, Corvalan stressed the importance of extending this to the whole machinery of the State so that the entire political power was in the people's hands.

The outlook [he wrote] is therefore for a series of clashes between the people and their government, on the one hand, and imperialism and the oligarchy, on the other. We should not, therefore, preclude the possibility of the people having to resort to one or other form of armed struggle. To ward off any such situation the popular forces must immobilise the enemy, straitjacket him, drive him into a corner and thus spare the country the civil war the opponents of reform would so gleefully welcome.³⁶

Such warnings were constantly repeated in the next few years. At the beginning of 1971, Corvalan declared: 'The imperialists and the national

oligarchy are preparing for subversion, and if that does not work, for a *coup d'état*. Therefore, we must do everything we can to straitjacket them before they can force armed struggle upon us.' In March 1972 he stated that Chile's effort to advance towards socialism without civil war 'presupposes a class struggle and not class harmony, not amicable coexistence between the exploited and the exploiter, and not a rejection of an armed struggle if required'. As late as 8 July 1973, in a speech made at the Caupolican Theatre, Corvalán called on the people to be prepared to use all possible means to meet the growing menace of civil war, at the same time making it clear that it was not the Communists who were seeking civil war, but on the contrary were still striving 'to complete the anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchical revolution, and march forward to Socialism without civil war, although, naturally, maintaining an intense class struggle'. Reaffirming his Party's desire to save the people from the horrors of civil war – 'We have said and repeat today that we are doing, and will continue to do all that is in our power to avoid it' – Corvalán nevertheless issued this call:

... the Chilean proletariat will stand firm in their places of work and, as we have also said, if it is necessary to fight we will leave the factories and do so... We must be prepared for any circumstances, ready to fight on all grounds. If the reactionary sedition becomes greater, entering the realms of armed struggle, let nobody have any doubts that the people will promptly rise, as one man, to crush it. In such a situation, that we do not desire, that we do not seek, that we wish to avoid, but could nevertheless take place, nothing will be left, not even a stone, that we will not use as ammunition. In such an instance, the new alternative would be to defeat with the maximum speed and energy those who unleash civil war, and liquidate the event before it begins, to spare Chile the injuries and anguish of a prolonged conflict of this type.³⁷

It can of course be argued that words are all very well, even fighting words, but that when it came to the eventual showdown, neither the Communist Party, nor Popular Unity as a whole, nor the Chilean working people were able to respond in the way which Corvalán had envisaged only a few weeks before. There are a number of reasons for this, including the factors that operated inside the armed forces. Any consideration of the causes of the failure to stop the coup, let alone defeat it once it had begun, must take into account the strategy of the Communist Party, and the reactions and behaviour of the other political forces, both those inside and outside Popular Unity, apart from those on the extreme right.

The presidential election success of 1970 was regarded by the

Communist Party as a significant step, but it knew only too well what immense problems Popular Unity and the Chilean people faced in the struggle to implement the profound changes set out in the Popular Unity programme. As the Communist Party saw it, the democratic mobilisation of the people, the consolidation of the people's support, the organisation of the people, and the gradual extension of the basis of Popular Unity through the winning of further strata of the population, and the achievement of understanding and cooperation with political forces outside Popular Unity were of key importance. In brief, the aim was to bring about a decisively favourable relationship of class forces, with a heavy majority for Popular Unity and its programme, and with the right-wing and fascist forces isolated. This favourable relationship of class forces would be expressed in the electoral field.

Three key problems had to be faced. How to raise the political level of the workers and other Popular Unity supporters; how to extend the base of Popular Unity, and open up an area of understanding with other social forces and with other political tendencies; how to ensure that the democratic option remained valid and that reaction was prevented from using the State, and especially the armed forces, to block the democratic road. Solving vital economic problems was intimately connected with all these three issues, which themselves were closely intertwined. In brief, what was at stake was the defence and growth of the democratic process.

The Communist Party and Young Communist League, whose respective memberships soared from 150,000 and 50,000 in 1972 to 250,000 and 100,000 in the summer of 1973, strove to make a major contribution to solving these problems. Recognising that mass extra-Parliamentary activity, the constantly expanding democratic participation of the people in carrying forward the Popular Unity programme, was the decisive sphere through which a favourable balance of class forces could be achieved, the Communist Party, together with other parties of Popular Unity, worked to strengthen the mass organisations and to assist in establishing new bodies in which the people could display their democratic initiative in all aspects of building the new social structure.

An important role was played by the million strong trade union movement – CUT (Confederation of United Workers), which helped to plan and supervise production in both private and state enterprises (although with the weaknesses we have noted earlier), and to help defend factories from hostile attacks at times of crisis.

Equally significant were the new organisations which were created by the people in the course of their struggle, first to win the 1970 elections for Popular Unity and then to implement its programme. Nearly 15,000 Popular Unity Committees were set up for the 1970 elections; and after Allende was elected as President they were retained with the idea that they would assume new functions. In a speech to the Central Committee of the Communist Party early in 1971, Luis Corvalán said of these committees:

In all places and at all levels they must discuss with the mass organisations and with the organs of Government the concrete tasks needed if the movement's programme is to be implemented. They will therefore be the motive force behind the programme's implementation and also the means by which the people can actively cooperate in Government affairs. The committees must also increase their vigilance against the manoeuvres and machinations of the right and imperialism.

These hopes were never fully realised, partly because of differences between some of the parties in Popular Unity. Undoubtedly the failure to consolidate and strengthen these committees was a significant shortcoming of Popular Unity. Nevertheless, other grassroots bodies sprang up which enabled the people, in different spheres, to become organised, to gain experience and confidence, and to advance their political understanding. Special youth brigades were established to help construction works and factories in the urban centres, and to assist to reclaim deserts, plant trees and bushes, sink wells, and so on, in the countryside. It was these brigades which did so much during the lorry strikes to help with the distribution of vital supplies, making use of the state-owned trucks. Councils for Supplies and Prices, aimed at mobilising the working people together with small tradesmen to supervise the availability and distribution of goods, and to combat hoarding, speculation and black-marketing, were also set up. Health Committees were formed, as were Centres for Mothers, Farmers' Councils, Citizens' Committees, and so on.

The *El Arrayan Report* of March 1972, drawn up with the approval of all the Popular Unity Parties, placed great emphasis on the democratic participation of the people, making this, in fact, a major theme:

... the most pressing task for Popular Unity is the development of its organising capacity, the mobilisation of the people and their support to the Government. ... In fact, one of the major weaknesses of the policy up till now is considered to be an inadequate participation of the masses of the people in the

tasks that the Popular Unity is carrying out. ... If social change is to be carried out, a mass participation in the work required for this change is, above all, needed ... the people must take into their own hands the task of fulfilling the programme of policy. This worker participation must, however, be real and democratically governed, to reach all sectors within Popular Unity, Christian Democrats, or independents. ... All these measures for political mobilisation should mean an effort to make the presence of the workers felt throughout the whole of the present State apparatus, as a basis for the development of a truly popular power. ... Many concrete tasks will thus be handed over to the people themselves, under forms of participation that will change the character and nature of the State. ... We will, therefore, make all possible efforts to apply the methods our principles and historic experience have shown as the most suitable revolutionary weapon; the work of the masses. Consult the people and make all decisions through them. This will be our fundamental line of conduct, to be increasingly more general and strengthened ... The improvement and the functioning ability of the State and Government institutions will depend in the last instance upon the work and participation of the masses.

Clearly, therefore, the parties of Popular Unity – and that included the Communist Party – in no way conceived of the Chilean road of advance as a purely 'parliamentary road', as some of their detractors on the far left have argued. On the contrary, the whole line of march was predicated on the utmost democratic initiative and activity of the people, and their increasing participation in managing the economy and State affairs at all levels. This process was in no sense completed by the time of the coup; but three years' experience had made it possible for growing numbers of ordinary men and women, young and old, in many walks of life, to become more politically aware, to have gained experience and, in the process, become more confident both in themselves and in the capacity of working people to manage the country.

Summarising the task that faced Popular Unity in turning its electoral support into conscious, democratic activity and participation, President Allende emphasised, in a speech after the 1971 successes for Popular Unity in the municipal elections, that 'if votes are important, the task of creating a revolutionary consciousness out of every voter is much more important. ... We need to convert these 1,400,000 revolutionary consciences which understand perfectly well the significance of the struggle of the people and Chile. ... I am concerned about the consciousness, the spinal column, the granite base of workers who are not only class conscious but who possess the strength of conviction obtained through dialogue and above all in ideological discussion.³⁸ So what we have ahead of us is to make these 1,400,000 votes, which for the

defeated count as votes, into 1,400,000 granite consciences for us which will defend the present and the future of our country.'

Some commentators analysing the 1973 September coup have presented matters as if Popular Unity had wide support at the beginning, in 1970, but as a consequence of its own mistakes combined with the mounting attacks of its opponents, steadily lost popular backing and by the time of the coup, had become very much isolated. However, things were not as simple as that. Student elections in November 1970, and trade union elections in 1972, provided indications of the massive support rallying behind Popular Unity. In the student elections for the University of Chile Students' Federation (FECH), the largest student body in the country, Popular Unity pushed its vote up by 40 per cent, defeated the Christian Democrat-ultra right alliance, and re-elected a Communist as President. In the trade union elections, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party obtained 70 per cent of the total votes (33 per cent for the Communist Party and 37 per cent for the Socialist Party), with most of the remaining votes going to the Christian Democrats. Among production workers, the Communist-Socialist vote reached 90 per cent. Luis Figueroa, a Communist, was re-elected as President.

There was no doubt that the Chilean working class overwhelmingly supported Popular Unity, with a decisive section being supporters of the Communist Party. But in the post 1970 presidential election period, neither the working class itself, nor the Popular Unity parties with the support they had won hitherto, were enough to achieve the ambitious goals which the Popular Unity programme had advanced. The strategy contained in the Popular Unity programme was to strive to win over a substantial section of the middle strata in town and countryside in order to change the balance of class forces and political alignments and secure majority support in the country for carrying through the main objectives of the Popular Unity programme.

White-collar and professional workers, as well as the middle strata of small and medium farmers, shopkeepers, manufacturers, artisans and self-employed technicians and professional people (lawyers, doctors, and so forth), are a key question for the working class. If important sections of these strata are not won over to the side of progress, or at least to a position of neutrality, hesitancy, or passivity, they will become a social base for reaction which will be able to throw them against the working class.³⁹ This, as we shall see, was a key factor in the Chilean coup.

As previously noted, the 1970 presidential elections already demonstrated the scope of the problem. The Popular Unity parties

gained 36.3 per cent of the votes – that is a little over one third. To advance under such conditions and implement the programme of Popular Unity was a most complex and difficult task; a task so formidable, in fact, that some political analysts have understandably questioned whether it was correct even to have tried. Not only was there the question of the majority of votes in the country going against Popular Unity; in the two Houses of Congress, elected in earlier elections, the opposition had a built-in majority, comprising the ultra-right Nationalists and the Christian Democrats. The latter party contained substantial sections of middle class and professional people, as well as sections of large capitalists, and relied for its popular voting support on substantial numbers of peasants, small traders and even some sections of workers (over a quarter of votes in the 1972 trade union elections went to the Christian Democrats). Large numbers of women, from all classes, traditionally voted Christian Democrat.

Thus, the Christian Democrat Party, while under a leadership which became predominantly right-wing, drew its support from many classes and strata. Politically it was in no way a monolithic body, but contained elements of differentiation which could have provided the possibility of an eventual fruitful and principled dialogue, at least with significant sections of that party. Allende, with the support of the Communists, sought such a dialogue, but there were some tendencies in Popular Unity, amongst the Socialists and MAPU (apart from the clamour from the MIR from outside the ranks of Popular Unity), which were not favourable to such an approach.

From their side, the Christian Democrats were not at all enthusiastic. Only at the very end, a few weeks before the coup, at the height of the transport crisis caused by the stoppage of lorries, buses and taxis, did their leaders, after some prodding from the Archbishop of Santiago, agree to sit down and talk with President Allende. But by then it was too late. The balance of forces had tipped too far. The country was heading for a coup.

Winning a broader class alliance than that embraced initially by Popular Unity was inevitably a difficult task, but it was essential if the forces of progress were really to succeed. Writing at the end of 1972, Luis Corvalán argued:

Our basic task consists in rallying the overwhelming majority of Chileans behind the Government and its revolutionary programme. This is quite feasible because the programme of Popular Unity accords not only with the interests of the working class but also with the aspirations of the middle social strata, with

the country's supreme interests. *In other words, the matter concerns the need to isolate our main enemies, winning to our side those sections of the population that are still under their influence* [italics added]. What is needed is to do away with limitations in the pursuance of our policy in this sphere and to give a vigorous rebuff to the attacks of the 'ultra left' wing forces, which with their adventurist actions have been bringing grist to the mill of reaction.

Elections over the three years of Allende's presidency provide some indication of the shifts taking place in the balance of class forces. The nation-wide municipal elections in April 1971, after five months of Popular Unity Government, gave the Popular Unity Parties a combined 50.8 per cent of the total vote. This was a striking advance over the presidential elections of September 1970 (36.3 per cent for Allende), yet it would be incorrect to think that a 14 per cent increase in the vote in municipal elections necessarily represented a real shift of those dimensions in the political thinking and allegiance of people in general.

In four Parliamentary by-elections following the municipal elections, one was won by Popular Unity and the other three by the combined votes of the National Party and the Christian Democrats together with another opposition party, the Radical Democrats. In a later by-election in July 1972, a woman Communist, Amanda Altamirano, standing as a Popular Unity candidate, won the seat against a coalition of the opposition.⁴⁰

These results only provide a partial picture of what was happening in the country. Of more significance were the Assembly elections in March 1973, a mere six months before the coup. Despite the immense economic problems facing the country, despite the sabotage and disruption, despite the terror organised by the 'Fatherland and Freedom' gangs, Popular Unity support rose to nearly 44 per cent – over 7 per cent up on the 1970 September vote for Allende. This would seem to indicate that Popular Unity had not lost support since it took office, but in fact was gaining support. True, it was still less than a majority, but the growth represented in this 7 per cent increase must have included, apart from working people, some sections from the middle strata. It was precisely because Popular Unity, despite the grave difficulties confronting it, was still assured of popular support at the polls, that the counter-revolutionary forces became more desperate and intensified their violence in order to overthrow the Government.

But of course the balance of strength between the contending social and political forces was not to be sought only in election results. It was, as Allende had declared, a matter of Popular Unity turning votes into

hundreds of thousands of 'granite consciences'. This was vital because the opponents of Popular Unity had no intention of leaving matters to be decided only by votes. For them, too, extra-parliamentary activity was the key; despite the fact that Popular Unity had no parliamentary majority, the opposition was determined to prevent the march of Popular Unity towards such an eventual electoral victory. A key force on which Popular Unity's opponents depended for extra-parliamentary activity was the middle strata.

To win such sections for progress is never easy. It requires a combination of measures to meet their economic problems, and patient, consistent explanations and persuasion in order to overcome their real anxieties as well as their imaginary and irrational fears. Economic measures to win over these sections were introduced by the Popular Unity Government in line with its programme;⁴¹ yet, at the same time, the deliberate acts of the US State Department and US monopolies directed to 'make the economy scream', and the supporting actions of domestic reaction, producing as they did mounting inflation and shortages of many goods, constantly upset what the Allende Government was attempting. The Government introduced tax and other concessions for traders and businessmen. The Statute for Small Industries and Handicrafts met many of the long-standing aspirations of these sections. The small and medium farmers, who comprised 40 per cent of the agrarian population, were assured by the Government that their farms would not be taken over; and, in addition, they were assisted with credits and technical assistance.

Despite the Government's steps to provide the small producers, traders and farmers with a secure place in the national economy, it still proved very difficult to change the political thinking of these strata and to win them over to support the Government, or at least take a more tolerant attitude towards it. The task of overcoming the fear of change, which is almost endemic with the small-owner; his innate conservatism, his anxiety about the fate of his small property, his deep-seated reservations and often hostility towards the working class, his deep-grained anti-communism nourished by years of propaganda and distortion, and associated in his mind with everyone left of centre; all this presented a grave and complex task for the parties of Popular Unity.

In a sense, the battle for the minds and political support of the middle strata was the fulcrum around which the political struggle unfolded. Popular Unity – and this was a point which the Communist Party repeatedly emphasised – needed to win a substantial section of the small-

owners, professional people, technicians and administrative workers away from the side of the two main opposition parties, especially the Christian Democrats. Economic policy, land reform, constitutional difficulties, the armed forces, the danger of a coup, all were linked with the question of the middle strata.

On its side, the counter-revolution understood that it had to retain these sections within its political orbit in order to have an adequate social base for its attack on the Popular Unity Government. The forces of the right calculated that the way to maintain their influence was to help create economic crisis, produce a situation of tension and violence, and sow fear in the minds of the farmers and urban petty-bourgeoisie. Time was an important factor, for if they were to carry through their military coup they stood a better chance of succeeding while at least half the country still gave their voting allegiance and political support to the anti-Government parties.

In this acute situation the tactics of the ultra-left MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) objectively made the work of reaction easier, however sincere may have been the intentions of many of those participating in MIR-inspired activities. When, in opposition to Popular Unity's policy of limiting land take-overs to the large estates (and this was being implemented), some small or medium-sized farms were seized, the right-wing papers came out with banner headlines intended to stampede small and middle farmers into the arms of reaction by stirring up their fears that their own plots would be taken next. With the machinery of propaganda mainly in the hands of the Government's opponents, and bearing in mind the fears already existent in the minds of the small-owners, these infantile tactics of the MIR, apart from solving no economic problems for Popular Unity but only creating new ones, made no political sense either. Similarly with the calls for the taking over of factories not on the list of major monopolies scheduled for such action by the State; this again gave the right wing the opportunity to spread panic amongst small producers, shop-keepers and so on, and so throw them back into the lap of the anti-Government forces.

Unfortunately some sections of Popular Unity, including among the Socialist Party and MAPU, were somewhat dazzled by the 'revolutionary' slogans and proddings from the MIR, with the result that Popular Unity was hindered from giving a firm and united rebuff to the dangerous antics of the ultra-left. But winning the middle strata was vital for Popular Unity.

Describing how fascism won in Italy in the 1920s Togliatti explained

that the discontent amongst the petty-bourgeoisie becomes a real menace, becomes 'transformed' when 'a new factor intervenes; when the most reactionary forces of the bourgeoisie intervene as an organising factor'.⁴²

This is basically what happened in Chile. The electoral support for the opponents of Popular Unity was transformed into an active, extra-parliamentary support by the activities of 'the most reactionary forces of the bourgeoisie' intervening as 'an organising factor'. A significant additional role here was played by the United States. Operating through the CIA, top circles of the US monopolies and the US State also intervened 'as an organising factor'. Starting with the 'pots-and-pans' march of upper and middle class housewives, reaction steadily increased the level of its mobilisation and the violence of its attacks. Thus it utilised the private lorry owners, with devastating effect, to cause heavy losses to the national economy, to produce hardship and shortages of essential goods for the people, and to create conditions of tension and difficulty which facilitated the unleashing of violence and terror. In the same way many Chilean shop-keepers, doctors, civil servants, air pilots, higher-paid workers at some of the copper mines, were provoked into actions which, even where those participating were not always motivated by the same aims as the counter-revolution, caused economic and social dislocation. The fascist terror gangs of 'Fatherland and Freedom' were, as their leader Roberto Thieme boasted, from these same middle strata.

A costly lesson for democrats everywhere is thus provided by the Chilean experience; if the working class does not detach the middle strata from their support for the bankers, industrialists and landlords, then these latter forces will use the middle strata against the workers. In periods of relative political stability and peace, in which the middle strata are more passive and generally confine their activity to that of casting their votes in elections, the working class and its allies, even when a minority, can carry on their work under reasonably democratic conditions and even, by the mobilisation of their strength, ensure substantial economic and social advance. But in periods of sharp class confrontation the capitalist class moves to match the workers' mobilisation by the mobilisation of its own supporters, turning them from that of relatively *passive* voters into *active* opponents of the workers and other democratic forces. It was, as Togliatti noted, the ability of the Italian capitalists to 'mobilise the petty-bourgeoisie' which provided it with its fascist arm to smash the working class and democratic movement. In the dramatic days of May 1968 in France, in reply to the

actions of workers and students, the French ruling class backed up its use of the State machine with preparations for a more decisive showdown by starting to 'mobilise the petty-bourgeoisie', as seen in the formation of reactionary 'committees' all over France and in the massive march in Paris which was a menacing display of its potential.⁴³ In Portugal, in 1974-5, after the overthrow of fascism, it was the 'mobilisation of the petty-bourgeoisie' in the North which provided the first check to the advance of the democratic revolution.⁴⁴

In his analysis and reflections after the Chilean coup, Enrico Berlinguer⁴⁵ has warned against the dangers of the working class becoming isolated from its main allies and potential allies; equally he cautions against the democratic movement, even with a 51 per cent majority, trying to push forward a progressive programme in conditions that would mean a 'vertical division of the country', with all its attendant dangers of tension, conflict, violence and even possible defeat. The question is not just one of arithmetic. Major class conflicts are not solved by voting figures, even in conditions where elections may be a major form of struggle and where the revolutionary movement may regard electoral choice as a key aspect of their road to socialism. What is required for victory is a number of initiatives – electoral activity, trade union action, extra-parliamentary activity in a variety of forms, and a policy directed to winning a massive majority to the side of the revolution – *a majority which does not limit its support to casting its vote against reaction*, but which has been won, partly through the economic and social benefits it has gained from a progressive government, and partly by political persuasion and by its own involvement, to an understanding that *it must be prepared to struggle in order to defend its government and to secure its objectives*. At all costs, a revolutionary movement must strive to avoid a confrontation which produces a deep fissure right down the middle of the nation. Even with a majority of 51 per cent, the revolution must so work as to cut deep into the remaining 49 per cent with the intention of winning a substantial part of it over to its side.

Mobilisation of one's own forces, the turning of voters into active supporters and defenders, and the determined, unrelenting but flexible pursuit of allies, of an ever bigger majority in order to have the best possible conditions for success – these are two of the key lessons of the Chilean tragedy.

Drawing on Chile's experience, Enrico Berlinguer⁴⁶ describes the question of alliances as 'the decisive problem for every revolution and every revolutionary policy'. Dealing specifically with Italy, but in terms

that give his analysis a wider significance, he stresses that 'Between the proletariat and the big bourgeoisie – the two basic class antagonists in the capitalist system – a network of intermediate categories and strata has grown up in the cities and countryside', often lumped together 'under the generic term "middle class"'. In addition, 'alongside and often interwoven' with these intermediate classes and strata there are other social forces – women, youth, the forces of science, technology, culture and the arts, and so on. Where these different classes, strata and social movements stand, and 'in what direction they tend to turn and move will prove a decisive factor. It is evident, that is, that for the fate of democratic development and the advance of Socialism whether the weight of these social forces is thrown on the side of the working class or against it is decisive. . . . With this in mind we have always thought – and today the Chilean experience strengthens our convictions – that unity among the workers' parties and left-wing forces is not enough to guarantee the defence and progress of democracy in situations where this unity finds itself confronted with a bloc of parties extending from the centre to the extreme right.' In such conditions, argues Berlinguer, the central political problem is 'how to avoid the welding of a solid and organic bond between the centre and the right . . . and instead succeed in drawing the social and political forces in the centre into consistently democratic positions'. In this, of course, the unity and political and electoral strength of the working class and left-wing forces and parties are the key – but on their own, without attracting the forces of the centre, it would be illusory to think that they could guarantee the defence of such a government as the Chilean Government of Popular Unity.

In Chile, it must be borne in mind, decisive sectors of the administration and the State could in no sense be regarded as strongholds of support for Popular Unity. Their attitude to Allende's Government was inconsistent; at all times they were undoubtedly influenced by developments in civilian life, and particularly by the anxieties and reactions of those classes and strata with which they could most closely identify.

Thus, the question of the Chilean armed forces and how they would behave was directly linked to the relation of class forces in the country at large. The problem was how to create the political conditions which would make it most difficult for the oligarchy to use the armed forces against Popular Unity. This required the gathering together of the vast majority of the people in order to isolate the coup-plotters, and so

influence the army to remain constitutional. This would facilitate the introduction of democratic reforms in the army, including the removal from their positions of power and authority of those officers who, by class origin, sympathies and outlook were most closely tied to the ruling class, and more likely to support counter-revolution. The more such democratic changes took place inside the army, the more the likelihood would grow that the men in uniform could be persuaded to give loyal support to the legally elected government.

This process was bound up with the problem of winning the middle strata over to the side of Popular Unity. Apart from the overall political impact that the achievement of such a broad alliance would have had, it could have exercised a direct influence within the Chilean armed forces themselves. This possibility arose from the fact that the majority of Chilean officers, as in most Latin American armies today, came not so much from the families of the oligarchy but from the middle strata. They were linked by a thousand strings with the urban petty-bourgeois and medium capitalist families to whom they were related, and were therefore likely to be heavily influenced by the same pressures and political ideas that were moulding the thinking and behaviour of their families and friends outside the army. It was to this that Luis Corvalan was referring when, whilst warning of the dangers of a coup and the consequent need to be prepared to engage in armed struggle, he wrote in December 1970⁴⁷ of the impact which world events could have under certain circumstances on the armed forces in Third World countries:

These days no social institution is indifferent to the social storms raging all over the world, and the tragedy of the hundreds of millions of poverty-stricken people. The attitude of the armed forces of the Dominican Republic during the US invasion [1965], and the progressive nature of the military government in Peru show that a dogmatic approach to the army is no longer valid.

That there were divisions and different trends within the Chilean armed forces was clear from the start. One section, headed by General Schneider, was prepared to stand by the Constitution and refuse to allow the army to be used against the legally elected Government. Another section, funded and aided in other ways by the United States, and encouraged by domestic reaction with which it had close ties, was involved in the counter-revolutionary conspiracies. These divisions ran right through the officer corps, although many officers, probably the majority, had no firmly decided view either way but were influenced by the ebb and flow of the political struggle in the country as a whole.

Other ranks were mainly conscripts, but their loyalties were also divided. As is usually the case, they tended to follow the lead of the officers rather than take any independent position of their own; the system of hierarchy and obedience to higher command was accepted as the normal pattern.

General Schneider's assassination in 1970 demonstrated the sharpness of the divisions. He was succeeded as Commander-in-Chief by General Prats, who continued to follow 'the Schneider line'.

The problem facing Popular Unity was how to bring about progressive changes in the armed forces in a situation without a popular majority in Parliament, without an electoral majority in the country, with important sectors of the economy still in the hands of private owners hostile to the Government and its programme, with the mass media dominated by Popular Unity's enemies, and with the state apparatus still largely unchanged since the days of the rule of the oligarchy.

Some people have argued that the Allende Government should have made a swift clean-up of the armed forces right at the start, and purged all the Government's opponents and potential enemies. This apparently simple solution, however, presupposes that the right-wing officers were isolated in the armed forces and had no strong support among the civilian population. But at no time was this the actual position. Any precipitate move by the Government could have provoked a crisis in the army and opened the way to a coup even earlier and under conditions in which, because of the political balance of forces, it was likely to succeed.

The Popular Unity Government, therefore, had to proceed with a great deal of patience and skill. The special anti-riot Mobile Guard of the police force, a most unpopular unit, was disbanded. Some of the most obvious and extreme right-wing officers in the armed forces were retired - although subsequent events were to reveal how limited this mini-purge had been. The September 1973 coup exposed the fact that of the twenty-one army generals, only five or six remained loyal. The retention of the fascist junta leaders, Pinochet (army), Admiral Jose Toribio Merino (navy), General Gustavo Leigh (air force) and General Cesar Mendoza (Carabinieri Corps) in their different services prior to the coup indicates how the main plotters were able to elude the net.

The question of the armed forces, like the State as a whole, presented the Popular Unity Government with some unique problems. Zorina has pointed out that Popular Unity was presented with 'the opportunity of carrying out revolutionary transformations both "from above" and

“from below”, within the framework of the constitution and with the backing of the masses’. The fact, noted Zorina, that Popular Unity came to power by constitutional means ‘to a large extent predetermined the conditions in which the Allende Administration operates: the preservation and gradual transformation of the traditional political and judiciary structure, an opposition in Parliament, government, law courts, press, etc. . . . But the rate of these transformations depends to a great extent on this specific situation and the fact that the broadest masses are being steadily drawn into the revolutionary process. . . . The challenge faced by the left-wing forces in Chile is unprecedented in the history of the working class movement: to gain full power with the support of the masses and by legal means while running the country.’⁴⁸

This process involved a phased, gradual restructuring of all areas of the State, including the armed forces; and, owing to the circumstances in which Popular Unity had assumed government, it was being done within a constitutional framework.

‘In such a context’, noted Zorina, ‘the question of attitude towards the old state apparatus calls for a different approach than in a revolution stemming from armed uprising and civil war.’ This new context in Chile required achieving ‘a proper balance between smashing and using the old state apparatus; to crush the resistance by reactionaries in administrative bodies; to enlist the support of the medium echelon of the civil service; to have the armed forces play a more positive role in carrying out revolutionary transformations, and to ensure the broad, genuine representation of the working people’.

Analysing the situation in the Chilean armed forces and explaining the necessity for an approach that would take into account the fact that ‘the Popular Unity parties came to power not as a result of grappling with the armed forces or any part of them’, Luis Corvalan argues that ‘the military establishment, too, needs change, but that change should not be imposed on it. It must be initiated by the military and based on their awareness of its imperatives.’⁴⁹

The novelty in the situation, as expressed by Corvalan and to an extent by Zorina, lay in the conception that, arising from the social and political changes taking place in the armed forces, and under the impact of political developments in the country, further changes would occur, leading to a qualitative transformation in the armed forces – but that this process would be the result of the efforts of progressive elements in the armed forces themselves, helped, no doubt, by the Government and the

parties of Popular Unity but not imposed by the Government against the wishes of the army.

President Allende worked very energetically for this concept. Measures were taken early on in the life of his government to improve the pay and conditions of the officers and soldiers in order to avoid any grievances which could be exploited by the counter-revolution. Army pay was increased by some 40 per cent, flats were built for army personnel, the children of a number of officers were granted scholarships to university and college. Steps were taken as well to involve the army in tasks of an economic and social character so that they might better understand the purpose of the reconstruction of Chilean society which was being attempted, and thereby become more favourable to these changes and so more inclined to keep to the constitutional path.

It was not possible for the political parties to be the main instrument for directly bringing about changes in the outlook of the armed forces. Not only would this have created acute tension between officers and parties, and presented other difficult tactical questions, but the Constitution itself, to which the Popular Unity was pledged, strictly forbade it.

Thus President Allende, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, took on this responsibility. Even before his endorsement as President in October 1970, he met the commanders of all the armed services, and promised them that if he were endorsed as President by the Congress and Senate he would improve their pay and conditions, refrain from interfering with their internal affairs, would consult them on all new appointments on which they would have the final word. At their request, he promised, too, that he would not abrogate the military agreements signed with the United States. This initial meeting made a big impact on many of the officers, the majority of whom refused to be drawn into the CIA-inspired assassination plot against General Schneider. After he became President Allende continued his purposeful work with the army. Starting with a meeting of 2,000 officers and men, in April 1971, he held frequent such gatherings – fourteen in the first seven months of his administration – as well as numerous other smaller consultations.

The President also strove to strengthen the links between the army and the people by bringing the officers more into public life, including their representatives in all important major receptions, and appointing them in delegations sent abroad on important missions on which they worked together with leading civilian representatives of the Chilean

government. At various critical moments of the Popular Government's administration, they were even brought more directly into government responsibility.

It might be argued that all this was a wasted exercise. After all, despite the Chilean army's reputation for constitutionalism, its past was not quite so unblemished, although for forty years it had staged no coup, a rather unique attainment in Latin America. The absence of military coups in Chile's history since the thirties, however, was due to the political situation in Chile, rather than to some peculiar characteristics of the armed forces themselves. For over forty years the ruling oligarchy had been able to contain the opposition within the framework of the existing system, and so the army had not found it necessary to organise an anti-government coup. But this did not prevent the army being involved in politics on the side of reaction, and in a most brutal manner on a number of occasions, including the mass repression under President Gonzalez Videla in 1947 and the army's ruthless suppression of the miners' strike during the period of the Frei administration prior to Popular Unity's 1970 electoral success.

This brutality was in keeping with its earlier practice: 30 killed during the dock strike in Valparaiso in 1903, 200 killed in a strike in Santiago in 1905, over 2,000 machined-gunned in the central square of Iquique in 1907, and 3,000 shot in La Corunna in 1925. It is as well to bear these experiences in mind, since some commentators have tended to present the Chilean army prior to the September 1973 coup as a rather liberal-minded institution which broke violently out of tradition and acted completely out of character when it brutally overthrew the Allende Government.

Nor should one ignore the US connection. Links between the Chilean armed forces and the United States were particularly close. It has been estimated by Professor Roy Allen Hansen of the University of California that as many as 68 per cent of the high-ranking Chilean officers on active service received training in US military colleges or at the special counter-insurgency college in the Panama Canal Zone. The Chilean armed forces were dependent on the US for military equipment, and this continued to arrive even after the US had suspended its economic contacts with Chile, following Allende's election.⁵⁰

Yet, there were divisions in the armed forces, many of the officers being sympathetic to progressive changes. A poll conducted in 1969 among 200 officers, including 38 generals, showed that 83 per cent were in favour of social and economic reforms, 14 per cent were clearly

reactionary in viewpoint, and only 3 per cent openly supported the idea of a military coup.⁵¹ Even among those favouring reforms,⁵² however, there were undoubtedly many who held anti-communist views which they shared with middle class people in civilian life who were apprehensive that radical changes in society would affect their status and their economic and social privileges.

The fact that there were two tendencies in the Chilean armed forces provided Allende and Popular Unity with both the hope and the possibility that they could prevent the counter-revolution turning the army against the Government and the people. It was in no sense an illusion to think along these lines. The attempt had to be made because, in cold political terms, there was no real alternative. For Popular Unity, in the three years of its administration, to have initiated its own confrontation with the armed forces in the midst of its difficult conflict with the substantial, organised and US aided domestic civilian opposition, would have been a certain road to early disaster. By its tactics Popular Unity was able to keep the army to the constitutional path for three years; and the hope and intention was that, by persuading the armed forces to adhere to this path, sufficient time would be gained to secure a more favourable balance of political forces in the country, and that this, in its turn, would assist further progressive changes within the armed forces themselves. The aim was that, stage by stage, the armed forces would be increasingly democratised and transformed into an institution that would support the new social structure being elaborated. Decisive for such a development, of course, was the continued shift in the balance of class forces in favour of Popular Unity in the population as a whole.

But the counter-revolution threw all its energies into the struggle precisely to prevent Popular Unity winning a more favourable balance of political forces to its side; and at the same time, and in parallel with its actions to 'destabilise' the economy and the Government, the counter-revolution proceeded in what was for it an increasingly favourable situation to bring about a decisive change inside the armed forces as a prelude to the overthrow of Allende's government. The coup of 11 September 1973 was preceded by a coup within the armed forces.

Throughout June, July and August 1973 steps were put in hand to place the control of the armed forces firmly in the hands of the ultra-right officers. A particular target was General Carlos Prats,⁵³ Commander of the Chilean Land Forces. On 29 June, Colonel Roberto Souper's abortive coup attempt took place. Though the coup was

immediately put down, assassination plots went ahead, and on 27 July Captain Arturo Araya, the President's naval aide, was shot dead in his flat. There also seems to have been an attempt to set General Prats up for assassination while he was driving his car to the Moneda Palace. A short time later, on 23 August, following a hostile demonstration of officers' wives outside his flat, General Prats resigned from his position of Commander of the Land Forces and as Minister of Defence, a post to which he had recently been promoted. A number of other army generals who, while not necessarily agreeing with Popular Unity, favoured the army remaining faithful to the Constitution, also resigned. General Prats' replacement was none other than General Pinochet. Other putschist officers took over control of the Navy, the Carabinieri Corps and the Air Force and a purge of progressive officers began even prior to the 11 September coup. When the coup itself took place a number of officers and soldiers refused to join it. Many were arrested and killed – soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers – according to what a junta spokesman is reported to have told a *New York Times* correspondent on 28 September. This happened, for example, with the Buin Regiment, and with the NCO school, where opposition to the coup met with ruthless suppression.

The existence of conflicting trends within the armed forces shows that it was correct for Popular Unity not to treat the armed forces as a single, homogeneous, reactionary institution, but to encourage the more progressive personnel at all levels and strive to keep the balance in the armed forces against counter-revolution. This, as we have argued, could not be achieved solely in army terms. For this tactic to succeed it was necessary that there should have been an increasingly favourable balance in the country as a whole, and a condition of economic and political stability.

Popular Unity strove to achieve these conditions, but a combination of sustained external pressure and internal violence and sabotage prevented it from rallying the balance of political forces sufficiently behind it, especially those associated with the political centre and expressed in great part in the Christian Democrat Party. The refusal of the Christian Democrats in 1969 and 1970 to back a military coup then was decisive in influencing the majority of officers, and so the road was blocked at that time to the putschists. By September 1973, with the right-wing in the ascendant inside the Christian Democrat Party, neutrality on their part, let alone cooperation with Popular Unity, was ruled out, and last minute agreement to meet and talk produced nothing. The Christian

Democrats' assent to the coup was the last, fatal blow. Popular Unity had failed to widen its system of alliances. The counter-revolution, on the other hand, had extended its base,⁵⁴ and the way was at last open for the coup to succeed. It was this which was the basic characteristic of the situation.

An analysis by the Chilean Communist Party emphatically makes the same point, explaining:

There cannot be a favourable balance of forces at the military level, which can guarantee the success of the revolutionary process, if a favourable balance of political forces is not formed [i.e. in the country as a whole – J.W.], that is, if the revolutionary forces do not manage to unite around them greater social forces than those that the enemies of the people can group. And it was the consolidation of this prior, necessary condition that was not achieved in the period of the Popular Government – and that determined, basically, our defeat⁵⁵ (italics added).

An Italian Communist leader, dealing with the role of the middle strata and the policy of alliances, has written:

For all its distinctive character, the experience of Chile, too, confirms the importance and necessity of a correct, non-sectarian and non-extremist policy towards the middle strata. We consider that the Chilean army played the part of an executor, of the last actor in a scene already staged in terms of social class alliances.⁵⁶

In other words, the counter-revolutionary action of the army became possible owing to the failure of Popular Unity to unite a majority of people in support of its aims.

There are those who present the argument as if the success of the coup was mainly due to the mistakes of Popular Unity and especially of the Chilean Communist Party. Mistakes were undoubtedly made, and the Communist Party, as well as other political parties of Popular Unity, has analysed a number of these. But a tendency to ascribe all setbacks of revolutionary movements to the *mistakes* made by the participants is a most unscientific way of analysing historical processes. Examination of objective circumstances as well as of subjective factors must be made. Those who took part in the Paris Commune made a number of mistakes, and Marx and Engels have analysed them at considerable length; but anyone who thinks that the Paris working people, by avoiding those mistakes, could have established a permanent island of socialism in the middle of nineteenth century Europe, does not really understand historic processes. The Bolsheviks made a number of mistakes in the 1905

revolution, and these have been analysed by Lenin; but if anyone thinks that a mere correction of the subjective errors in 1905 could have overcome the objective obstacles at that time, including the fact that the mass of the peasantry, as much as they hated the landlords, still believed in the Tsar and therefore did not understand the need to overthrow his tyrannical regime which was the mainstay of the feudal land system – then he or she does not really understand historic processes.

The basic problem in Chile was to extend the democratic alliance so as to embrace the overwhelming majority of the population. This was clearly understood by the Communist Party, but not so fully accepted by other Popular Unity parties.

In a very penetrating and thought-provoking study of the Chilean coup, Professor Sobelev⁵⁷ draws some very pertinent conclusions, some of which understandably have a significance beyond Chile itself, especially for a number of capitalist countries in which the relevant Communist Parties have worked out a strategy for a democratic change to socialism without civil war. There are aspects to his analysis, however, that are open to debate – and to be fair to Professor Sobelev, he makes it clear that the lessons which he draws from the coup are, to a considerable extent, tentative and that in his view further discussion is certainly needed. Yet it seems to me that his analysis tends to ignore the real relationship of class forces that existed in Chile. Further, a number of the measures which he believes could have made it possible to defeat the putschists are drawn to a large degree from the different experience of October 1917. Starting from the dubious premiss that Popular Unity had political power, backed by 'a relative majority'⁵⁸ – a concept the meaning of which is unclear – Professor Sobelev indirectly or directly criticises Popular Unity for not being able to hold on to its power. He is not consistent when dealing with the question of power. In one place he refers to there having been 'two centres of power in the country: the popular one that concentrated in its hands mostly the executive power in the person of President Allende and his government, and a reactionary centre that held in its hands legislative power, the judiciary, most of the state apparatus and the mass media'. In another place, drawing general conclusions, he writes that 'it seems that it is easier to take over power than to hold it', apparently ignoring his alternative assessment that political power in Chile was shared between 'two centres'.

Having, however, embraced this idea of 'dual power', Professor Sobelev tends to present matters in terms of October 1917, despite his repeated references to the 'new' experiences and lessons to be learnt from

Chile. Thus he argues that what was missing in Chile were 'all-embracing mass organisations', and here he cites the example of the Soviets in Russia. Certainly it was necessary for Popular Unity to back up its governmental and State activities with various forms of popular action, by political parties, by trade unions, by various forms of people's committees – and this was being attempted, even if inadequately – but the relevance of Soviets, which after all would only have had meaning if they had been armed, as they had been in Russia in 1917, is very doubtful. The Soviets in Russia in 1917 were armed because they arose in the midst of the First World War; and the 'national committees in European countries', also cited by Professor Sobelev, arose in the midst of the Second World War. In both instances the working people had certain practical possibilities, because of war conditions, to acquire arms. Chile in the period 1970 to 1973 was in a totally different situation.

This was a real dilemma for Popular Unity, arising not only from the fact that it did not enjoy majority support but also due to its whole strategy of seeking to influence the armed forces away from the manoeuvres of the counter-revolution. It was very different from the situation in Russia in October 1917 when it was a question of the armed Soviets *overthrowing* the bourgeois government of Kerensky. In Chile Popular Unity was *upholding* its own government. To have tried, in these circumstances, to establish armed mass organisations alongside the effort to produce changes within the armed forces could have hindered the latter task and, more dangerously, provoked army action much earlier, certainly before effective armed mass organisations could have been really established. Should Popular Unity have attempted a secret arming of the working people? To have done this on any worthwhile scale could hardly have been kept secret. The few arms that some workers had clearly been able to acquire, and which were used in an heroic but vain attempt to resist the tanks and planes of Pinochet's forces, only revealed the tragic inadequacies of the people's military preparations that were made under such conditions.

Professor Sobelev really fails to grapple with the question of the need for Popular Unity to win a majority to its side. Having called its initial 36.32 per cent a 'relative majority' (even its 44 per cent won in the 1973 elections was still a *minority*), he subsequently argues that 'an ill-organised majority' is a 'passive majority', and that what was required to break reaction's resistance was 'not simply a majority but a vigorously acting and firmly organised majority'. It is, of course, true, as we have pointed out earlier, that in assessing the relationship of forces mere

numbers is not the whole story, and that the degree of organisation and mobilisation of one's forces is vital, but in the conditions of Chile the winning of a majority was essential. Yet Professor Sobelev appears to argue as if Popular Unity already had that majority, and as if the problem was that of organising this majority. His view on the question of a majority brings us back again to the idea of Soviet-type 'mass, all-embracing organisations', which would unite 'the majority of working people'. He even argues that the Popular Unity committees could themselves have been transformed into such bodies, and so become 'an embryo of power'.

Despite the criticisms that may be made of Professor Sobelev's analysis, he has nevertheless made a valuable contribution to the international revolutionary movement and its discussions on Chile by posing two vital questions. First, how is it possible within a strategy based on a constitutional, non-insurrectionary road, to bring about changes in the State, including above all in the armed forces and the police, changes not merely of a partial, transient character, but of a more permanent kind which will provide the possibility for the progressive forces to change society without counter-revolution being able to use these State institutions to block the people's path? Second, how to cope with the real danger point, the point of transition, when full power is not yet in the hands of the people but when they have formed a government and have begun the process of change? What must be done to enable the transition to continue? How can the resistance of the class enemy be prevented, or crushed? How can reaction's turn to illegality and violence be dealt with?

These tasks were not solved in Chile; and given the fact that Popular Unity never enjoyed majority support, their difficulties were of a specific kind. Could the coup, then, have been avoided? Yes, if a majority had been won, if the middle strata or substantial sections of it, had been won, if the Christian Democrats or a majority of them had been won, if not to wholehearted support for Popular Unity, at least to uphold democracy and not back the counter-revolution. But this also required that the support of the working class and other popular forces needed to be mobilised for activity to counter the extra-parliamentary support of reaction. The two tasks were closely linked. If Popular Unity widened its base, but still failed to mobilise its forces for action, it could still have been toppled by a coup. If Popular Unity mobilised its support, but failed to extend its base, it would still have run the risk of being defeated by a coup. The question of the role of the armed forces is

directly connected with these problems. By extending its base through winning decisive sections of the middle strata, and by mobilising its forces for activity, Popular Unity would have had the best chance to influence the army not to act; and if, despite Popular Unity's wider support and effective organising of the people, the army had struck, the strength of the divisions that would have then been expressed within it, combined with the majority support that Popular Unity would have won, would have provided the best opportunities for the coup to have been effectively resisted and overcome.⁵⁹

Understandably, and despite his very relevant examination of the various economic and political steps which he considers Popular Unity could have taken to widen its social base, organise its own forces, and bring about democratic changes in the state, including in the armed forces, Professor Sobelev has to admit: 'It is very difficult, if not impossible altogether, for us to give a sufficiently substantial answer to the question of what specific measures could have been taken to prevent the reaction's armed action.' He even goes so far as to say that it is quite possible, given the weaknesses and mistakes of Popular Unity, with the working class unprepared to defend the revolution and the army in a strong position, that an armed clash would 'have resulted in an inevitable defeat'.

Professor Sobelev nevertheless draws the conclusion that 'not only the alignment of forces in favour of democracy in conditions of which reaction will not dare risk a civil war, constitutes an imperative condition of the peaceful development of the revolution, but also the permanent and real preparedness of the revolutionary vanguard and the masses to suppress by means of force the armed resistance of the bourgeoisie'. This brings us back once more to the real relationship of forces that was present in Chile. Popular Unity never enjoyed an alignment in its favour, and this itself was a major barrier to being able to deter or, if necessary, forcibly prevent reaction's armed suppression of the revolution.

In this connection it is interesting to note how Volodya Teitelboim, a leading member of the Chilean Communist Party, has outlined the relationship between the necessary force to stop the enemy and the winning of a majority of the people.

The people of Chile . . . did not have sufficient material strength to neutralise the forces of their armed enemies and make them respect their - the people's moral - strength. . . . The important thing in a situation such as Chile's is that the people must be stronger than their enemy. Only then can democracy and

freedom triumph. The people's strength is the best constitutional guarantee of the existence of a legally-constituted state.⁶⁰

But he then goes on to point out that to achieve such strength 'the greatest possible unity of all forces is a vital necessity', a unity of the proletariat, the peasants, and 'broad sections of the middle classes', a unity which embraces 'the greater part of the nation, including the democratic elements in the armed forces'.

In a later analysis⁶¹ Teitelboim makes a sharper criticism of the weaknesses of Popular Unity and of the Communist Party, in particular its tendency, as he sees it, to become too wedded to a single scenario for revolutionary change, namely a path without civil war and through the utilisation of the constitution and the existing institutions. Stressing the need to turn an electoral majority into a political majority, an active majority ready to uphold 'by every possible means' the gains made, he criticises the fact that 'during the revolutionary process in Chile, the forms of struggle were considered as important as its goals. Form was exalted to the rank of substance, as it were, and an absolute was made of one path. This was undoubtedly a mistake, for when the concrete situation changed, the masses found their hands tied.'

Yet, how could the change in the form of struggle be effected? 'Adequate military support' and the backing of 'the section of the army loyal to the revolution' was essential. But, as Teitelboim points out, the 'political factor certainly played the main role in the interconnection of the political and the military factor'.

It was, he said, necessary to be prepared to 'change horses' and adopt different forms of struggle when the situation changed. But, 'this is not a matter that can be settled at the moment of change; it requires advance preparations, which may even take years, and this is what Chile's popular movement failed to do'. Instead, in his view, the movement stuck mistakenly to legality and looked upon preparations for other forms of struggle as unacceptable.

It is not always clear from Teitelboim's argument whether he means that irrespective as to whether it had built up a popular majority or not, the Party and the movement should have prepared for armed struggle. He constantly returns to the vital need to have created an active majority on the side of Popular Unity, a majority ready to adopt 'effective defence measures'. At the same time, he points out that 'the peaceful path' would have been possible 'if the idea of the revolution' had won 'the minds of the majority of the people' and prompted it 'to act'.

All this really begs the question. The argument seems to run as

follows: an active majority, ready to act, would have made a 'peaceful path' possible; our weakness was that we had not prepared for alternative forms of struggle, for a 'non-peaceful path'. This is true, up to a point; but it only brings us back again to the problem of the alignment of forces, and, in particular, the winning of a majority. Popular Unity, as Teitelboim has pointed out himself on many occasions, had not won the majority. In these conditions, surely to have embarked on alternative forms of struggle, could have proved to be a dangerous adventure?

The winning of the middle strata to the side of the working class and Popular Unity, the winning of a majority of the people, and the turning of that majority into a politically aware, organised, active majority, ready to defend its gains, would have had a decisive effect on the armed forces. It was this political task that was not achieved; and any presentation that seems to play down this question by the way it emphasises forms of struggle as if one can divorce them from the problem of winning the majority, prevents one learning fully the vital lessons from Chile's tragedy.

Thus we are driven back to the two key elements in the Chilean tragedy; the necessity for the revolutionary movement to enjoy the support of the majority, not only of the working class, but of the nation as a whole, and the necessity for the revolution to organise for active struggle the strongest forces so that it can bring to bear the maximum pressure against the enemy. Weaknesses of the revolution in Chile arising out of the objective conditions, combined with errors committed by Popular Unity, including the Communist Party, hindered the winning of a powerful majority (and to achieve that, winning the middle strata was vital); and this fact, together with other objective difficulties and subjective mistakes, made it impossible to mobilise and organise the necessary strength to stop the coup.

Defeating the coup once it had begun was never a serious possibility in those circumstances. Not only is it always difficult to fight from such a defensive position, with the enemy having the initiative. The point was that the battle had to be won *before* the coup had commenced. Having lost the struggle to secure the most favourable alignment of political forces prior to 11 September 1973, Popular Unity was in no position to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat on 11 September itself nor in the ensuing days and weeks. Resistance there was, and many lost their lives in that heroic attempt to thwart the enemy. But within a few days it was evident that the revolution had been struck a deadly blow, against the consequences of which, the Chilean people are now struggling to repair

their forces sufficiently to take the initiative again, remove the junta from power and resume their march towards socialism.

NOTES

- 1 Since driven underground by Bordaberry's repressive dictatorship.
- 2 In 1971 the Social Democrat Party merged with the Radical Party.
- 3 In 1973, after the March Congressional elections, MAPU itself suffered a split, a new organisation being set up called MAPU (Workers and Peasants), which also adhered to the Popular Unity coalition.
- 4 The two are obviously not always identical. There can be a civil war without a coup, leading to a victory for the revolutionary forces; and there can be a coup without a civil war, with a sudden, powerful military blow temporarily crushing all organised resistance.
- 5 Allende obtained only 39,000 votes more than the Nationalist candidate in a total vote of some three million.
- 6 The *El Arrayan Report*.
- 7 These figures are taken from the *El Arrayan Report*. Different figures are provided by a leading Chilean Communist, Orlando Millas, who writes that production in the large mines rose from 540,000 to 571,000 (in 1971), but that output in the medium and small mines fell from 151,000 to 127,000 (1971). This gives a combined figure for 1971 of 698,000, compared with 691,000 in 1970. (See *World Marxist Review*, November, 1975, p. 33.) The more restrained estimate given by Orlando Millas is generally regarded as more accurate.
- 8 'Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders'; 'An Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities': United States Senate, Washington, 20 November 1975 (Report No. 94-465) (hereafter referred to as 'Select Committee Report').
- 9 Financial support for Frei's 1964 campaign came also from West Germany.
- 10 Select Committee Report, op. cit., p. 229.
- 11 A special US State security committee then headed by the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger.
- 12 Select Committee Report, op. cit., p. 229.
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 Later exposed in the Watergate scandal.
- 15 Select Committee Report; op. cit., p. 227.
- 16 *ibid.*, p. 228.
- 17 *ibid.*
- 18 *ibid.*, p. 225.
- 19 i.e. prior to Allende's parliamentary endorsement as President on 24 October.
- 20 Select Committee Report, op. cit., p. 230.
- 21 Under the Constitution of Chile a President cannot run for two successive terms of office.
- 22 Select Committee Report; op. cit., p. 231.
- 23 *ibid.*, p. 231.
- 24 *ibid.*
- 25 *ibid.*, p. 233.

- 26 *ibid.*, p. 254.
- 27 *Inside the Company*, op. cit.
- 28 William Shawcross, *New Statesman*, 21 September 1973.
- 29 Orlando Millas, 'From Economic Subversion to Fascist Putsch', *World Marxist Review*, November 1975, p. 33.
- 30 Orlando Millas, op. cit. See also Hugo Fazio, 'Analysing Lessons of the Past in the Interests of the Future', *World Marxist Review*, April 1976.
- 31 Millas, op. cit.
- 32 See above, pp. 160-63.
- 33 *Guardian*, 28 August 1973.
- 34 Richard Gott, *Guardian*, 9 November 1972.
- 35 This was understood in international Communist circles, despite the attempts of some commentators to claim that Communists had illusions about the 'peaceful' possibilities of advance in Chile. The present author, for example, envisaged over a year before it happened the possibility of Chilean Popular Unity being defeated by a violent coup (see *New Theories of Revolution*, London, 1972, p. 252).
- 36 Corvalan, 'Chile: The People Take Over', *World Marxist Review*, December 1970.
- 37 See English translation in *Marxism Today*, September 1973.
- 38 The transformation of voters into conscious and active defenders of the Popular Unity Government could not be achieved only by 'dialogue' and 'ideological discussion', nor was the political conviction, which Allende rightly noted existed among the core of the working class, obtained in that way. It needed, in addition to ideological work, experience of political activity and struggle, experience derived from democratic participation in building the new society for which the supporters of Popular Unity were striving. This is why the *El Arrayan Report*, with the full support of the Communist Party, placed so much stress on the need to involve the people in all aspects of implementing the Popular Unity programme.
- 39 In one of his lectures on fascism Palmiro Togliatti pointed out that the 'mobilisation of the petty bourgeoisie' was a vital element in the installation of the fascist regime in Italy (*Lectures on Fascism*, London, 1976, pp. 7-8).
- 40 She obtained 53.6 per cent of the vote; the combined opposition vote of 44.9 per cent was 8,000 votes less than the joint votes of the two reactionary parties when they stood separately in 1970. Of special significance, there was a big increase in the Popular Unity vote amongst women, traditional supporters of the two big opposition parties; in seven out of the fifteen communes in the constituency there was actually a majority of women voting for the Popular Unity candidate.
- 41 Figures provided by Ralph Miliband ('The Coup in Chile', *Socialist Register* 1973, p. 458, London, 1974), compiled from 'United Nations sources' show that while the share of the national income of the poorest 50 per cent of the population increased from 16.1 per cent to 17.6 per cent, and that of the richest 5 per cent dropped from 30 per cent to 24.7 per cent, that of the 45 per cent making up the middle strata went up from 53.9 per cent to 57.7 per cent. In other words, the latter actually came off best under the Popular Unity government. Yet these economic benefits were not sufficient to win them for radical change.
- 42 Togliatti, op. cit., p. 11.
- 43 It is true that, to mount this procession of some 400,000, it was necessary to bring forces from outside Paris; but this does not invalidate the argument above.
- 44 See below for an examination of events in Portugal.

- 45 Enrico Berlinguer, 'Reflections After the Events in Chile', *Rinascita*, 28 September–12 October 1973 (English version in *Marxism Today*, February 1974).
- 46 *op. cit.*
- 47 Corvalan, 'Chile: The People Take Over', *World Marxist Review*, December 1970.
- 48 I. Zorina, 'People's Unity and Bourgeois Democracy', *Unity*, No. 8, 1972 (Moscow).
- 49 Corvalan, *op. cit.*
- 50 Similar to the tactics used in Indonesia (see above, pp. 148–9).
- 51 Obviously, many of those who were coup-minded preferred not to admit it; the percentage must have been much higher than 3.
- 52 Just as the Chilean army had a reactionary past (noted above), so it has, too, some progressive traditions, especially in the 1930s, arising out of the economic crisis, and to be explained, in part, by the changing social composition of the officer corps. In 1931, young naval officers backed strikers in Valparaiso, some even raising the red flag on their warships. In 1932, General Marmaduke Grove, Commander of the Air Force, seized power and proclaimed Chile a 'socialist republic'. It fell after twelve days, but not before it had enacted a number of progressive decrees, some of which were later to be used by the Popular Unity Government. In 1933, General Grove and Salvador Allende helped found the Socialist Party.
- 53 As has been mentioned, even after the coup, when General Prats went into exile in Argentina, his enemies pursued him and eventually assassinated him, just as they had killed his predecessor, General Schneider.
- 54 It is an irony of the situation, expressive of the fascist character of the Pinochet regime, that although Pinochet relied on the Nationalist and Christian Democrat Parties to provide him with a substantial base for proceeding with his coup, once the Allende Government had been overthrown Pinochet made it clear that there would be no role for either Party. Some leading personnel of the Nationalists were found posts in the new regime, and offers were made to – and refused by – Frei, the Christian Democrat leader. But neither of these two parties, notwithstanding their support for the coup, are allowed to carry on political activity, and no political party system exists.
- 55 'The Trojan Horse', statement of the central committee of the Chilean Communist Party, September 1973.
- 56 Rodolfo Mechini, 'The Middle Strata and the Policy of Alliances', *World Marxist Review*, No. 10, 1976.
- 57 Professor Alexander Sobolev, 'Revolution and Counter-revolution: Chile's Experience and Problems of Class Struggle', *Rabochy Klass i Sovremennyy Mir*, No. 2, Moscow, 1974.
- 58 Actually 36.32 per cent of the votes at the 1970 elections.
- 59 Santiago Carrillo (*Dialogue on Spain*, London, 1976) draws the following three interesting lessons from the experience of Chile: '1. It is essential for the proletariat to remain allied with the middle strata and not to become isolated. 2. If you try to carry out a socialist experiment along the democratic road and if you don't have the support of the majority of the people, you must be able to resign in good time from government, so that tension does not degenerate into civil war, and must submit the question to universal suffrage. And you must retire if necessary, so that you can try to return later, when you are stronger. 3. When you propose to remain in power, you should take all the necessary measures to fight at the right time, if the enemy abandons legality and resorts to force' (p. 187).

- 60 V. Teitelboim, 'Reflections on the Chilean Developments', *New Times*, No. 42, October 1973.
- 61 V. Teitelboim, 'Reflections on the 1,000 Days of Popular Unity's Rule', *World Marxist Review*, No. 1, January 1977.