

RCP Chile Urges Active Boycott

Chilean Generals Hold Gunpoint Referendum

September 11 marks a sad anniversary for the people of Chile and an infamous date in the history of U.S. imperialism. On Sept. 11, 1973, as a three-year campaign planned in the White House and orchestrated by the CIA came to a climax, as U.S. warships maneuvered off Chile's coastline, the hand of American imperialism unleashed Chile's armed forces. The Presidential Palace in Santiago was surrounded by tanks, President Allende murdered, and a ferocious military repression launched against Chile's workers,

peasants and other forces whose struggle threatened U.S. interests.

It was on this anniversary, Sept. 11, 1980, that the fascist military junta which came to power through that coup seven years ago shamelessly held a phony national "plebescite" to obtain the stamp of popular approval on the military regime's proposed constitution, which would allow junta head Gen. Augusto Pinochet to remain in office until 1989, or 1997 if the regime deems it desirable. The military regime had announced

that anyone not voting would be jailed and strict watch would be kept to enforce this edict. To deal with the fact that the junta itself had destroyed the voter registration lists, it was announced that voters' hands would be marked with indelible ink—supposedly to prevent people from voting twice, but obviously meant in this case to allow the police to check up on who didn't vote at all.

In the face of this situation in which whether people

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voted yes or no was irrelevant and the only question was whether the government would emerge strengthened or weakened by its success or lack of it in carrying off this farce, the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile called for the formation of thousands of Abstention Struggle Committees and an Abstention Struggle Front to carry out agitation and propaganda and enable the people to find the ways to boycott this election. Although the U.S. TV news reports from Chile Sept. 11 slyly indicated that there was no point in staying up late for the junta's announcement of the results, the political results of this day will be known only through much slower arriving reports from Chilean revolutionaries.

The outcry against the coup which arose from every corner of the world forced the U.S. government to put a certain distance between itself and its bastard fascist offspring in power in Chile. But in fact U.S. support for the Pinochet regime has never ceased for an instant. This was underlined by a recent U.S. government decision to halt legal and diplomatic proceedings against the head of the Chilean secret police for the murder of Chilean exile Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffit in Washington, D.C. in 1976—a murder led by an American who conveniently confessed to being a Chilean agent in return for the promise of an early release from prison. Now the British government has announced it will resume open arms shipments to the Chilean junta. Clearly there are hopes that a "good show" in Chile Sept. 11 will allow far more open support for the regime, including from the U.S.

American business publications count Chile as among the best places for what is politely called investment—that is, robbery and pillage. But there's a persistent "image problem" which plagues the Pinochet regime (and the U.S.). In order to deal with this, they made repeated efforts to wipe the blood off. Most notorious was a phony referendum conducted in January 1978 which gave "public approval" to the government's condemnation of a UN exposé of mass murder and torture in Chile. But in fact that 1978 plebiscite marked the beginning of a new wave of struggle that has grown in strength, organization and combativeness ever since.

This week's plebiscite, with its so-called opportunity to vote "no" to fascism, represented yet another such political maneuver by the junta and its backers. What prevents these efforts from being nothing but a sick joke is the role of the Christian Democrat semi-legal and pro-U.S. opposition and the pro-Soviet revisionists, who have in common the denial that what Chile's people need is revolution and common efforts to derail its development. Eduardo Frei's Christian Democrats have lent to the junta's game completely, carrying out a public campaign in favor of voting "no" in the election, while the revisionist Communist Party of Chile prattles about "spaces of legality" permitted by the dictatorship which supposedly can be expanded piece by piece until fascism disappears.

The U.S. bourgeoisie itself has played two cards; on the one hand discretely supporting the military junta, and on the other, offering a hand to the Christian Democratic opposition (such as with Kennedy's pro-Frei floor show in the Senate Sept. 11), in this way promoting the hope of a peaceful evolution of the Chilean regime and assuring continued U.S. domination.

The military junta has given ample proof that its main plan to deal with its isolation and the people's hatred is terror, torture and mass murder. The July 15 killing of Lieut.-Col. René Vergara Campos, the director of the military intelligence school, has been used as a pretext for mass arrests amounting to thousands of people, with soldiers and tanks conducting dragnets in the streets and a new round of "disappearances" among suspected revolutionaries. On Aug. 27, a government authorized rally in a stadium conducted by Frei turned into a riot as tens of thousands who had not attended the meeting clashed with police outside in the most spectacular street fighting in recent years. Since then the repression against revolutionaries has mounted steadily as it became increasingly clear that the junta considered this essential for its plebiscite's success. For Pinochet and his backers, the tolerated (and tolerant) opposition of Frei is a necessity, while the revolutionary opposition must be gotten rid of to ensure that the government not only wins the election, but the whole game. Through all this the question of pinning all hopes on a peaceful "evolution" that would somehow bring about a government in the interests of the masses, or instead, preparing conditions for the armed overthrow of the Pinochet regime, has posed itself more sharply than ever.

The following is a declaration by the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile, published Aug. 21 in a special bulletin to its newspaper *El Pueblo* in Chile, which analyzes this situation and contains the PCRCh's call for a political counterattack to the plebiscite. The translation is ours.

After seven years of massacres, abuses and the super exploitation of our people to serve the interests of U.S. imperialism, the monopoly capitalists and landowners, Pinochet and his gang have approved *their* Political Constitution. Now they are trying to legitimize it. Toward this end, with great fanfare they have called a

mockery of a plebiscite whose character is "consultative," since everything is already decided beforehand and there's nothing more to decide.

In the face of this new maneuver by Chilean fascism to maintain, consolidate and prolong its power and the present state of affairs by a combination of arms and demagogy, it is necessary to put forward an alternative of struggle to wreck their plan and advance the Chilean proletariat and people towards the overthrow of the dictatorship.

In accordance with this necessity, the REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHILE declares:

1) This is a new and shameless farce, calculated down to its smallest details, a rerun of the fascist "national Consultation" carried out January 4, 1978, a spectacle carefully prepared and set up by the dictatorship.

They have selected a favorable time to try to complete their plans against the people. They have completed seven years in the government, during which they have committed all kinds of outrages. More than 30,000 Chileans murdered in different ways, more than 2,500 prisoners "disappeared," hundreds of thousands of political prisoners, more than a million people exiled, hundreds of thousands of unemployed, constant massive layoffs, closings of workplaces, the constant rise in the price of necessities, wage freezes, the suppression of social benefits, growing denationalization of the economy and culture, systematic destruction of small and medium businesses, scandalous financial frauds, constant growth of all the bleeding sores of society, government acts of terrorism, the denial or restriction of the most basic rights of the people, etc., etc. This is the worn-out "peace, tranquillity and security" Pinochet's mouth is so full of. The so-called "national reconstruction" has been only for the benefit of imperialism and the oligarchy, who have made Chile a paradise for them and a hell for the workers, which they are trying to keep going until 1989 and beyond.

Completing this picture, in the last three months Pinochet has unleashed a wave of stepped-up repression against the masses. Kidnappings, tortures, murder and banishment (to remote places within Chile) are the coronation of this period of seven years. At the same time a violent clash is developing within the regime, resulting in resignations, threats and "mysterious" deaths.

Despite all this, the spirit of rebellion, of unity and of struggle has been reinforced among our people.

2) The fascists have chosen and prepared their field of combat, one that most suits them. They have already approved *their* Constitution and the "temporary measures" that go with it (so that Pinochet can "legally" continue for nine more years). They have determined the rules and who will participate in *their* "plebiscite." They will control and make known the results. Already they have thrown thousands of cops into the streets to assault whatever dissident voice which might obstruct their plan. Under these conditions, the "plebiscite" is no more than a formality designed to give a "legal" appearance to their fascist decisions.

Since the aim of the dictatorship is to give the appearance of legitimacy to *their* Constitution, this means they need the presence and participation of the biggest possible number of people in this new circus. If there are people who vote "yes," all the better for them; but it doesn't matter whether people vote "no," leave their ballots blank or spoil them, because the results have already been arranged. Fascism needs a chorus for its carnival, which is why it is trying to trick and intimidate the Chilean proletariat and people. On the one hand it offers the "alternative" of voting "no" (in case anyone falls into the trap) and on the other hand it threatens to punish those who don't show up or don't vote, so as to assure the maximum participation. Voting "no" won't

change the present situation in any way, not even as a way to protest, since, as we've said, everything's been arranged (a certain majority of "yes" votes, a certain minority of "no" votes, another number of blank and spoiled ballots just for window-dressing). This shows, once again, that Pinochet and his gang will not give up the power that has given them so much monetary satisfaction. If they aren't swept aside by the struggle of the people led by the proletariat, they won't go of their own will.

3) For the dictatorship, people who don't vote commit the most serious crime. This is exactly the *weak point* of Pinochet's maneuver. His worst fear is that the masses won't play his game. A massive abstention would be a very hard blow to his aspirations.

With this in mind, the Chilean proletariat and people must choose the battlefield that most suits their interests. They must set their own rules in this struggle. In this way they can maintain their independence, increase their fighting capacity, heighten their morale, hit where it hurts the most and in this way have the opportunity to hit the dictatorship with a closed fist.

On the basis of this analysis of the situation, the REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHILE calls on all social forces who oppose the dictatorship or struggle against it to unite and coordinate their organizations and struggle to mobilize to **FLATLY REJECT THE PLEBISCITE BY REFUSING TO PARTICIPATE IN IT.**

This is a clear call to the Chilean people and proletariat to boycott the fascist "plebiscite" by **ABSTAINING**. Far from what might be imagined, abstaining *does not mean staying home idly waiting for Pinochet to fail*. Abstaining means struggling, agitating, propaganda, etc. This requires the organization of thousands of **ABSTENTION STRUGGLE COMMITTEES** in the factories, in the countryside, in the mines, in the schools, in the offices, in the shantytowns and in every area of national life.

These Committees should meet continually to plan their activity—how to mobilize trade union and neighborhood organizations, how to explain and convince the masses of the necessity of **NOT VOTING**, how to carry out propaganda, etc. Together with the masses, it is necessary to seek and figure out ways to elude the repression against those who don't vote (the experience of the past Consultation can give some ideas). Bulletins, leaflets, "pigeons," painting on walls, joint declarations, etc. are good (but not the only) methods to awaken the consciousness of the people and mobilize them for the struggle.

The **ABSTENTION STRUGGLE COMMITTEES** must spark the struggle of the masses in all its forms, starting from the immediate problems of the masses (wages, repression, unemployment, health care, culture, etc.).

Last, great efforts are necessary to try to form a broad **ABSTENTION STRUGGLE FRONT**, including within it all the committees and mass organizations which are in favor of abstention.

The **REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHILE** believes that the basic condition for the establishment of a truly people's government with a truly popular constitution is the overthrow of the dictatorship.

**BOYCOTT THE PLEBISCITE!
FORM ABSTENTION STRUGGLE
COMMITTEES!**

SECRETARIAT OF THE CC
OF THE RCP OF CHILE

August 21, 1980



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