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Chile: The People Will Not Forget Their Victories nor Pardon Their Assassins



Revolution Is The Art Of Uniting The Forces Of The People

The following article was excerpted from an interview with Luis Cerda, the MIR's representative in Europe. It was translated from the Bulletin du Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria [(Paris), No. 2 (April/May 1974), 21-30], and first appeared in the French periodical, Liberation.

QUESTION: What kind of situation do the Chilean people and the Resistance face six months after the coup?

LUIS CERDA: We must distinguish two aspects: on the one hand, we must take into account the general situation, and in particular the relation of class forces vis-a-vis the military Junta -- the political economy of the Junta, its politics of repression, the brutal manner in which it imposes the interests of certain privileged sectors of the population, those linked to large national and foreign capital. All this has produced rather important changes in the general political situation and has led to a certain breakdown of the military Junta. This has alienated it from the social base it had at the beginning, at the time of the coup. In other words, there are now sectors of the petit bourgeoisie who are totally dissatisfied with the Junta. The situation of urban and rural workers and of the popular sectors in general has also worsened. All this has led to a climate of general discontent. Thus, we must develop our political work with this in mind. Obviously, it is easy to delude ourselves about this; i.e., when these sectors disassociate themselves from the Junta and seem to be strongly discontented with it, we may be tempted to assume that the Junta is weakening and the revolutionary forces gaining strength. We are much more skeptical about such an analysis. We believe that this phenomenon is quite important, but that in political life things never happen automatically. Even if this development is a sign of some weakness on the part of the Junta, we absolutely must not assume that this guarantees a strengthening of the revolutionary forces. This means that if there is no revolutionary political line that presents itself clearly and openly, this kind of conflict, or contradiction within the Junta, will not lead to a strengthening of the revolutionary camp. This conflict may also

favor certain centrists who have nothing to gain from the current political process in Chile. I think this is an important aspect to consider. On the other hand, we also believe that the undeniable weakening of the Junta will have only a limited effect on its future options. From the moment the Junta revealed itself for what it is -- as an expression of large foreign capital -- it was clear that it could not expect real support from the people. The Junta had a choice. And it chose to rely fundamentally on force. Now, from this point of view, the Junta is not only trying to reinforce its position by the purge it is carrying out in the army right now -- which is spoken of in the papers -- but it is also seeking to reinforce its position through the support of the United States in particular, and also of Brazil, which is seeking to strengthen its position in Latin America.

The third point refers to the second aspect that I mentioned earlier. We must not only pay attention to what is happening on the political scene in general, but also ask ourselves what is happening within those political forces, and see how we can profit from this situation and set into motion a resistance movement against the Dictatorship. I feel that the Junta's difficulty in destroying the forces of the Chilean Left is the most important sign. We may mention here, as an example, the case of the MIR, which still maintains its military apparatus as well as its political organization. The MIR has only lost three members of its Central Committee: two were imprisoned and are dead, and only one deserted the struggle and went into exile. As for the Political Commission, we must note and deplore the arrest of Bautista van Schowen. But in spite of all its efforts at destroying the MIR's organizational structure, the Junta has not succeeded. Since the beginning, the MIR has emerged as the Junta's prime target. On the first wanted-list published by the Junta, five of the "most wanted" persons were from the MIR; of those five, four remain and continue their political work. Among them are Miguel Enriquez, Victor Toro, Pascal Allende and others. This is proof that conditions are good for the Chilean resistance. If we examine the situation since the coup, we see that the Junta has made no real progress in its goal of repressing revolutionary organizations. This underscores the capability of the resistance movement of revolutionary

Chilean organizations and of the Chilean Left in general.

Q: Recent news from Argentina notes the formation of a "junta of revolutionary coordination" of various revolutionary organizations in the Southern Cone of South America (MIR, ELN, ERP, MLN-Tupamaros). What are the factors that led to the creation of this revolutionary front? What is the real meaning of this coordination in the current anti-gorila struggle?

LC: This coordination is the result of a political line and political work that have been carried out for three years with important results. It goes back to our analysis of the situation in Latin America: on the one hand, U.S. imperialism, which since 1962-3 has systematically developed its policy of reinforcing military forces in Latin America with military aid, and on the other hand, the actual economic expansion of imperialism on the continent, translated into an inter-penetration of the interests of the national bourgeoisies with those of U.S. imperialism. The most visible and obvious expression of this policy is Brazil, which since the military coup of 1964 has built a sub-imperialist system. Brazilian sub-imperialism demonstrates both the integration of the Brazilian bourgeoisie's interests with the large international trusts, as well as the interests of Brazil as a great power seeking an increasing control over the countries of Latin America, economically and politically. Brazil is thus a special case of imperialist domination in Latin America. All this tends to create the conditions for the development of a class struggle in Latin America with an international character.

Our conception of this is slightly different from Che's: the international character of the Latin American revolution is fully confirmed to-

day. The Chilean coup, that in Bolivia and Uruguay, and the reactionary movement in Argentina, show that we must struggle against forces organized at an international level, not only against the national forces of each particular country.

This was clear for us from the start of the Popular Unity government. We had to take the international situation into account and prepare for the future. We never had any illusions about the chances of sustaining a popular regime as a totally isolated "island" in Latin America. We knew that if this popular "island" could not maintain itself and spread to other countries, it would not be possible to maintain the Chilean regime as it stood at that point in time. After 1971, neither the overthrow of the Torres government in Bolivia nor the events in Uruguay surprised us, and we deliberately, consciously moved closer to those parties ideologically and organizationally similar to ours. Our aim in this regard is to establish bases for real international action. We are still far from the time when revolutionary armed struggle in Latin America can take on the international character that Che sought to give it, but we believe it is necessary to work toward this end. The best way of advancing in this direction is to deepen the revolutionary struggle in our individual countries. We are speaking only of a first nucleus, one which will attract the revolutionary forces of other countries that are, for the moment, in difficult situations; such is the case of Brazil, Peru, Paraguay. We must wait until the revolutionary organizations in these countries can truly develop.

This coordination has a dual significance: on the one hand, it responds to the objective conditions of the situation in Latin America -- a more and more powerful internationalization of the revolutionary struggle. On the other hand, it permits the establishment of a truly coordi-





General Augusto Pinochet

nated revolutionary movement in Latin America. We are not in a rush. We work according to the actual conditions in which we find ourselves. We must regroup our forces, encourage cooperation at all levels, from the coordination and discussion of a common political focus to the realization of joint actions, as we have already done in the past and as we shall do with fervor in the future. We must create the conditions for a revolutionary movement capable of confronting national and foreign capital in Latin America. On the other hand, we believe that the Latin American revolution must have what I call a certain "autonomy"; this means that we cannot rely solely on the revolutionary centers, the strongholds of the Left. This would force us to link ourselves to the evolution and fluctuations of international politics. We Latin Americans must have our own revolutionary line. To the degree that we will be able to put this line into practice, we will be able to propose to other revolutionary forces in the world the choice of supporting or not supporting the revolutionary struggle in Latin America.

Q: What are the principal obstacles to the establishment of a coordinated resistance movement, especially taking into consideration the particular political, economic and structural conditions of Chile?

LC: We think that the main problem is knowing how to combine a revolutionary line based on clandestine work and the preparation of armed struggle, with real mass work. From this perspective we can examine the problems of mass work in Chile today.

But this is secondary. The main problem is the first: knowing how to develop a revolutionary line, a line for armed struggle, and at the same time, link it more and more tightly to the real mass movement at its present level of consciousness. This is the big problem which has broken the back of practically every Left movement in Latin America. Why?

First, because the traditional Left parties, reformist in tendency, have tended to emphasize traditional forms of struggle, mass struggles, and have renounced, not only verbally but also in their actions, the line of insurrection by armed struggle. This was quite clear in Chile. When, at the beginning, the situation in Chile was totally favorable for preparing for armed struggle, most of the Left parties remained under the illusion that they could maintain, in an undefinable fashion, the mass struggle within the framework of [bourgeois] institutions. They were not ready to move to a higher form of struggle.

Secondly, we also have seen revolutionary forces in Latin America which posed the question of armed struggle but, being too far removed from the masses, fell into a kind of "Left militarism". I am thinking particularly of revolutionary movements which suffered extremely serious defeats, such as those in Brazil and Venezuela. Thus, the Tupamaros themselves, after 1972, had to engage in a self-criticism of their position.

It is a question of being truly linked to the mass movement, of debating the direction and leadership of that movement with the perspective of systematically leading the mass movement to the arena of armed struggle. We believe that all forms of struggle must be employed. In this regard we must think not only of possibilities, but also in terms of concrete situations. We must always keep in mind the forms of struggle that will be victorious in the end. We think that the main form of struggle is armed struggle. But for us armed struggle is not just one possibility among others, a form that the mass movement can adopt. It is the general form that the mass movement adopts at a given moment in its development when the contradictions which exist within the national and imperialist ruling classes are sufficiently developed. We must seek in each concrete situation the forms with which we will be able to develop a mass resistance in Chile, a mass resistance which is capable of creating an armed power able to face and crush the military apparatus of the bourgeoisie and imperialism.

Q: In the last declaration of the National Secretariat of the MIR in January 1974, the question is raised of the necessity of giving birth to a "broad social bloc which, under the direction of the working class, will integrate all classes and exploited sectors oppressed by the military Dictatorship, principally broad sectors of the petit bourgeoisie, thus heightening the struggle to topple the Dictatorship." Must this broad social

bloc of which this document speaks also integrate grass-roots sectors of the Christian Democratic Party [PDC], which has, it seems, been torn to shreds by the repressive policy of the Junta?

LC: Of course. We believe that the Christian Democratic Party is a political party which has attracted to it a rather important popular sector. We believe today that not the Christian Democratic Party itself, but sectors of Christian Democrats, must unite with the resistance. But in order not to confuse our position on this matter with a position which we criticize, we must emphasize: we absolutely do not seek an opening toward the center. Considering the intensification of contradictions and class struggle in Chile today, such a centrist line seems to us absolutely unjustifiable. We think that the contradictions between the different sectors of Chilean society, particularly between sectors of the petit bourgeoisie and the Junta, have grown sharper and sharper. We must unite those forces. We believe, along with Fidel Castro, that revolution is the art of uniting the forces of the people. When we try to unite these forces, we must know on what basis we are uniting them. For the sector of the PDC which seeks an active role in the resistance, which has truly decided to take a stand on the various battlefields in the struggle against the Junta, there will always be a role to play in the resistance. We demand of that sector a clear commitment to the resistance. The regrouping of social forces must be around a clear, revolutionary position. The principal force of the resistance must be the masses, and particularly the working class. We are currently attempting to reorganize the mass movement, to reorganize the working class, to give the masses a chance to impose their line. This seems to us more important than solemn agreements with the PDC or the petit bourgeoisie. We do not think that it is necessary to take a step backwards in order to reach -- on any basis whatsoever -- an understanding with this sector. This understanding must be reached in the arena of struggle directed by the mass movement with the working class and the revolutionary forces who direct the movement of the revolutionary masses. Understanding must be reached in this area.

The most important thing for us, at this time, is the mass movement. This mass movement has not yet completely recovered from the gorilla's attacks. The working class has not yet found the best forms of struggle, the best methods for confronting the military Dictatorship and expressing its true interests. For us, the main task at the moment is the organization of the working class, the organization of popular sectors around the working class, sectors which are its natural allies. Obviously, we try to show the petit bourgeoisie, and even some sectors of the middle bourgeoisie, that this military Junta is not in their class interests. But we have no illusions about the possibilities of attracting this sector. It will follow only when we first have set into motion a true workers' resistance.

Q: The present period is therefore one of reorganizing the working class, which was scattered when the repression began and which must now be restructured as a political class?

LC: Of course. For us, the question at the moment is one of reorganizing the working class, and of reorganizing and joining to the working class the popular sectors, its natural allies. The current phase is also one of preparing the party and clandestine mass organizations. This will permit us, in a second phase, to carry the struggle onto the terrain we truly want to take it. The Dictatorship is trying, albeit in a rather clumsy way, to provoke us into a level of combat for which we are not really prepared. We are not willing to fight on a battlefield chosen by the Dictatorship; we want to choose, and we are going to choose, our own time and place. To do this, obviously, we must be well-prepared to be capable of broaching an open armed struggle against the Dictatorship and to assure the conditions for leading that struggle. To arrive at that point we must, in effect, have a mass movement capable of sustaining such combat; on the other hand, we must count on favorable international attitudes. Our current policy is along these two lines: reorganization of the party, reorganization of the mass movement, in particular the workers' movement, in the face of new conditions of class struggle; and preparation of international conditions favorable to broaching an open struggle against the Dictatorship. That struggle is one we have been leading since the month of September 1973 in different ways. Simply maintaining and developing a clandestine structure under the present conditions is already a form of struggle against the Dictatorship. But obviously we don't want to remain at that point. We want to go on to overt struggle and be able, at a given moment, to recapture the offensive. To do that we are going to prepare ourselves for as long as we judge it necessary.

Q: Do you think that all the parties which formed the Unidad Popular have really learned the lessons of the failure of the reformist path? What does the MIR think of the latest declarations of the Unified Secretariat of the Resistance in Rome?

LC: The contradictions within the Left parties are not fully developed. Most of the organizations which formed the UP, such as, for example, the Communist Party, are forced today to reconsider their analysis of the situation, and to look for new paths if they want to remain faithful to their expressed desire during the Allende government to build socialism in Chile. It is clear that this will require more effort of the other parties than of the MIR, because the MIR, while it had to adapt tactically, for a moment, to the real conditions which were imposed on it, did not change its fundamental political line. Its conception of the struggle in Chile and Latin America has, indeed, been confirmed by the facts of the situation. Today the question is to translate this political line into concrete action.

Most of the other parties labored under an erroneous conception, a conception refuted by history. We think that within those parties there are forces capable of arriving at a unitary conception. At this moment we maintain fraternal relations with all the parties of the Chilean Left, trying to create the most favorable conditions for ideological and political debate, with the goal of finding a common ground more solid than before. What does this common ground consist of? All the parties, including the MIR, find themselves today in a rather difficult situation because of the military coup d'etat. This is why we are obliged to maintain a certain degree of cooperation among ourselves. All our effort at this time is aimed at assuring that this collaboration can be translated into concrete results.

On the level of the Left as a whole, we find several concrete tasks that must be undertaken immediately, and to do so, cooperation is not only possible but necessary. It is for this reason, for example, that we participated in the meeting with the other parties and signed a declaration which is a step backwards from our position, but which does not contradict any of our basic principles. We did this with the perspective of carrying out several concrete tasks. On the other hand, it is obvious that, as for strategic questions, there is still a long road ahead: to reach an agreement we can engage in discussion, but we must particularly create concrete situations in which these parties will have

to take concrete positions. We think that that is more efficient than mere debates on doctrine.

But we must develop this point: for us, ideological struggle is very important, and we have always engaged in it, but it is not the only area in which to develop our relations with the organizations of the Left. For us, it is political practice, the practice of the masses, which must, in the final analysis, define relations between the different organizations of the Left. In this sense, we are developing a mass practice with a specific goal, one which we hide from no one, from no political party. This does not prevent us from signing a common declaration, like that of February 12 [See the "Declaration of the Chilean Left," in this issue]. We are now in the midst of making our own position known regarding our strategic objectives, our current tactics, and the manner in which we think that international solidarity should be built. This is not exactly the same thing as was said in the declaration of February 12, but it is not in contradiction with it.

Q: Can you give some indication of the kind of unity that is being developed at the grass-roots level?

LC: Political and ideological debate with other organizations is something we engage in only when it is absolutely necessary, at the level of the coordination of the Chilean Left. Ideological



questions are only posed around very concrete problems that the resistance must face. However, in our bilateral relations with other parties both at home and abroad, we engage in a much deeper level of discussion. This implies, with regard to certain parties, a criticism and self-criticism of activities prior to the coup, as well as the present positions of these organizations. Within the unified Left, we are only trying to resolve practical problems that arise for the Resistance nationally or internationally.

The day after the coup we immediately raised the question of the creation of coordination inside the country, but this problem has not been resolved yet. For the moment, we have established bilateral relations with the [Left] parties. In this sense, the conditions under which we act concretely on a day-by-day basis -- repression and clandestinity -- have a strong influence. But the problems of coordination are not only technical; there are also political problems. It is through discussion with the political forces of the country on the current situation, and what preceded it, that coordination can be built within Chile.

Q: How does the MIR view China's and the USSR's position vis-a-vis the Junta?

LC: This is a difficult question. The attitude of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, their first reaction, has been very positive: breaking off diplomatic and economic relations, etc. On the other hand, we are not at all satisfied, in this respect, with the Chinese attitude. We had hoped that China would take the same actions as the Soviet Union.

Q: Nevertheless, isn't the Soviet Union partly responsible for the propagation of the theory of the peaceful road to socialism?

LC: Concerning China, besides certain alterations in its foreign policy, rather visible in these last years, it doesn't seem to be very affected by events in Chile in the measure that what happens in Latin America does not concern it very much. China has adopted, at least as far as Latin America is concerned, a Big Power policy which doesn't correspond to one of proletarian internationalism. However, that position has often been taken by the Soviet Union towards other countries and, on the contrary, China has reacted differently. What has motivated the policy -- which we find so positive -- of the Soviet Union towards the Junta? The simple fact that this greatly affected the interests of the Soviet Union and the European Communist Parties (French and Italian) has obliged the USSR to adopt a very firm position, a little like posting a warning against other attempts [at counter-revolution] by the big national and foreign capitalists. We must not always dream of an ideal political line. It is in the face of a concrete situation that the socialist countries are forced to make their choice, that we can develop a genuine solidarity between the socialist countries

and the Latin American revolutionary movements. The USSR can have its own ideas about the "peaceful road", about the manner of making a revolution in this or that country. It can have its preferences for the parliamentary road, etc. But when the Soviet Union is confronted with a concrete experience, as it was in the case of Vietnam, Cuba and now in Chile, it is obliged to adopt more advanced positions than it would like.

I have the feeling that revolutionary parties and Left parties in general are too worried about what the Soviet Union or this or that socialist country generally thinks about the situation of these countries; if they would or wouldn't support a revolutionary movement. For us, the problem is different. It is through the creation of a truly revolutionary movement that we can force the socialist countries to adopt a position which corresponds to our wishes. Over the last years, China has retreated in relation to Latin America. It appears that it is not interested in playing its hand at this moment in this part of the world. This is the expression of Big Power politics imposed on the Chinese foreign policy, a policy which resembles that of the USSR for some years now. We greatly regret the Chinese position, but in a certain way, we understand the reasons why China has adopted that attitude. The principal reason is that Chinese interests are not threatened by the military Junta in the same way that they were not during the UP. We must realize that the People's Republic of China had offered the Allende government its solidarity which Allende did not take advantage of due to certain national or international interests. On the other hand, the Soviet Union had at stake not only the situation of the Chilean Communist Party, but also its global policy which it is trying to spread throughout the world in favor of peaceful coexistence. In addition to this, there were very strong interests, such as those of the French and Italian Communist Parties, which forced the Soviet Union to adopt stronger positions in relation to Chile.

It is to the extent that the international situation will increasingly force the socialist countries to take a position dictated by their autonomous interests that we will be able to develop a proletarian internationalism -- a proletarian internationalism quite neglected at this time. There will be a time when China will take an interest in the events of Latin America, and when the capitalist countries will also have to adopt a position: it is this situation that we are trying to create. It is necessary to create the conditions which will force the leftist movements of the socialist and the capitalist countries to take a position even if it is not the position they took at the beginning. The same problem comes up in relation to the Chilean Left, and we must discuss it. We must argue different viewpoints, and, in the last analysis, the attitude which these forces adopt on concrete, political questions. These are the conditions which the MIR is trying to create. And that is the cutting edge.