
Chilean Communist Analyzes Allende Years

U.S. Edition of Book Out Soon

Chile: An Attempt at Historic Compromise—The Real Story of the Allende Years, by Jorge Palacios

Published by Banner Press, Chicago, November 1979.
512pp. \$5.95.

"First and foremost, we want to assert that it is not Marxism nor socialism that failed in Chile, and, that this theory, by ridding itself of its falsifiers and combined with the heroic fighting capacity of our people, will lead us to national liberation and genuine socialism." These words, from Jorge Palacios' introduction to his book *Chile: An Attempt at Historic Compromise*, describe in a nutshell the role of this important book. Already published in three different editions, it will be made available in the U.S. beginning October 1, in conjunction with a nationwide tour by the author being sponsored by El Frente del Pueblo, a mass organization of the Chilean resistance abroad as well as in Chile. The Revolutionary Communist Party, USA is actively building support for the tour.

While many tomes have been written on Chile, on the Allende experience, and on the U.S.-backed fascist coup that overthrew Allende in September 1973, it was really not until the publication of *An Attempt at Historic Compromise* that a thoroughgoing, Marxist-Leninist analysis of these events had been made, broadly available to an international audience. Palacios, a founder and a leading member of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile, carefully dissects and analyzes the different class forces that played their role in the Chilean experience. He shows the hand of the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the midst of the turmoil that was rocking Chile. Above all, what comes through clearly is a vivid picture of the treachery of the pro-Soviet Communist Party of Chile, which bears the greatest responsibility for the fact that the masses were unarmed—politically, organizationally and militarily—in the face of the right-wing coup which resulted in the massacre of 30,000 people.

Palacios' basic thesis is that the CP, which occupied the dominant position within the Allende regime, had no intention of moving toward socialism at all, but instead aimed at creating a bureaucratic state capitalism into which they would be integrated, along with more traditional sectors, into the Chilean ruling class. This is why the CP preached the "peaceful road to socialism"—not because they were pacifists, but because if the masses were mobilized and armed it would be an obstacle to their plans. They preached respect for the institutions of

bourgeois rule (parliament, courts, armed forces, etc.) because they themselves wanted to rule over a bourgeois state and needed such institutions. Instead of mass revolutionary violence to smash the bourgeois state, they saw their way to power through an "historic compromise," the term coined by the revisionists in Italy to mean complete collaboration between the revisionist CP and the ruling Christian Democratic Party.

This fit in perfectly, Palacios argues, with Soviet aims to force the U.S. to allow the Soviets to become junior partners in the exploitation and domination of Latin America. This Soviet strategy is based on recognizing Latin America, like Western Europe, as the U.S.'s "sphere of influence"—and working to create the conditions so that the junior partner can someday contend for total control. This is why the U.S. imperialists were so determined to stop the CP in Chile—not principally for fear of losing their economic interests there, but rather for fear of setting up a precedent and a model, a stimulus for further Soviet penetration throughout this U.S. "sphere of influence," Palacios explains.

The book argues that the Soviets never really saw the Allende regime as anything more than a stepping stone to what they really dreamed of—a joint government of the CP and the pro-U.S. forces within the Christian Democratic Party, led by Eduardo Frei, once the darling of the Kennedy Alliance for Progress in Latin America. Together they would lord it over the people and suppress revolutionary struggle, but would at the same time provide a big opening for the USSR to make inroads into the heretofore impregnable South American mainland. Palacios shows well in his book that the constant cowardice, treachery and misleadership of the revisionists cannot be explained simply by speaking of "opportunist deviations" or "errors" but must instead be seen in the entire context of the line these revisionists were pursuing.

Indeed, the story of the CP's betrayal of the cause of the Chilean people borders on farcical, were it not for the tragic consequences it had for the masses of people. The book documents in painful detail the efforts of the CP to restrain and derail the mass movement of the workers and the oppressed, all the while protecting the bourgeois state and other reactionary institutions from the attack of the masses. As Palacios points out, this was a policy which the CP had pursued for many decades and for which it was rewarded by being allowed to be one of the few Communist Parties in Latin America that enjoyed a long period of legal, open activity. The policy of the "peaceful

road" had been vociferously fought for by Luis Corvalan, the head of the Chilean CP. No argument was too bourgeois for them to advance on behalf of this policy, and no treason was too high for them to commit. The "twin pillars" of the Chilean CP's opportunist strategy (as Palacios calls the CP's strategy of "peaceful road to socialism" and their attempts to achieve an "historic compromise" with the Christian Democrats) came crashing down with the fascist coup in September 1973.

Palacios sums up the experience of the Allende government this way: "In essence, the three-year experiment of the UP government was an attempt to take advantage of (or to outwit using 'legal expedients') laws and institutions that had been designed to serve the most reactionary interests. It was an attempt to limit and overthrow these interests by respecting the rules established precisely in order to consolidate and develop them. In short, it was an effort, with all imaginable shortcomings, to 'peacefully' transform a social system that used the mask of bourgeois democracy for the sole purpose of concealing the armed violence that was its real foundation. It was the failure of an attempt to exercise power without having won it and without even the intention of using what had been acquired through the electoral victory of 1970 in a revolutionary way in order to develop a fighting mass movement capable of really seizing such power by smashing the armed reactionary apparatus. This last possibility was in fact—and this is the basic thesis of the present book—absolutely incompatible with the plan for a society based on centralized state exploitation of the people, as was the aim of the pro-Soviet 'C'P leaders and some of their followers within the Popular Unity. For a people mobilized in a revolutionary way, it would have been easy

to 'turn the guns against the new exploiters', as Frederick Engels used to say."

For the majority of the workers of Chile, and even perhaps many of the leaders peddling the reformist program, the "peaceful road to socialism" was a tragic illusion. But for the revisionist CP and their closest adherents, the whole experience of the Allende government was a cynical and barbaric attempt to achieve a share of political and economic power by using the masses as pawns and even being willing to climb to the throne on the corpses of the workers and oppressed.

For example, Palacios relates how the reactionaries (with U.S. financing and instigation) managed to whip up the reactionary strike of independent truck drivers and other small businessmen against the Allende government in October 1972. The masses went on the offensive and succeeded in dealing a powerful blow to the enemy, effectively smashing the strike. And what was the result? Did the Allende government and the CP urge the masses forward to build upon the victories won by the rank and file workers and challenge the power of those who were obviously preparing to drown the people's struggle (and the Allende government in the process) in a sea of blood? On the contrary, the crushing of the reactionary offensive was the signal for the greatest retreat of the Allende government, the *forming of a cabinet including generals and admirals* which was to assure that the armed forces remained "democratic" and "constitutional," so that they would serve as a "wall of iron" to stop reaction. In fact, what the CP was seeking was to placate the big capitalists and the U.S. by bringing the armed forces into the government to insure that the government served them. The CP claimed that it was not the workers' counter-offensive,

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but the addition of four chiefs of staff to the cabinet, that had broken the reactionary strike—and made it clear that it considered the rising and increasingly uncontrollable mass movement to be the main danger.

The revisionists claimed that any move by the masses to defend their gains and their movement by preparing to meet the reactionary onslaught head-on would only “provoke” a coup. For this reason, the CP and the Popular Unity government voted unanimously (along with the opposition parties) for the infamous arms control act, which gave the armed forces a *carte blanche* to raid factories, trade union offices, workers’ centers, even the headquarters of government political parties, in search of arms. One raid of 2000 soldiers (incidentally conducted by a general who was lauded to the skies as a pro-Allende force) turned up one .22 in the hand of a watchman—meanwhile the workers were terrorized, forced to lay on the ground in below-freezing weather for six hours. And as if to prove the point, one worker was shot in the back and killed.

Beginning in March 1973, the army began active preparations for the coup, using the arms control act as an excuse. And what was the CP’s slogan in relation to the immediate and obvious threat of a coup? To raise the slogan “No to civil war.” As the author puts it, “They raised the slogan of ‘No to civil war’ as the central issue precisely at the time when both they (the CP) and their opponents were certain that *there would be no civil war* because the people were disarmed and the Armed Forces were united for a coup d’etat. Under the circumstances, then, this line was the line of getting the people to accept complete surrender as long as it was to avoid the ‘atrocities of a civil war’, or, more concretely, of a coup d’etat, since they did not dare to call a spade a spade.”

This line of “No to civil war” remained in force during the coup itself and even up to today. Perhaps most revealing was an incident Palacios cites when, in the midst of the coup d’etat, a representative of the MIR hurried to the CP offices to demand that some kind of joint action take place against the military. The CP’s response—“Let’s see if they dissolve Parliament first”!

And now that the bloody coup is an accomplished fact and the masses in Chile live under a bloody terror heaped on top of the daily exploitation and violence of capitalism, the Communist Party of Chile and its leader, Corvalan, continue to talk about the “peaceful road” and to try to justify their treason during the Allende years. Their own explanation of the coup is that it was the result of the “ultra-left” (!) policies of the MIR and other revolutionaries. The CP had hoped that the effects of the coup they knew was coming would be shortlived, and that the “non-political” army would turn power over to the Christian Democrats and Frei and the CP would remain an indispensable vehicle of bourgeois order, shackling the workers and throwing sand in their eyes.

In his survey of the different class forces at work in the Allende years, Palacios also describes in detail the line of the petty-bourgeois radical and revolutionary forces that opposed the line of the CP and their supporters but still worked generally within the framework of the Popular Unity. Of these groups, the one that was the most opposed to the CP line was the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left). The MIR was a group that had been and remains greatly influenced by the line of Fidel Castro. While generally opposing the line that the reactionaries would peacefully accept a transition to socialism, the MIR, in practice, functioned as the “left wing” of the Popular Unity even though they were never formally a part of it. Palacios points out that the petty-bourgeois opposition was unclear on the nature of the CP and the Allende

government and hence viewed their line as mainly one of “errors” and in effect saw the role of the masses as being to push the government to the left and to complete the revolution—which, in reality, had never begun.

Central to the errors of the petit-bourgeois opposition was confusion on the nature of state power. They promoted the idea that “dual power” existed in Chile—along the lines of the situation in Russia after the February 1917 revolution. And this wrong analysis led to many wrong policies, such as seeing the way to consolidate power as carrying on more expropriations even of relatively small-scale capitalists. This latter policy was also linked to the Trotskyite and revisionist view that the stage of the revolution was a socialist one, and that it was unnecessary to pass through the stage of popular democracy. Essentially the line of the petty-bourgeois opposition was profoundly rightist in that despite some correct views of the need for the masses to arm, it never made the seizure of power (rather than the *extension* of power) the cardinal question of the revolution. But it did at times take an “ultra-left” form, such as in the policy of trying to expropriate the middle bourgeoisie, and this contributed to (although it was certainly not principal in) allowing the U.S.-backed big bourgeoisie and landlords to whip up the middle bourgeoisie and much of the petty bourgeoisie as shock troops against the Allende government.

Jorge Palacios also discusses the views and activities of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Chile all during this period. He points out that the RCP, alone among the political organizations, avoided the intoxication with bourgeois democracy that befuddled the entire Left, even the more revolutionary sections, and consistently sought to warn and prepare people for the inevitable showdown with the reactionary classes. He also discusses the Party’s policy of carrying out the anti-fascist resistance struggle and shows how this fits into the overall strategy of achieving the popular democratic revolution. Of great interest is the stress that he and his Party place on the fact that both bourgeois democracy and the rule of the generals are *forms* of dictatorship of the reactionary classes and that until it is swept away the people will be at the mercy of the common cycle in Latin America of generals being replaced by civilian democracies and then open terror being unleashed against the people once again. He quotes Mao’s succinct point that “without a people’s army, the people have nothing.”

While *An Attempt At Historic Compromise* correctly concentrates on unmasking the falsifiers of Marxism and the revisionist CP, it also serves as excellent material exposing the U.S. imperialists’ crimes and intrigues in Chile. Palacios makes available in a living way the story of the plotting, preparing and funding of the fascist coup, as well as describing the way the U.S. has exercised its domination in Chile and Latin America generally. In his exposition of the U.S. role in Chile, Palacios offers a thought-provoking analysis of the Alliance for Progress and its subsequent demise and links the different policies of the U.S. ruling class in Latin America to conflicting interests within the U.S. bourgeoisie.

All in all, *An Attempt At Historic Compromise* is an excellent Marxist analysis of one of the most important events of recent times. It is of value far beyond helping the reader to understand the events in Chile. It sheds important light on the strategy of the Soviet Union in its contention with the U.S., on the nature of revisionism, and the tasks of the proletariat in a country like Chile. The lessons of the Chilean experience were paid for with the blood of 30,000 martyrs—a cost far too high to allow any serious revolutionary to fail to learn them. ■