What to read on Chile

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into practice, in the form of a concrete programme for Chile which goes some way beyond ‘anti-fascist’ positions.

Insofar as these problems are reflections of those of the international left, it may be naive to speculate on purely Chilean advances. However, it is also true that revolutions have been made by revolutionary practice, rather than debates in exile, whose significance is exaggerated by their being more conspicuous than concrete developments in Chile. That these involve few dramatic events is partly a measure of the left’s success in working for reorganization and effective propaganda, rather than rapid confrontation. Two things stand out in the consequently scant information on the opposition to the junta – a new degree of cooperation between grassroots activists of different parties like those whose stories feature here; and widespread popular resistance to current policies, despite the penalties. For instance, all the left-wing parties are regularly producing and distributing clandestine news-sheets, presumably with a new generation reliving Gregorio’s childhood experiences (chapter I) of this sort of political work. Even in gaol new bonds have been forged on the common anvil of the repression between activists with different experiences and political positions. Resistance committees also exist in many places of work and residence – and whilst the Chilean left in exile may disagree as to their merits, many of them are in fact inter-party. Rate strikes are occurring in shantytowns, stoppages in the copper mines, go-slow in the factories and ports. Wall slogans are reappearing – sometimes just ‘R’ for ‘Resistencia’.

All these of necessity involve substantial organization and awareness. They also suggest the experience and will of a new political generation committed, in some of Allende’s last words, to new and appropriate forms of struggle.

WHAT TO READ ON CHILE

A surprisingly difficult question. The coup has produced a spate of books and pamphlets, but little in English with any depth or originality. Most of them, like Helios Prieto’s *Chile: The Gorillas Are Amongst Us*, (Pluto Press. 1974) are superficial and sectarian, of the ‘told you so’ variety. The one comprehensive study in depth of the Popular Unity and its background is *Chile: the State and the Revolution* by Ian Roxborough, Philip O’Brien and Jackie Roddick (Macmillan, 1976, paperback edition). This also has a comprehensive bibliography of books and articles in French and Spanish, as well as English. Otherwise, the most readable items published since the coup are probably *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Chile*, edited by Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff (Monthly Review Press, 1974) and Michel Raptis’ book of the same name, sub-titled *A Dossier on Workers’ Participation in the Revolutionary Process* (Allison and Busby, 1974). The first is a collection of articles written before and after the coup. The second includes valuable documentary material on the various popular organizations such as the industrial cordons, but not enough, whilst the author’s comments, like most on the subject, are largely an affirmation of faith.

In these circumstances, the most vivid reading dates mainly from before the coup, though much of this is also one-sided. A prime example is Kate Clark’s *Reality and Prospects of Popular Unity* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1973), which virtually ignores the controversy over the PU’s strategy. Read together with Prieto it is a fair measure of how far Chile was a problem not just of imperialism, but of the sclerosis of the whole left, and not just in Chile. On the positive side, *The Chilean Road to Socialism*, edited by Ann Zammit (Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, 1973) includes discussions which remain live, however dated, and also the Popular Unity programme. Regis Debray’s *Conversations with Allende* (New Left Books, 1971) is lively, despite Debray’s arrogant moments. Allende’s speeches are also vivid, seen in their context and with hindsight – *Chile’s Road to Socialism*, Salvador Allende, ed. Juan Garces (Penguin, 1973). Sadly, though, the best books – those which argue issues openly, or
provide the raw material for this – remain untranslated. Notable amongst them are ‘The State and Tactical Problems During the Government of Allende’ (El Estado y Los Problemas Tacticos en el Gobierno de Allende, Siglo Veintiuno, Madrid, 1974), also by Juan Garces, an advisor and close friend of Allende. And Maurice Najman’s ‘Chile is Close’ (Le Chili Est Proche, Maspero, Paris, 1974), a much fuller collection of documents than Michel Raptis’. In confirmation of Najman’s title, as measured a blow from the right as any is Robert Moss’s Chile’s Marxist Experiment (David and Charles, 1973). Full of misrepresentations and venom, it’s a healthy reminder that Pinochet has friends in Britain.

On events since the coup the best informed source – though hitherto short on political analysis – is Chile Monitor, published roughly every two months by the Chile Solidarity Campaign in London. The NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America, N.Y. and Berkeley, California) Latin America and Empire Report for October 1973 (‘Chile: the Story Behind the Coup’) is still worth reading, whilst its November 1976 number (volume X, no. 9, ‘Chile: recycling the capitalist crisis’) gives the most thorough up-to-date information at the time of writing. Most of the Chilean left parties in exile are now publishing documents in English. However, they are understandably guarded, and there is as yet no adequate analysis of them, nor of the resistance in Chile. The commentators – and perhaps the surviving leaders too – have yet to do justice to the fallen.

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