

The Battle of Chile

(Directed by Patricio Guzman, with the collaboration of Federico Elton, Jorge Muller, Bernardo Menz, Jose Pino, and Marta Harnecker. Released by Tricontinental Film Center; a production of *Equipo Tercer Ano* in collaboration with the Cuban Film Institute and Chris Marker. In Spanish with English narration; 191 minutes.)

Patricio Guzman's *The Battle of Chile* is a documentary about the crushing of a revolution whose leaders played by the rules and expected their opponents to do the same. Beginning with the election gains of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government in March, 1973, this brilliant film eyewitnesses the tragic but enlightening events leading to the right-wing *coup* six months later which murdered Allende and brought to power a fascist junta of generals bought, trained and paid for by the United States government and serving the interests of Wall Street.

While analyzing the Chilean revolution and counter-revolution from an openly Marxist standpoint, Guzman "shows both sides of the story" by taking the viewer into the streets, the factories and halls of state, among the workers and capitalists and other friends and foes of the Allende government and lets them express their beliefs and aims in their own words and by their own acts.

On an historical level, the film illuminates facts which have been either ignored or lied about by the press in the United States. It disproves the CIA-inspired myth that it was President Allende's "disastrous" Marxist economic policies that led the country to the brink of ruin, and that the right-wing generals had to overthrow the Popular Unity government in order to restore order and prosperity. The viewer is shown that whatever chaos existed was created by the capitalists, not the workers. The United States sought to weaken Chile from without by economic boycott, while the Chilean capitalists tried by hoarding and destroying commodities, stopping production, and disrupting transportation to create shortages and unbalance in the economy. The working people, on the other hand, fought to maintain the economy by working harder, creating consumer cooperatives, rationing, and organizing their communities and workplaces to do away with sabotage, anarchy, and waste.

Also disproved is the lie that Allende, elected on a socialist platform in 1970, alienated his supporters by his "inept Marxist policies." In the congressional elections of March, 1973, Allende's Popular Unity government won 43% of the vote, 7% more than in 1970, and was in fact the first Chilean government ever to increase its plurality while in office. The film proves that it was the right wing's failure to destroy Allende's popular support and oust him by legal means (along with economic

sabotage, street violence and CIA-Pentagon funding and training) that made necessary the fascist *coup*.

Because it presents these facts, *The Battle of Chile* should be seen by especially those Americans who still believe that our country represents democracy and human rights, not the interests of a few bloodsucking businessmen and landowners and the blood-sodden generals who defend them with *our* tax dollars. For them the film will provide a rude but necessary awakening.

But more than this, Guzman analyzes from a Leninist standpoint the causes of the terrible, bloody defeat of the Chilean revolution, and thus makes an important contribution to the international working class movement.

There is no question that during the period of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity administration a classical revolutionary situation was born and matured. On the one hand the working people, downtrodden by years of exploitation and betrayal by United States and domestic capitalists, were no longer willing to go on as before. They elected and supported Allende on a platform of peaceful transition to socialism. On the other hand the bourgeoisie and their political parties (the National Party and the Christian Democrats) found themselves unable to rule in the old way, by democratic deception backed up by economic and political coercion. A confrontation was inevitable. Although they controlled Congress by an 8-5 margin, the right-wingers were not strong enough to impeach Allende and vote out his Popular Unity government, which controlled the executive branch of the state. The government was thus split. The drama could only be played out according to the saying, "when two wills collide, then force will decide." But on this level the socialists were no match for the fascists. The right was supported by key sections of the military bought and trained by the CIA-Pentagon-Wall Street axis, and freely used extralegal, unconstitutional means to strengthen themselves and attack the working class. Allende, on the other hand, insisted on relying on the "constitutional" section of the military, those officers who agreed to defend the legal government, as well as on the good will of the opposition forces, particularly the Christian Democrats, to hold back the open fascists. This was a fatal mistake, a mistake compounded by the disunity of the Chilean working class organizations and the lack of a consolidated leadership able to see and plan for the impending outbreak of fascist violence. In the six months preceding the September 11 *coup*, the Chilean workers consistently gained political consciousness and militancy. In three mass demonstrations during the spring and summer, the number of Allende supporters marching in the streets of Santiago, ready to take on the fascists, grew from 300,000 to 500,000 to 800,000 in September! But they were unarmed. The fascist generals throughout this period sent their soldiers to invade the factories, looking for arms and feeling out the terrain.