

The road to fascism in Chile

TORONTO (CUP) — The recent coup in Chile was a well-orchestrated military maneuver that came as the culmination of at least a year of right-wing attempts to sabotage the road to socialism chosen by the people of Chile.

Origin of the coup—October 1972

The essential roots of this week's coup go back almost a year to the truck-owners' strike of October, 1972. At that time the obstruction and subversion of the government by rightist elements in Chile became an open strategy.

The majority parties in the Congress, the traditional right-wing National Party and the "Centrist" Christian Democratic party, utilized their votes in Congress to block almost every executive initiative, while at the same time subjecting governmental ministers to verbal attacks and resolutions of impeachment forcing resignations and jugglings of the cabinet.

This campaign gained momentum on the legislative front with the mid-term election campaign for Congress in February and March 1973. Eduardo Frei, former Christian Democratic president, ran for the senate and called for a return of a two-thirds majority for the right and centre so that they could impeach and dislodge Allende.

The electoral campaign failed. The Left increased their support in "mid-term" elections, something no recent governing group had succeeded in doing, and Frei's idea of a legalistic "coup" was blocked.

Lacking his two-thirds majority, Frei was elected to the Senate, where as its president, he found a platform for continued attacks on the government.

The second element in the anti-Allende strategy was to use certain key economic groups to block the economic reforms of the government.

A strike was mobilized among the small-time businessmen who operated the trucking industry in Chile. While never universal, the truck-owners strike was a reaction against the government's plan for state initiative in transportation and was a bloc to the economic stability of Chile's elongated strip of land.

Merchants and businessmen's

groups, doctors and other professionals joined in. It was not a strike in collective bargaining terms — with some potentiality for settlement — but an all-out attempt to overthrow the government by creating such economic paralysis that the armed forces would be persuaded to intervene. There is strong evidence that shows American funding of the truck-drivers during the strike and a tremendous inflow of US dollars at this time.

Direct sabotage accompanied the legislative and economic attacks. Supplies were hoarded and destroyed; factory owners attempted to lock out workers from production, and right-wing groups attacked non-striking truckers and various government agencies.

But the strategy failed. Allende was able to keep his coalition together, to maintain order and to gain the effective co-operation of the armed forces. With the addition of several military men to his cabinet, led by army commander Carlos Prats, he out-foxed the right, putting them

in the unenviable position of having to attack their long-potential allies; the armed forces, who, in turn, were assuming the mantle of the "defenders of the constitutional presidency." While this strategy enabled the President and the coalition to maintain control of the situation and the country, the key to their survival was the massive support the

government received from Chile's people.

Chilean workers, students and peasants mobilized and created a new revolutionary consciousness and direction.

The response of workers, students and peasants to the truck-owners strike was tremendous. Medical students and nurses staffed hospitals in the face of the doctors' strike. Vigilance committees were established in neighbourhoods and factories to prevent sabotage. In October, the military and the organized working class joined

forces to keep the face of the revolution.

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"Well back to the old ballot box."