

South America on fire

Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group

23 December 2019

Across South America, the class struggle is raging at an intensity that Australia has rarely seen. Both Right and Left are on the offensive in different countries and it is the political centre which is falling away.

Bolivia has just experienced a military coup with clear participation of Fascists and with at least a degree of orchestration from within the United States. The coup regime has issued an arrest warrant for former President Evo Morales, under the pretext of terrorism and sedition, but transparently for the real reason of being Evo Morales. In Brazil, the Fascist Jair Bolsonaro was elected by technically democratic means, but is engaged in murderous repression and is attacking the institutions of capitalist democracy from within. He is not getting it all his own way, though, and there has been sporadic large scale struggle against him.

In Argentina, the Right has just been ejected from office by the Centre-Left, but inflation is high and mass struggles continue. In Colombia, a recent general strike suffered widespread repression which has nevertheless failed to squash the movement. This should surprise no-one, because ever since the peace deal disarming the guerillas of FARC, the oligarchy has been able to engage in murderous repression of the social movement, unconstrained by prospects of reprisal.

The Right is also on the offensive in Venezuela and has been for some years. President Nicolas Maduro, successor to Hugo Chavez, is a bumbling authoritarian who has no idea how to defeat the militant Right, which is financed and in large measure directed by the United States. He narrows the Chavista base by counter-productive measures and an inability to dodge the crippling US sanctions. Opposition to him from the Left is needed, but an opposition which is also aimed clearly against the Right. Meanwhile, in Ecuador, the ironically named Lenin Moreno has switched sides, allied with the United States and largely adopted the policies of the Right. A massive campaign of strikes and demonstrations in October caused him to abandon a set of drastic austerity measures.

It is Chile, however, which is ground zero and where the struggle has advanced the furthest. The working class and student movements in Chile have waged immense struggles frequently in recent years, concentrating mainly on immediate issues but with an undercurrent of rejection of the political system. This undercurrent burst out into the open when the entire country rose up on 7 October and following days against an attempt by the Right wing government to increase public transport fares. No sooner had strikes and demonstrations begun than a slogan emerged that took the struggle to a new level: "It's not the thirty pesos, it's the thirty years." Though the

students have been the most militant, the power of the working class has been the most effective. Support for Right wing President Sebastian Pinera has totally collapsed and not even cutting a deal with the parties of the Left (including the so-called “Communist” Party) for a Constitutional Convention has enabled him to re-stabilise things. Militant demonstrations continue.

What needs to be done to drive the struggle onwards? How can the Right be beaten? The answer is twofold. Firstly, Anarchists in South America should organise themselves in federations of revolutionary Anarchist Communists – a tendency which there goes by the name of Especificismo. This is, to an extent, happening. The Federation Anarchista Santiago is active in Chile and is strongly participating in the struggle there. In addition, Especificismo groups in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil have recently announced the re-launching of CALA, the Latin American Anarchist Co-ordination. This is an immensely positive development, showing the way for Anarchists to participate in the struggles on that continent in a positive way. The Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group calls on Anarchists across South America to flock to their banners or to form similar groups so that the effectiveness of Anarchist organisation can grow by the orders of magnitude the struggle necessitates.

The other thing that needs to happen is the formation, in Chile and other countries where the struggle has reached the necessary level, of mass organs of workers’ democracy. The old reformist organisations of the working class are simply inadequate to the current crisis. New bodies are needed, transcending bureaucratic divisions, uniting broader layers of workers and establishing direct democracy in place of representation. These bodies will be based in the workplace, in order to establish the possibility of cutting off the power of capital at its source and wielding the vast power of the economy according to the will of the workers themselves.

Finally, it is necessary to recognise there is no conflict between these two tasks. Indeed, the first is a precondition of the second. Anarchists organised on the basis of Especificismo need to be propagandising ceaselessly, in Chile and wherever else is practical, for workers to form mass organs of workers’ democracy and to turn away from Parliamentary roads that can only lead to defeat or from political parties which seek power only for themselves, not the workers. Only the revolutionary abolition of capitalism can solve South America’s pressing crisis and only Anarchist Communism, Especificismo, can light the way to that revolution.

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