

A POLICE KILLING IN CHILE...

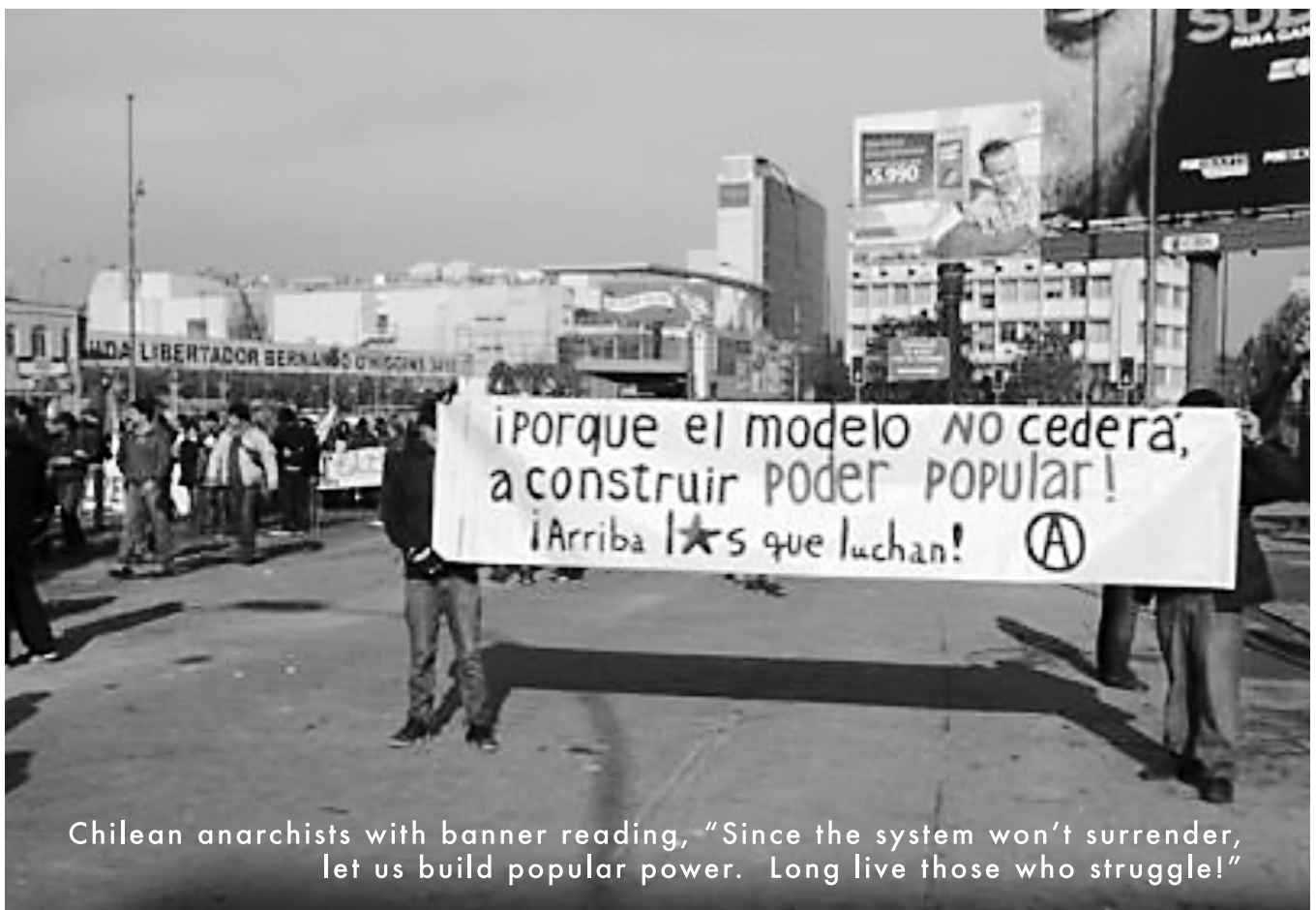


While much of the world's attention this year has been turned toward events in the Northern hemisphere—the Arab Spring, the Spanish and Greek street assemblies, the riots in the UK, the violence in Libya—an equally interesting and potentially more radical movement has been taking place in Chile.

Chilean students and the poor who have been excluded from “the Chilean miracle” of American-trained free marketers have waged fierce battles with the cops. One teenager has been killed in the streets, shot by police in Macul, a borough of Santiago. Initial reports described the victim as a protester; later ones say he may have been an onlooker. His family places the blame squarely on the police. Whatever the final determination, he was a casualty in a conflict that has pitted Chilean youth against a social order that is old, decrepit, and brutal.

The Chilean movement has emerged in the throes of winter in the Southern hemisphere, with young people going out into the icy streets, braving the elements, of course, and, more importantly, directly challenging the Chilean state and its gendarmes, showing determination and resolve in the face of the military police. These cops are the carabineros of sinister memory under Pinochet. Their vehicles include armored personnel carriers, and they shoot water cannons at demonstrators. They more resemble an occupying army than a riot squad.

We want to remember Manuel Gutiérrez Reinoso, the teenager killed on the night of August 24, but we want to do more than that: we want to actively support the broader rebellion in Chile. We see something in the protest movement there that we identify with: it is a struggle that is ours as well. The Chilean protests began as a student movement demanding the right to public education, and at no cost to students, even at the university level. The protests began on a whimsical note, with mass “kiss ins” and other creative gestures. What made Chile different from California was that Chilean workers and the poor saw the students’ fight as one they should support as well. As the movement spread, it encountered stiff resistance from the state and its armed wing, the police. What started with a kind of poetry turned into social war.



Chilean anarchists with banner reading, “Since the system won’t surrender, let us build popular power. Long live those who struggle!”



A BATTLEFIELD THAT IS EVERYWHERE



Occupation of Education Ministry by the "Rebel Education Ministry"
 Police at the scene of the occupation
 Radicals hang banner reading, "From the Classroom to the Class Struggle"

Pitched battles have taken place on the streets of neighborhoods in Santiago and elsewhere in the past two weeks. At its most radical level, the Chilean struggle is a fight against capitalism and the state, a fight against the misery spread by a system whose financial house of cards is shaking. In fact, the movement's radical wing has already opposed the efforts of student union bureaucrats (including the media darling, Camila Vallejo) to cut a deal with the Chilean government and achieve merely a reform of the education system. The radicals have promoted self-organization and autonomy in neighborhoods and regions, recalling the anti-authoritarian aspects of the Chilean Revolution of the 1970s, the cordones industriales and comandos comunales, forms of direct democracy created by workers and the poor.

It is on the basis of this radicalism that we make common cause with the Chilean rebellion, and not out of an empty notion of "solidarity," but rather from a deep conviction that we need to open a front in the social war here where we live. We do not want to be trapped underneath the rubble as capitalism's house of cards collapses. We want to deal out new cards, new ideas, and make a new and different world. We invite you to join us. Bring your own banners, signs, and ideas. It will be an open ended protest, whose features will be determined by those who participate in it. Those endorsing this action may not necessarily agree on an entire program or philosophy, but we do agree on this: it is important to stand up for those who have already accomplished so much, and at great risk to themselves, in Chile.

Text by CR: 9/3/2011

VIGIL & PROTEST

Friday September 9, 2011: 4 p.m.

Consulate General of Chile: 870 Market Street, San Francisco
Collective Reinventions, MAIZ (Movimiento de Acción Inspirando Servicio, San Jose) and Voz de Lucha