



# Street Battle in Santiago

Chile's hot spring began in November. It was the stormiest month since March 1983 when mass street protests first began to interrupt the silence of the tomb Chile's U.S.-backed generals had tried to impose on the country since they took over a decade earlier.

On November 6th General Pinochet (shown above) reimposed a national state of siege. The national stadium, where soccer fans had recently broken out in chants of "Va caer" (the government will fall) earlier in the month, was used to hold the 10,000 workers and others rounded up by police and troops in the capital city of Santiago. The Pisagua desert concentration camp was reopened for business. On the eve of Chile's twelfth consecutive National Days of Protest starting November 28, troops in La Victoria, a working class slum which has been the most violent centre of resistance, dug themselves World

War I-style trenches from which to fight. The fighting lasted almost three days in the slums, on the streets of downtown Santiago and on university campuses.

The decree reimposing a state of siege was co-signed by Sergio Jarpa, a life-long fascist who as Chile's Interior Minister was leading what was billed as Chile's "democratic opening." Although it was the U.S. which unleashed Pinochet over a decade ago, nevertheless the U.S. gave signs of being disturbed by the clanging shut of this "opening" at least for now. This "opening" had failed to make the junta more popular among the middle classes who once supported it or more powerful in the face of the rebellion of the masses. So far despite all the U.S.'s efforts it has failed to negotiate a transition from a military junta made in the imperialist blood sausage factory to a civilian government made of another skin with the

same stuffing.

There are two related reasons for this. The first is that no civilian government is likely in Chile without considerable influence for the pro-Soviet forces and space for them to work towards a "historic compromise" undermining exclusive U.S.-bloc control. It was partially to prevent this that the U.S. had Chile's last civilian government overthrown. The second reason is that these days of protest which began amid sordid political manoeuvres have been the occasion for outbursts especially among the youth, particularly proletarian youth, that have increasingly terrified not only the country's rulers but also some of the forces scheming to use their ability "to control" the masses as capital. In Chile, as elsewhere in Latin America and the world, these youth are a new factor in the game which none of the traditional players welcome. ■