

The elements which have been grouped together in Mida are working together to overcome our ideological weaknesses and become better organisations. Of course, it is also important to recover what we lost during the dictatorship because of the repression.

Rapid organisation

One thing we have realised since 1970 is that we erred by trying to mobilise people very rapidly, rather than relying on more traditional methods of organising. In 1970, when Allende's Popular Unity (UP) government was voted into power, the basic social organisation was relatively weak; today it's even weaker.

The main trade union federation, known as CUT, was characterised by a top-heaviness. The unions affiliated to CUT performed rather irregularly and tended to focus on specific types of activities which basically consisted of collective bargaining once a year. Among the general population, on the outskirts of the cities, the level of social organisation was relatively weak. They, like student and other organisations, tended to be top-heavy.

The neoliberal project

In rebuilding the Chilean Left, we declare ourselves enemies of capitalism — particularly its free market and neoliberal form. We have the "advantage" of having suffered the effects of neoliberalism, imposed on us by a dictatorial regime.

Neoliberalism has cost Chilean workers the important gains they achieved through long and painful struggles. The right to strike exists legally, but is practically non-existent. A union can vote and choose to strike — but after 15 days on strike, if there is no agreement with management, scab labour can be employed and the strike will fizzle out. Management is allowed to negotiate individually with each worker; so it grants benefits to workers individually, not by way of the unions. That is how you explain the fact that there are 11 000 unions, most very small. And together they represent only 14% of the country's labour force.

Chilean workers have lost access to health. The neoliberal model privatises health services, even cemeteries. Education is now private, with private universities flourishing. You will not



The struggle is not yet over

Veteran activist Manuel Cabieses Donoso founded Punto Final newspaper in 1965. In 1973, his newspaper was closed by the Pinochet dictatorship and Cabieses was detained in several prison camps until 1975, when he went into exile.

Cabieses returned to Chile in 1979, working underground against the dictatorship, and was a founder member of the Revolutionary Movement of the Left (MIR). He later became founder and leader of the Allendist Democratic Movement of the Left (Mida).

Cabieses has relaunched Punto Final and is currently editor-in-chief. Later this year he is due to face charges of slander and incitement for an article he wrote about Pinochet during the late '80s. Because of Chile's bizarre legal system, Cabieses will face charges under both the military council and the civilian government. He faces imprisonment of 800 days on each of the charges.

find the child of a worker in those universities. There is a shortage of one million houses.

The secret of the neoliberal economic model is to push the exploitation of workers to the extreme — lower wages, long working hours, etc. A UN report estimates that between 1974 and 1989 Chilean workers were dispossessed of \$83-billion — by way of lower income, longer hours, the removal of essential services and super-exploitation. We demand that this social debt be repaid, by bringing back the social services that were taken away.

New conditions

Chile in 1993 is a totally different country from Chile of 1973. This has tremendous implications for the Chilean Left which, to a certain extent, has not been able to adapt to the new situation.

To impose the neoliberal model, it was necessary to annihilate the organisations of the Left. The military dictatorship almost achieved this. The toll was horrific: There were 15 000 dead and 2 500 "disappeared". And it has proved impossible to apply justice; not a single member of the armed forces or police have been charged with any of these crimes.

But what is important today is that the popular, democratic and revolutionary organisations were virtually silenced. We have been undergoing a very slow process of reconstruction which has grown in strength a bit since 1990.

The Chilean Left is still debating the mistakes we made in 1973. We believe it would be wrong to try and repeat the road of the UP. We know what the end of that road looks like. Anyway, the masses will not follow us on that road because they know where it leads to.

I believe the road the forces of the Left must follow should be to achieve a decisive social majority which should be well-organised and should extend into all sections of our society, including the armed forces. This demands profound changes and adaptations in our organisations and their methods of working.

Luckily, the events of the past few years, the changes in political and ideological thinking, have opened the possibility — at least for the Latin American Left — to develop styles of working and organisation that are democratic, and to abandon authoritarian habits. We are stimulated by these new realities.

And although the road forward is not altogether clear, we have in our favour, across the world, the tendency towards building these democratic social and political forces. ■

● This is an edited version of a presentation to a public forum at Johannesburg's Phambili Books. WIP is grateful to Phambili Books, and to CUSO for their support in bringing Mr Cabieses to South Africa