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Revolutions and Popular Politics in 20th Century Latin America

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Influence, Interests, Investments and the Cloak of “Anti-Communism:” American Involvement
in Allende’s Democratically-Elected Communist Chile

On September 4, 1970, Salvador Guillermo Allende Gossens became the first marxist to come to power through an open, democratic election. Ariel Dorfman, who eventually served as Allende’s Cultural and Press Advisor, remembered of this day that

Like hundreds of thousands of other Chileans, Claudio and I were fervent supporters of the Socialist Salvador Allende, who-at a time when guerilla warfare was raging across Latin America-believed that a nonviolent revolution in our country was possible and proclaimed that we could create a more just and sovereign society through peaceful and democratic means.¹

Unfortunately, that just and sovereign society was attacked and dismantled in a military coup led by military commander-in-chief, Augusto Jose Ramon Pinochet Ugarte, on September 11, 1973. This coup proved that just as a nonviolent revolution can bring change, so too can a military coup bring death to a leader and democracy.

Throughout the Cold War and the threat of communism in general, it was not democracy that the US was looking to protect, but capitalism; which has no place in a communist government. Through studying the actions of the US government, the intentions become clear. Anti-communism is a front repeatedly manipulated by the US government to defend their pro-capitalist involvement in foreign policy; this is evident in the case of Chile and the US government’s involvement in the 1964 and 1970 elections, and the coup of Salvador Allende. The true interests of the U.S. lie in monetary influence, interest and investments, which over encompass any regard for democracy and right to self-government. For organization sake, this paper will first discuss background information regarding Chilean Society and Allende, followed by the evidence for the 1964 and 1970 election, respectively, and ending with with military coup of Allende’s government in 1973.

Chile is not a surprising location for communism to thrive. Similar to the diversity in climate, Chilean social structure is no different with extreme disparities between the top and

¹ Ariel Dorfman, “9/11: The Day Everything Changed, in Chile.” *New York Times*. 7 September 2013.

bottom. *Los rotos* (the broken) are the disenfranchised illiterates of Cuban Society, with the majority consisting of working class/peasants of Amerindian origin. While the highest class consists mainly of those of Basque/German origin.² Described as lively and generous to a fault, Salvador Allende came from a well respected and political family, but became increasingly aware of this disparity through his own various endeavors, and was extremely affected by what he saw. Allende joined the military in 1924 at age 16 and became a medical student in 1926 until his graduation in 1932. He also worked part time ambulance service, where he came face to face with the mass illiteracy and impoverishment rampant throughout Chile's lower classes. This and a strong social conscience brought him into politics in 1937, with notable positions throughout the Popular Front and within the Senate of Chile.³

Although Allende had ran for the presidency in 1952 and 1958 as well, his name was of little worry for the US until the 1964 election. In 1975 the Select Committee on Intelligence in the US Senate reported that both Kennedy and Johnson, under the Alliance for Progress, gave over \$3 million from 1962-1964 to Christian Democrat candidate, Eduardo Frei, in order to prevent Allende's presidency.⁴ The Alliance for Progress was not the only American organization donating to the cause, as several businesses with interests in Chile donated to Frei's election as well. Along with Anaconda (a copper business with huge interests in Chile), Chase Manhattan Bank, International Telephone and Telegraph, and Pepsico had come together to form the executive committee of the Business Group for Latin America. At least \$2 million of the Group's dollars alone were spent to get Frei elected. At some point during 1963, CIA director John McCone had met with David Rockefeller and Anaconda executives, who told McCone that Allende would be a threat to their company, advising McCone on the necessity to give financial support to Frei. The CIA had requested \$500,000 in July for Frei's campaign.⁵

Here is when the Mann Doctrine and its timing become of particular interest. In 1964, Thomas Mann, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, proposed the Mann

² Haslam, Jonathan. *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile: a case of assisted suicide*. New York: Verso, 2005. p. 2.

³ Haslam, *The Nixon Administration*, 4

⁴ Qureshi, Lubna Z. *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende: U.S. involvement in the 1973 coup in Chile*. Lanham Md.: Lexington Books, 2010. p. 27

⁵ Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende*, p. 31

Doctrine, which essentially called on the US government to ignore the people of Latin America and support regimes that were sympathetic to US interests.⁶ This included military dictatorships and excluded democratically elected communists, such as Allende, should they be successful. The Mann Doctrine gives credibility to undemocratic involvement overseas, and for what? American interests and investments.

In 1970, this pattern continues, Allende runs for the presidency again and the US gets involved in Chile's democratic elections again. Particularly, the CIA once again got involved in Chile's 1970 election to stop Allende. Receiving private funding from Anaconda Copper, Pepsi-Cola, as well as money requested from the government.⁷ After a congressional run-off, on September 4th, Allende was declared the winning candidate. He had finally won the presidency. Allende's win made him the first Marxist to come to power through the electoral system. However, instead of respecting the free will of the Chilean peoples or the results of the election, involvement did not stop there. More extensive involvement by the US government comes soon after Allende's election.

Days after the results of the election on September 14, Viron Vaky, top deputy on NSC, wrote to Henry Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Advisor, what he saw as the two major dangers in regards to Chile. The largest of which was exposure of involvement, which could ruin US credibility and would permanently increase the anti-US sentiment in Chile. This could have problematic reactions in Latin America, the world, and domestically. The other danger was a slippery slope that "we may very well find ourselves irresistibly sucked into rising degrees of involvement at risking risks to "protect the investment" and find ourselves having slipped into a disastrous situation."⁸ Because the US had \$1.5 billion dollars worth of investments in Chile⁹ it seems that the investment worth protecting was not democracy. It also seems that it was worth any risk of a disastrous situation as Kissinger ignored Vaky's warning. Nixon had similar sentiment regarding the urgency in Chile. The next day, September 15, Richard Helms, director

⁶ "What is the Mann Doctrine?" *New York Times*. 21 March 1964

⁷ Hanhimäki, Jussi M. *The Flawed Architect: Henry Kissinger and American Foreign Policy*. London: Oxford University Press, 2004. p. 101

⁸ *Viron Vaky to Kissinger*, "Chile-40 Committee Meeting, Monday-September 14," *September 14, 1970*. In National Security Archive, Kissinger and Chile: The Declassified Record.

⁹ Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende*, p. xii

of the CIA, had a meeting with Nixon on Allende. His handwritten notes of the meeting show Nixon's intentions for Chile: "1 in 10 chance perhaps, but save Chile! Worth spending. Not concerned with risks involved. No involvement of embassy. \$10,000,000 available, more if necessary. Full time job-best men we have. Game plan. Make the economy scream. 48 hours for plan of action."¹⁰ Just as Kissinger, Nixon was not concerned with risks involved. Millions were provided to make the economy scream.

Part of Nixon's plan of action involved an attempt at a coup to overthrow Allende before taking office on October 3, 1970. The Chilean Armed Forces officers were to be supplied with tear gas and machine guns by the US government. Intent for the coup was to kidnap Chilean military commander, Rene Schneider, in a way that could be blamed on Allende's supporters, prompting a military takeover.¹¹ However, Schneider was killed by another group with CIA connections, making the coup obsolete.

Kissinger's defense for involvement was that Allende would seek to establish a socialist state and eliminate US influence from Chile and the hemisphere.¹² It is evident that US influence does not have anything to do with the principles this country was founded on, especially democracy and the right to self-government, but the influence of American business and power. Kissinger himself takes note of this in his November 5, 1970 memorandum for the president,

A. Allende was elected legally, the first Marxist government ever to come to power by free elections. He has legitimacy in the eyes of Chileans and most of the world; there is nothing we can do to deny him that legitimacy or claim he does not have it. B. We are strongly on record in support of self-determination and respect for free election; you are firmly on record for non-intervention in the internal affairs of this hemisphere and of accepting nations "as they are."¹³

This reference to Allende's legitimacy and being on the record for respect of free elections is not to stop actions against Allende, but to remind Nixon that efforts against Allende need to be

¹⁰ Handwritten notes, Richard Helms, "Meeting with President," September 15, 1970. PDF. National Security Archive, Kissinger and Chile: The Declassified Record.

¹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, CIA, Cable Transmissions on Coup Planning, October 18, 1970. PDF. National Security Archive, Chile and the United States: Declassified Documents Relating to the Military Coup, September 11, 1973.

¹² White House, Kissinger, Memorandum for the President, "Subject: NSC Meeting, November 6-Chile," November 5, 1970. PDF. National Security Archive, Kissinger and Chile: The Declassified Record.

¹³ White House, Kissinger, Memorandum for the President, "Subject: NSC Meeting, November 6-Chile," November 5, 1970.

covert enough not to ruin the portrayal of America. This constant theme of worry of the message that involvement will send shows that image is everything. Image is more important than keeping true to principles. This leads back to Vaky's initial message to Kissinger. In this there was another important warning: "What we propose is patently a violation of our own principles and policy tenets...If these principles have any meaning, we normally depart from them only to meet the gravest threat to us, e.g. to our survival. Is Allende a mortal threat to the US? It is hard to argue this."¹⁴ Nixon and Kissinger's explicit disregard for Vaky coincide with their explicit disregard for American principles.

Chile had a long-standing democratic history and its people had a strong faith in the electoral system. This made the US afraid, that despite monetary effort, socialism is being seen as a reputable government, so reputable that people are voting for it. Citizens of Chile, at least 37% of it, were ready for change. The US, however, was not. This was seen as more important than the "self determination and free election" that Nixon supported. Kissinger says that

The example of a successful elected Marxist government in Chile would surely have an impact on-and event precedent value for-other parts of the world, especially Italy the imitative spread of similar phenomena elsewhere would in turn significantly affect the world balance and our own position in it.¹⁵

If democratically elected and publically supported, theoretically there should be no qualms from another foreign power in regards to another country's government. Except there were because one of the key tenets of socialism, the nationalization of business, rejects the notions of capitalism and largely rejects the involvement of foreign hands in a country's economy. This extinguishes any need for the influence of American dollars and business.

Nixon had a history of seeing Latin American democracy as violent and irritable. Stemming from a particular tour of Latin America while Vice President, where Nixon received, to put it lightly, hostile reactions from Peruvians and Venezuelans.¹⁶ He obviously never thought to get to the source of these hostilities, as his reactive and combative personality only led him to strike. Had he been led toward education or understanding, he would have learned that America's history of imperialist actions in Latin America created strong Anti-American

¹⁴ *Viron Vaky to Kissinger*, "Chile-40 Committee Meeting, Monday-September 14," *September 14, 1970*.

¹⁵ White House, Kissinger, Memorandum for the President, "Subject: NSC Meeting, November 6-Chile," November 5, 1970.

¹⁶ Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende*, p. 3

sentiment throughout. He's on record saying that "when you look at Latin America, not a very encouraging place to see, except those countries that got dictators in it and successful dictators, they're all in a hell of a mess."¹⁷ With this contempt for Latin American democracy and a respect for dictatorship we move further into Chile.

On September 11, 1973, La Moneda, the presidential palace, was attacked by Augusto Pinochet in a military coup of Allende's government. While Allende and his staff were being bombed at and held prisoner within La Moneda,¹⁸ Allende spoke his final words to his people. Showing his character, his words are rather optimistic and civil for someone that is being attacked by people who betrayed him.

Placed in historic transition, I will pay for loyalty to the people with my life. And I say to them that I am certain that the seed which we have planted in the good conscience of thousands and thousands of Chileans will not be shriveled forever. They have strength and will be able to dominate us, but social process can be arrested by crime nor force.¹⁹

Although there had been talks by the US government in the past about a possible coup to overthrow Allende, it is held by the CIA that the US was not personally involved in the coup that overthrew Allende:

We find no information—nor did the Church Committee—that CIA or the Intelligence Community was involved in the death of Chilean President Salvador Allende. He is believed to have committed suicide as the coup leaders closed in on him. The major CIA effort against Allende came earlier in 1970 in the failed attempt to block his election and accession to the Presidency. Nonetheless, the US Administration's long-standing hostility to Allende and its past encouragement of a military coup against him were well known among Chilean coup plotters who eventually took action on their own to oust him.²⁰

It is proven that the US did know, and to me, the evidence can be presented to show that maybe there was personal involvement by the US government.

The CIA also says that the day before the coup a Chilean military officer reported to a CIA officer that the coup was being planned. The CIA reports to have refused to assist this coup.

¹⁷ Qureshi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende*, p. 11.

¹⁸ Dorfman, "9/11," *New York Times*

¹⁹ Salvador Allende. Last Words to the Nation. Manuscript. In Marxists Internet Archive, Salvador Allende (1908-1973).

²⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Summary of Response to Questions," CIA Activities in Chile created September 18, 2000.

²¹ I have extreme doubts of this refusal. Just a month prior, in August 1973, the Defense Intelligence Agency had done a biography on Pinochet. This could be because Pinochet had just become the Commander in Chief of the Chilean Army, however the specific date the biography was made, or requested is not present. As well, a good portion of the document is blacked out, other than some personal information on Pinochet, such as language, birthday and military history. An addendum was added after the coup stating him as president of Chile.²²

What I find most interesting, is a telephone conversation between Kissinger and Nixon a few days following the coup:

K(Kissinger): Nothing of very great consequence. The Chilean thing is getting consolidated and of course the newspapers are bleeding because a pro-Communist government has been overthrown. P(president): Isn't that something. Isn't that something. K: I mean instead of celebrating-in the Eisenhower period we would be heros. P: well we didn't-as you know-our hand doesn't show on this one though. K: we didn't do it. I mean we helped them. _____ created the conditions as great as possible P:that is right. And that is the way it is going to be played. But listen, as far as people are concerned let me say they aren't going to buy this crap from the Liberals on this one. K: absolutely not.²³

What is left to the imagination is who created the conditions, because whomever it was is protected, and worth protecting. The entire conversation that takes place between Nixon and Kissinger is so interesting because of how extremely casual they are. I am extremely suspicious of their level of involvement, especially due to that being "the way it is going to be played." I think this way of "playing" it is continued to this day. Just as well, any actions of the Nixon Administration are dignified under the Mann Doctrine, which upholds this protection for American interests in spite of foreign democratic institutions in place.

Whether involved in the coup or not, the Nixon administration was in close connection to Pinochet during his dictatorship. A common occurrence in this relationship is trying to validate the actions of the coup and to allow for more funding for Chile. In a June 8, 1976 conversation, largely between Pinochet and Kissinger, Pinochet attempts to give credibility to his command,

²¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Early Allende Presidency," CIA Activities in Chile created September 18, 2000.

²² Defense Intelligence Agency, Biographic Data on General Augusto Pinochet, August/September 1973. PDF. National Security Archive, Chile and the United States: Declassified Documents Relating to the Military Coup, September 11, 1973.

²³ Telcon, Kissinger-Nixon, September 16, 1973, 11:50 a.m. PDF. National Security Archive, Kissinger and Chile: The Declassified Record.

saying that Chile “is a country of warm hearted people, who love liberty. This is the reason they did not accept communism when the communists attempted to take over the country.”²⁴

Although I’m sure Chile is a country of warm hearted people, Pinochet is wrong in saying that they did not accept communism. They did in 1970 with a majority-slim as it was-voting for Allende’s “communist attempt to take over the country,” and supported his accession to the Presidency. The rest of conversation consists mostly of talks on how to better the state of human rights in Chile, specifically so Kissinger can get support from congress to increase funding for Chile. He first needs further support for congress to overturn the Kennedy amendment, which banned the sale of weapons to Chile. This relationship should further the notion that US involvement in Chile was never about anti-communism. In regards to democratic well-being, dictatorships are more detrimental than communism. Allende was never a dictator, while that is all that Pinochet was, and a heartless one at that. If anti-communism was the intention, the US would have been out of Chile following Allende’s coup. As shown through Operation Condor and this continuation of relations with Pinochet, they were not.

Operation Condor comes into play because later in 1976, it was officially organized. Although not specifically a part of Operation Condor, the US had profound influence on it, through it’s profound influence of the governments involved. All six of the governments at hand were military governments supported by the US. Operation Condor was a codename for the collection, exchange and storage of intelligence concerning so called “leftists,” communists and marxists between intelligence services of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Brazil having tentative membership. Chile was the center of the operation. The most secret phases were the formation of special teams from member countries who are to travel anywhere in the world to non-member countries to carry out sanctions, up to assassination against terrorists or supporters or terrorist organizations from member countries.²⁵

Although perhaps not specifically relevant to Allende, Operation Condor is still important. It proves the repeated involvement of the US in foreign governments in the name of

²⁴ Department of State, Memorandum, “Secretary's Staff Meeting, October 1, 1973: Summary of Decisions,” October 4, 1973, (excerpt). PDF. National Security Archive, Kissinger and Chile: The Declassified Record.

²⁵ FBI, Operation Condor Cable, September 28, 1976. PDF. National Security Archive, Chile and the United States: Declassified Documents Relating to the Military Coup, September 11, 1973.

anti-communism. What we should be asking ourselves now, is why so much death and destruction to prevent something portrayed as causing death and destruction? Anti-communism in the US stems from fear of its threat to democracy. As evident in Chile in 1970, communism is not an innate threat to democracy. Communism can, and should more so, be elected democratically. The true fear then, is that people will see the advantages of true and just communist system and wish to end capitalism. With the amount of money from big business in politics, this can not occur.

To me this mindset all began in the 19th century, though having clearly evolved over time. Manifest Destiny is typically taught, and thought, to have justified expansion west across America, that God had willed it himself. Unbeknownst to most school children, and unfortunately most Americans, Manifest Destiny did not end when the western coast was reached, and in fact, has not ended. This deification of the American spirit has infected the American mindset since its inception and has led to the annihilation of countries and people. And for what? For whom? Profit and American influence abroad fiercely protected through the government's extreme devotion to capitalism and the profound influence big business has on the American government as well.

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