

CIA Link Seen in '70 Chile Plot

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The Central Intelligence Agency encouraged a 1970 scheme to touch off a coup in Chile that went awry and resulted in the assassination of Chilean Gen. Rene Schneider, according to informed sources.

Schneider, commander of the Chilean army, was fatally wounded on Oct. 22, 1970—two days before the Chilean Congress ratified the election of the late Salvador Allende as president of the South American nation. A gang of assailants sought to kidnap Schneider as he was being driven to his office in Santiago, but shot him when it appeared he was trying to draw a gun.

The CIA, it was learned, had Schneider on what amounted to a worldwide "enemies' list" of individuals considered inimical to U.S. interests, but the agency, sources said, did not intend his assassination and did not think he would be killed.

The abortive kidnaping was staged with the thought that it would lead to a military takeover of the country and prevent Allende from assuming the presidency.

Government officials have been treating covert CIA operations in Chile as especially sensitive. The White House has not turned over documents on the issue to the Senate committee on intelligence operations and has been insisting instead on first providing a briefing that has been postponed at least once.

The CIA, it was disclosed last fall, spent \$3 million in Chile to foil Allende's candidacy in 1964 and \$8 million attempting to block his election and to undermine his government after 1969. A confidential Senate staff report prepared last September accused Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger of having "deceived" the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in sworn testimony on the issue.

According to that report, Kissinger minimized the CIA's role in the 1970 Chilean election in secret testimony during his 1973 confirmation hearings. The report quoted Kissinger as saying:

See SCHNEIDER, A4, Col. 1

SCHNEIDER, From A1

"The CIA was heavily involved in 1964 in the election, was in a very minor way involved in the 1970 election and since then we have absolutely stayed away from any coups."

Read closely, Kissinger's statement did not rule out CIA involvement in a 1970 coup effort albeit, by his definition, "in a very minor way."

It could not be established whether the CIA provided any concrete assistance such as money to those behind the Schneider kidnaping attempt. (Sources indicated that the agency expressed its approval and encouragement of the idea. However, whether this encouragement amounted to an explicit directive to go ahead or whether the plotters

acted on their own is not known.)

Sources agreed that a thorough investigation could provide fresh embarrassment for the CIA and perhaps for others if secret documents (other than those of International Telephone & Telegraph Co., which already are known) become public.

A CIA spokesman declined any comment.

In any case, Schneider's death was evidently not part of the plot. His would-be abductors intercepted his Mercedes-Benz, apparently thinking he could be kidnaped quickly, but assumed the car doors were locked and began smashing the rear window with a sledge hammer. The general was shot three times, reportedly when it seemed he was reaching for a gun.

"I don't think there was any intention to assassinate anyone by the agency or by the others," one source said.

According to internal memoranda of ITT, which had more than \$150 million invested in Chile, U.S. interests promoted, but then apparently backed away from plans for a right-wing military coup there in 1970.

A Marxist, Allende won a narrow plurality in the Chilean national elections on Sept. 4, 1970. During the campaign, Gen. Schneider, apparently on his own initiative, declared that the army would respect the decision of the voters. But after the balloting, extreme right-wing elements in the country began advocating military intervention to block Allende's assumption of the presidency.

The ITT papers, first made

public in 1972 by columnist Jack Anderson, stated that around mid-September of 1970, the U.S. government gave "the green light" to the ambassador in Santiago "to move in the name of President Nixon" with "maximum authority to do all possible, short of a Dominican Republican type action, to keep Allende from taking power."

One retired Chilean general, Roberto Viaux, was described in the same Sept. 17, 1970, ITT memo, as "all gung-ho" about taking action, but Schneider was said to have "threatened to have Viaux shot if he moves unilaterally."

Outgoing President Eduardo Frei was reported in the document to be unwilling to move "unless he is provided with a constitutional threat" justifying intervention. "That threat

must be provided one way or another through provocation," the ITT operatives in Chile declared.

As the weeks went by, Allende's prospects for final election improved. At one point, according to a summary of secret CIA testimony last year, the National Security Council's "Forty Committee," which Kissinger chaired, authorized CIA expenditure of \$350,000 "to bribe the Chilean congress," but this plan was later discarded as unworkable.

"Unless there is a move by dissident Chilean military elements by this time next mid-week," ITT was told by its operatives in Chile on Oct. 16, 1970, "the consensus in Santiago is that Salvador Allende will win the October 24 congressional run-off easily . . ." Viaux was said to have been preparing to move, but, the ITT memo stated, "it is a fact that word was passed to Viaux from Washington to hold back last week" and wait for a riper moment.

"As part of the persuasion to delay," this memo stated, "Viaux was given oral assurances he would receive material assistance and support from the U.S. and others for a later maneuver. It must be noted that friends of Viaux subsequently reported Viaux was inclined to be a bit skeptical about only oral assurances."

The same Oct. 16 corporate communique observed that Allende was undoubtedly aware of "this sort of plotting" to block his election since he noted in a speech earlier that week that Chile was "now swarming with CIA agents."

Subsequent ITT documents mentioned the shooting of Schneider, but nothing to indicate U.S. involvement in it. At first, ITT operatives in Chile

described it as "a skillful maneuver to eliminate from the top the one man who would have permitted Allende to infiltrate and neutralize the military."

After Allende's inauguration in November, 1970, however, the ITT papers called the Schneider assassination "a grim development that may greatly strengthen Allende's

and the Communist position" because it could invite a military purge.

By then, Viaux had been arrested on charges of participating in the slaying. He was convicted and served time in prison, but his sentence was later reduced on appeal and he subsequently moved to Ecuador. In 1972, while still in Chile, he denied receiving

money from the CIA or "any other organization" to plot against Allende. The Chilean president was overthrown in September, 1973, in a bloody coup that reduced in his death.

The Senate committee investigating the CIA is expected to get a White House briefing on the Agency' Chilean operations this week.