

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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The C.I.A. in Chile

At his recent press conference, President Ford gave a flimsy and self-righteous excuse for the C.I.A.'s role in "destabilizing" the Allende government in Chile. He claimed it was necessary for the United States to help Allende's opponents because his government supposedly was moving to destroy the opposition parties and media.

Even if one accepts the President's view of events in Chile as accurate, and I certainly do not, he left two obvious questions unanswered: "Why did the C.I.A. spend millions of dollars to defeat Allende before he was elected president in 1970? And why hasn't the C.I.A. also spent millions to aid the opponents of right-wing dictatorships in countries like Brazil and Spain, which have very successfully destroyed opposition parties and media?"

Eugene Zitver.

Hagerstown.

American intervention in Chile was justified by President Ford on the apparently irrefutable grounds that the United States could not idly stand by while the leftist Allende government suppressed the rights of the Chilean opposition groups. Given the character of the current military regime in Chile, it will be interesting to see if the same altruistic principle will apply. I highly suspect that no intervention is forthcoming and that the American people are once again expected to accept "inoperative" explanations for indefensible foreign policies.

Martin Brennan.

Washington.

President Ford's admission that the C.I.A. was active in efforts to subvert the "Ali-yende" government of Chile should come as a shock to no one. For years the U.S. government has lent its support to right-wing dictatorships while doing everything in its power to thwart the progress of governments that seem to lean to the left.

These actions fly in the face of American values and traditions; yet the President gave no assurance that this type of action would stop—indeed he indicated that it would continue. Ostensibly, these actions, "in the best interests of the people of Chile," were designed to thwart attempts by the Allende government to destroy opposition news media and political parties. Yet, the government which we helped to place in power has destroyed the free press and multi-party system which we were so eager to maintain and which were still viable forces while Allende was in power.

Does this mean that our agents are

in the Chilean election of 1976. Later, when asked to clarify what he meant by "democratic" forces, Colby explained that the C.I.A. hoped to avoid a military coup in order to insure that the democratic process would be carried out in 1976. Clearly, according to Mr. Colby's statements, the C.I.A.'s activities in Chile were unsuccessful. This is extremely unfortunate for all Chileans. As the C.I.A. continues its activities in Chile, one hopes that their alleged goal will be realized, and that, in fact, the democratic forces which elected Allende will triumph again in 1976.

B. Lynne Barbee.

Washington.

Can we afford the C.I.A.?

On September 8, you reported that our government now admits spending \$11,000,000 to replace Chile's Allende government with a military dictatorship—and lying about it to Congress and the American people. This is entirely consistent with the record which the C.I.A. has made in Guatemala, Iran, Cuba, Vietnam, Korea, Laos, Cambodia, Greece and Indonesia: Invariably, it has supported corrupt, oppressive, reactionary dictatorships, and has subsidized and helped to organize police states which would have been the envy of Hitler or Stalin.

What benefit have we ever obtained from the C.I.A. which is remotely comparable to the harm which it has done? Americans may be deceived—many of us prefer to be kept in ignorance of what is being done by our agents—but the rest of the world knows what is going on. Millions of the world's most intelligent and well-informed people have ceased to think of us as concerned with freedom, justice, or mercy. They see us as the source of the professional liars, thieves and murderers who act as though they had the God-given right to break any law, ignore any agreement, bribe any politician, and overthrow any government. It is all done in the sacred name of anti-communism—but an increasing number of observers must be wondering if communism could do worse. And wondering what good it does to sign treaties with a country which reserves the right to violate them at will.

Perhaps we should abolish the C.I.A. before it abolishes the U.S.A.

Wm. Palmer Taylor.

Hamilton, Ohio.

still in Chile, trying to bring about this noble goal? And what of Vietnam and Korea? Should we assume that our government is making efforts to stop the continued suppression of these peoples, even while we supply them with the military means to continue that suppression? Mr. Ford's defense of these actions on the basis of similar behavior by Communist nations is particularly puzzling. Does the U.S. now look to the previously dreaded menaces for example, or was it we who set the example? Candor and openness about issues such as these are not enough; these activities must be ended once and for all.

John L. Good.

Greenbelt.

During his speech recently at the Conference on the C.I.A. and Covert Actions, C.I.A. Director William Colby declined to state whether or not the C.I.A. activities in Chile were successful. However, he did say that the C.I.A. activities were aimed at insuring the success of democratic forces

Gerald Ford said in his press conference that the operations of Kissinger and the Forty Committee in Chile were justified in order to support "democratic opposition" to the Allende government.

Does this mean that the Forty Committee is also authorizing the CIA covertly to finance and manipulate democratic opposition to the military dictatorships we overtly pay for in Saigon, Brazil, the Philippines and elsewhere?

Ann Morrissett Davidson.

Haverford, Pa.



A Peace Corps Volunteer's Disillusionment

When I and my fellow Peace Corps Volunteers to Chile arrived in Santiago, Chile, in 1965, we were greeted with a banner headline in one of the afternoon papers, "Forty-Seven Agents of the C.I.A. Arrive at Airport Today."

At the time I saw the paper's story as at best something of a sick joke. "Us spies for the C.I.A.? None of us signed up to spy on anyone! We were in Chile as representatives of the people of the United States . . . we came to live with the Chileans, to understand their country and culture and to lend a hand in attacking the problems of economic and social development at the grass roots."

For two years we attempted to do just that; many of us all the while thoroughly puzzled and sometimes angered at the continued insistence of elements of Chile's political left that we were agents and spies for the C.I.A. Many of us never quite understood why this charge kept surfacing and simply chalked it up to some sort of overly active and slightly perverse version of extremist imagination.

During my stay I learned respect for Chile, her people, her traditions and institutions — this was, after all, one of the principal goals of the Peace Corps Act whose authority underwrote my two years overseas. Before I returned to the U.S., it was clear to me that in the sense of the political outlook of this country, Chile in the middle '60s had an open and democratic political system given to tolerance for the politics of the right, left and center.

Toward the end of the decade the people of Chile, exercising their political rights in strict conformity with their established laws and institutions, elected a Socialist President, Salvador Allende Gossens, whose stated goal was to lead Chile to socialism via constitutional means. As the record of the ensuing years shows, he found this task impossible to accomplish. There are those who maintain, and not without reason, that Allende himself put Chile's political institutions in great jeopardy. However, that point of view deals with potentialities, with possibilities, because the democratic process continued uninterrupted during his term of office. Congressional and municipal elections were held, apparently as openly contested as ever. Political parties across the spectrum of Chilean political life maintained their vigor.

In any case Allende is dead now and Chile is in the hands of a rightest military dictatorship. There are no elec-

tions, no political parties, no freedom of speech or the press. Those are accomplished facts, not potentialities. And if the military spokesmen are to be taken at their word, they are not going to permit a return to even a truncated version of Chile's past form of political life in the near future, perhaps not even within the decade. To their minds, it seems, elimination of Socialists and Communists did not really get at the core of their country's political difficulties. A more general approach was needed, i.e. the entire elimination of the democratic process.

What puzzles and angers me now is not so much that a military regime controls Chile, for that is primarily a matter of direct concern for Chilean citizens. However, after reading the details of how the C.I.A., as a matter of policy decided at the highest levels of our government, expended several million dollars in attempting to subvert, corrupt and destroy the political institutions of the Republic of Chile, I do see why many well-meaning Chileans might have thought that the Peace Corps was in their country as an arm of the C.I.A. Apparently the men charged with conducting our foreign policy are capable of almost anything in the name of expediency, but eight or nine years ago this fact was not so evident to me. At that time the leftist judgment of the Peace Corps seemed just too ludicrous for serious consideration. Although I emphasize that I still have no reason to believe that any volunteers were conscious tools of that agency, what could be more bizzare than the facts of the C.I.A.'s actual involvement?

Not incidentally, all of this was happening while hundreds of thousands of young men of the United States were being sent to another corner of the globe to "fight for the forces of freedom and democracy in Southeast Asia." . . . or so Presidents Johnson and Nixon and their secretaries of state would have had us believe.

As regards Chile, of course, we are able to take comfort from Dr. Kissinger's assertions that our policy toward the Allende government was designed to aid the "democratic, pro-U.S. force in Latin America."

How strange. Alas, if it only were 1984 instead of 1974. Then I might not find all this double-think/double-talk so disquieting.

Denton R. Vaughan

Peace Corps Volunteer, Chile, 1965-67,
Burke, Va.