

Chile In Anguish

THE BLACK BOOK OF AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN CHILE. By Armando Uribe. Translated from the Spanish by Jonathan Casart. Beacon. 163 pp. \$9.95; paperback, \$3.95

THE UNITED STATES AND CHILE: Imperialism and the Overthrow of the Allende Government. By James Petras and Morris Morley. *Monthly Review*. 217 pp. \$10.95

By PATRICK BRESLIN

TWO YEARS AGO this week Salvador Allende died in the wreckage of his bombed-out presidential residence, his attempt to lead Chile to socialism obliterated by a violent military coup.

The regime which replaced Allende imposed a strict military dictatorship and pledged to wipe out all traces of Marxism. There have been thousands of deaths and thousands of political prisoners. Widespread use of torture has been documented by several international groups. Civil liberties disappeared. Through it all, the United States government has seldom wavered from its support of the Chilean junta.

Did the Allende government sink of its own weight two years ago, or had it been fatally weakened by an economic stranglehold and covert intervention directed by the United States? That question has been examined these two years and the evidence suggests that U.S. hands are less than clean.

Except for ritual—and, some have suggested, possibly perjurious—denials by U.S. officials, few observers have been willing to argue that the United States had no significant role in the troubles which beset the Allende government and eventually led to its overthrow. As revelations about clandestine activities seeped out over the past two years, anyone venturing into print to say the United States was blameless ran the risk of contradic-

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tion by the next morning's headlines.

More headlines may be expected when the Senate's Select Committee on Intelligence Activities releases the results of its investigation into the Chile affair. In the meantime, two recent books, one by a pair of American-based social scientists, the other by a former Chilean diplomat, marshal the evidence against the United States and reach quite similar conclusions.

Petras and Morley, with better organization and less jargon, could have produced the definitive work so far. What they have written is based on relentless poring through the public record, and extensive interviews with government officials. Their points are heavily documented; a full quarter of the book is devoted to footnotes and tables.

Uribe's main contribution is a series of documents he says were circulated within the Allende government commenting on U.S. maneuvers and personalities. While they do not add up to the detailed case against the United States that the book promises, they provide glimpses into the tense and veiled exchanges between top officials in the two governments.

Both books make essentially the same charges: that the United States was automatically hostile to Allende, a Marxist who had won the presidency in a free election; that it had points of leverage with which to exert pressure against the Allende government; and that Henry Kissinger and the National Security Council were the architects and coordinators of a policy of economic pressure designed to weaken that government.

The major leverage exerted by the United States during Allende's three years was provided by Chile's enormous foreign debt. It was largely piled up during the 1960s, and totaled about \$3 billion when Allende took over. It was the United States' ability to frustrate and delay Chile's attempts to refinance this debt, and to discourage sources of new credit, that bedeviled Allende throughout his truncated term. Petras and Morley provide exhaustive and convincing evidence of a U.S. economic campaign against Chile.

The second point of leverage was the close contact between the United States and Chilean military. That contact was

maintained through the Allende period—to the extent of providing easy credit for military purchases by Chile's armed forces, at the same time the United States was arguing in international forums that Chile was not credit-worthy. Both books suggest U.S. complicity with the Chilean military in the coup itself, but without solid evidence. The U.S. policy of maintaining close ties with the Chilean military even while it opposed the Allende government is, however, no secret.

That the United States intervened in Chile's political affairs is clear. No less a spokesman than President Ford has so stated, citing covert aid to media and political parties opposing Allende. The CIA has admitted spending \$8 million between 1970 and 1973 in such aid. While the exact extent of the U.S. effort against Allende is still undefined, it was obviously massive.

What was there about the Chilean experiment which drew such opposition from the U.S.? What was so important about a small, far-off country of 10 million people, pointed like a dagger at the heart of Antarctica, to paraphrase Kissinger's misleading sarcasm?

Uribe, who attended meetings at the presidential level in both Washington and Santiago, attributes some of the hostility to the personalities of the U.S. participants, starting with Richard Nixon. But both he and Petras and Morley also point to the economic interests involved—Allende's nationalization of the copper mines, the nervousness of ITT about its investments in hotels and the Chilean telephone system.

Even more important, they argue, was the example of Chile. For Uribe it was the very existence of Allende's Popular Unity government, that combination of Marxists and non-Marxists, that had to be destroyed lest it provide a model for such countries as France and Italy. Petras and Morley see Chile's attempt to break out of the capitalist system in the Western Hemisphere, the first such attempt since Cuba, as the intolerable challenge to the U.S.

Such explanations are generally dismissed in this country as leftist propaganda. But if discarded, are there other rational explanations for the energy with which we subjugate small countries? □