

Excerpts From C.I.A. Study

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 4—Following are excerpts from a report, "Covert Action in Chile, 1963-1973," prepared by the staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence:

Numerous allegations have been made about U. S. covert activities in Chile during 1970-73. Several of these are false; others are half-true. In most instances, the response to the allegation must be qualified:

Was the United States directly involved, covertly, in the 1973 coup in Chile? The committee has found no evidence that it was. However, the United States sought in 1970 to foment a military coup in Chile. After 1970 it adopted a policy both overt and covert, of opposition to Allende, and it remained in intelligence contact with the Chilean military, including officers who were participating in coup plotting.

Did the U. S. provide covert support to striking truck owners or other strikers during 1971-73? The 40-man Committee did not approve any such support. However, the U. S. passed money to private sector groups which supported the strikers. And in at least one case, a small amount of C.I.A. money was passed to the strikers by a private sector organization, contrary to C.I.A. ground rules.

Small Amounts of Money

Did the U. S. provide covert support to right-wing terrorist organizations during 1970-73? The C.I.A. gave support in 1970 to one group whose tactics became more violent over time. Through 1971 that group received small sums of American money through third parties for specific purposes. And it is possible that money was passed to these groups on the extreme right from C.I.A.-supported opposition political parties.

The pattern of United States covert action in Chile is striking but not unique. It arose in the context not only of American foreign policy, but also of covert U. S. involvement in other countries within and outside Latin America. The scale of C.I.A. involvement in Chile was unusual but by no means unprecedented.

Preliminary Conclusions

A fundamental question raised by the pattern of U.S.

covert activities persists: Did the threat to vital U.S. national security interests posed by the Presidency of Salvador Allende justify the several major covert attempts to prevent his accession to power? Three American Presidents and their senior advisers evidently thought so.

One rationale for covert intervention in Chilean politics was spelled out by Henry Kissinger in his background briefing to the press on Sept. 16, 1970, the day after Nixon's meeting with Helms. He argued that an Allende victory would be irreversible within Chile, might affect neighboring nations and would pose "massive problems" for the U.S. in Latin America:

"I have yet to meet somebody who firmly believes that if Allende wins, there is likely to be another free election in Chile. . . . Now it is fairly easy for one to predict that if Allende wins, there is a good chance that he will establish over a period of years some sort of Communist Government. In that case, we would have one not on an island off the coast [Cuba] which has not a traditional relationship and impact in Latin America, but in a major Latin-American country you would have a Communist Government, joining for example, Argentine . . . Peru . . . and Bolivia . . . So I don't think we should delude ourselves on an Allende take-over would not present massive problems for us, and for the democratic forces and for pro-U.S. forces in Latin America, and indeed to the whole Western Hemisphere.

In the hands of Congress rests the responsibility for insuring that the executive branch is held to full political accountability for covert activities. The record on Chile is mixed and muted by its incompleteness.

The record leaves unanswered a number of questions. These pertain both to how forthcoming the agency was and how interested and persistent the Congressional committees were. Were members of Congress, for instance, given the opportunity to object to specific projects before the projects were implemented? Did they want to? There is also an issue of jurisdiction. C.I.A. and State Department officials have taken the position that they are authorized to reveal agency operations only to the appropriate oversight committees. The Chilean experience does

suggest that the committee give serious consideration to the possibility that lodging the responsibility for national estimates and conduct of operational activities with the same person—the Director of Central Intelligence—creates an inherent conflict of interest and judgment.

When covert actions in Chile became public knowledge, the costs were obvious. The United States was seen, by its covert actions to have contradicted not only its official declarations but its treaty commitments and principles of long standing. At the same time it was proclaiming a "low profile" in Latin-American relations, the U. S. Government was seeking to foment a coup in Chile.

This report does not attempt to offer a final judgment on the political propriety, the morality, or even the effectiveness of American covert activity in Chile. Did the threat posed by an Allende Presidency justify covert American involvement in Chile? Did it justify the specific and unusual attempt to foment a military coup to deny Allende the Presidency? In 1970, the U. S. sought to foster a military coup in Chile to prevent Allende's accession to power; yet after 1970 the Government—according to the testimony of its officials—did not engage in coup plotting.

Was 1970 a mistake, an aberration? Or was the threat posed to the national security interests of the United States so grave that the Government was remiss in not seeking his downfall directly during 1970-73? What responsibility does the United States bear for the cruelty and political suppression that have become the hallmark of the present regime in Chile?

On these questions committee members may differ. So may American citizens. Yet the committee's mandate is less to judge the past than to recommend for the future. Moving from past cases to future guidelines, what is important to note is that covert action has been perceived as a middle ground between diplomatic representation and the overt use of military force.

In the case of Chile, that middle ground may have been far too broad. Given the costs of covert action, it should be resorted to only to counter severe threats to the national security of the United States. It is far from clear that that was the case in Chile.