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The C.I.A. in Chile: A Question of Responsibility

By Michael J. Harrington

...in its staff report...
...Chile, 1963-1973...
...Intelligence Committee has...
...of the large-scale covert efforts...
...Intelligence Agency to...
...control possible, control po...
...in that small and vulner...
...country. A careful reader of this...
...is drawn to the conclusion that...
...United States Government bears a...
...responsibility for the destruc...
...of Chilean democracy.

...been interpreted by...
...and readings as excep...
...United States from responsi...
...because the C.I.A. did not...
...city control events in Chile. To...
...not this judgment would commit us...
...starting proposition: to be held...
...responsible for the consequences of...
...of actions, one must be in total...
...of these consequences. By this...
...there would be few things indeed...
...which we could hold the Govern...
...at responsible. If our Government...
...did not directly control events in...
...le—any more than it can control...
...rate of inflation in this country—...
...certainly tried its best.

...and three major charges...
...that the C.I.A. that this report has...
...interpreted to have abetted...
...the C.I.A. financed the truckers'...

...strike that was so important in the un...
...doing of President Salvador Allende...
...Gossens; that large sums were spent...
...in 1970-73 to destabilize Chile, and...
...that the United States was involved in...
...the 1973 coup.

...What does the report say about...
...these allegations? First, it establishes...
...that the truckers' strike could not...
...have been maintained on union funds...
...alone. The committee documents one...
...instance in which a C.I.A.-funded...
...group passed \$2,800 of C.I.A. money...
...directly to the truckers. The group re...
...ceived another payment the very next...
...month. The report clearly suspects...
...that more money went to the truck...
...ers: "There were extensive links be...
...tween these [C.I.A.-supported] private...
...sector organizations and the groups...
...which conducted and implemented the...
...strikes." Far from dispelling this...
...charge, the report documents that...
...C.I.A. money did reach the truckers...
...and that more may have been too...
...deeply hidden to discover.

...Second, the C.I.A. spent \$3 million...
...in a country of 10 million people be...
...tween 1970 and 1973. An equivalent...
...expenditure of \$168 million in this...
...country by a foreign power would ex...
...ceed the spending by all Presidential...
...candidates in 1972. Hence, the Senate...
...committee called the expenditures...

...While the C.I.A. maintains that the...
...money was spent to keep democratic...
...opposition alive under Dr. Allende, in...
...fact the money was strategically dis...
...tributed to help democratic and un...
...derminable foes.

...The C.I.A. helped found the right...
...wing extremist group, Patria Libertad...
...with \$38,500 in 1970, and continued...
...payments for at least another year...
...On Nov. 5, 1971, the 40 Committee...
...the high-level panel that oversees...
...covert C.I.A. activities, authorized...
...\$815,000 to, among other things, "in...
...duce a split in the Popular Unity...
...[Allende] coalition," presumably to...
...weaken and help bring down the...
...Government. But this was only the tip...
...of the iceberg of United States efforts...
...to achieve that goal.

...The third charge, that the United...
...States was somehow involved in the...
...1973 coup, is the major one. While...
...the report finds that the United States...
...was not "directly involved" (the re...
...port's italics), it adds that the 1973...
...coup must be seen against the back...
...ground of active C.I.A. efforts to bring...
...about a coup in 1970 and continued...

...intelligence contact with coup plotters...
...Thomas Karanassines, former head...
...of C.I.A. clandestine operations, told...
...the committee: "I am sure that the...
...seeds were laid in that effort in 1970...
...and had their impact in 1973. I do...
...not have any question in my mind...
...about that either. . . . As far as I was...
...concerned, Track II [the coup efforts...
...in 1970] was really never ended...
...What we were told to do was to...
...continue our efforts." The report docu...
...ments these continued efforts.

...In November 1971, the C.I.A. sta...
...tion in Santiago reported that "the...
...ultimate objective of the military...
...penetration program was a military...
...coup." The following month the C.I.A...
...began a "deception operation" to con...
...vince the Chilean military that Dr...
...Allende was using Cuban intelligence...
...against it, thereby "inducing the...
...armed services to press the Govern...
...ment to alter its orientation and to...
...move against it if necessary."

...Finally, throughout 1970-73 the sta...
...tion collected information that would...
...be useful in a coup, including arrest...
...lists and lists of Government and...
...civilian installations that would have...
...to be taken over. The report con...
...cluded: "The C.I.A.'s information gath...
...ering efforts with regard to the...
...Chilean military included activity...

...which went beyond the mere collec...
...tion of information."

...The full extent of United States...
...involvement with the Chilean military...
...before the coup may never be known...
...Questions remain about the role of...
...the military-assistance program, the...
...defense attaches, and other United...
...States service personnel in Chile...
...especially the Navy. The point is that...
...C.I.A. station officers did not leave the...
...armed forces up the steps of the...
...Presidential palace because they did...
...not have to. The United States acted...
...forcefully to convey its preference for...
...a right-wing military regime to the...
...continuation of constitutional govern...
...ment under Dr. Allende.

...Whether that was the controlling...
...or even the decisive factor is not...
...the point. We played fast and loose...
...with the democratic traditions of one...
...of the world's most sophisticated...
...nations. And when the United States...
...penetrates a society as thoroughly and...
...continuously as we did Chile's, why...
...we use our resources to impose our...
...preferences on their society is...
...factually wrong and morally wrong...
...to assert that we have no responsi...
...for the consequences of our actions.

...Michael J. Harrington, Democrat...
...represents Massachusetts' Sixth...
...in the House of Representatives.

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