

Slow Squeeze

How the U.S. Strangled Allende Rule

By James McCartney
Knight News Services

WASHINGTON — The U.S. officially denies that it "participated" in toppling the Chilean government of Marxist Salvador Allende Gossens.

Technically, that may be true.

But U.S. military and economic policies over a three year period put a slow squeeze on Allende.

And Latin American experts here — both in and out of the government — credit the U.S. and its policies with a major role in bringing down Allende's government.

For all practical purposes, experts say, the U.S. imposed, and actively supported, an economic blockade on Chile after Allende became the Western Hemisphere's first elected Marxist President in 1970.

U.S. economic assistance was slashed from one of the highest levels in Latin America to one of the lowest.

Credit was cut off.

Imports to Chile dried up.

At the same time, the U.S. carefully, and deliberately cultivated friends in the Chilean military, including many of those who staged a coup against Allende Tuesday.

The level of U.S. military aid increased after Allende took power, and stood at a record high in dollar amounts at the time of the coup.

"A determination was made that it was important for us to maintain our contacts with established institutions in Chile, including the military," says one State Department official.

A result was that the U.S. maintained many friends in the Chilean military establishment, who opposed Allen-

de and planned the coup.

Relations with these friends were close enough that at least some of them tipped U.S. officials in advance that a coup was planned.

"Of course we knew there was going to be a coup," says one official. "We had known it for months. He had gotten information from some of the planners.

"In fact, we considered a coup inevitable the way things were going.

But we didn't know exactly when it might be and we had many false alarms before last Tuesday."

In effect, U.S. economic policy toward Chile, accord-

ing to Joseph Collins, of the Institute for Policy Studies, a liberally-oriented private research group, was "to encourage economic chaos."

Military policy was to build up "pro American" elements in the Armed forces, giving them power to take advantage of chaos, Collins says.

Thus Allende was in a slow squeeze — his country falling apart at the seams economically, and the right-wing military in a position to move in and take over.

Most of the military equipment that knocked off Allende, bombing his palace to open the coup on Tuesday bore the label: "Made in USA."

Figures on U.S. economic aid to Chile show dramatically what the U.S. actually did.

In the four years before Allende so-called "development assistance" aid ranged from \$25 million a year to more than \$82 million.

In the first year after Allende took power the figure dropped sharply to \$8.6 million and then, the following year, to \$7.4.

Military aid to Chile the year before Allende was less than a million dollars — only \$800,000.

It climbed to \$5.7 million in 1971 and to \$12.3 million in 1972. It is about \$12 million in the current fiscal year, according to State Department officials.

Joseph Collins cites credit figures to illustrate what happened to Allende in attempting to get help from abroad to support his government.

Collins says that by 1972

Allende had only about \$35 million available to him in short-term credit.

He said the average available to Chile in the pre-Allende years was about \$220 million a year.

Demonstrators against the Chilean coup in Latin America and in Europe have charged that the CIA staged the coup.

At this point, there is no overt evidence available to support the charge — and the U.S. government categorically denies it.

State Department spokesman Paul Hare said earlier this week: "I think I ought to make it quite clear — and unequivocally clear — that the U.S. government, and all elements of the U.S. government, were not — repeat, not — involved in the matter."

Hare was asked if that denial covered the CIA. He replied: "Yes."

Collins, however, says that the U.S. embassy staff in Chile was heavily populated with men with CIA backgrounds.

"At least nine men in the political section of the embassy were listed, by name, in the 1968 edition of 'Who's Who in the CIA,'" Collins says.

He says the State Department's Chilean desk officer, Arnold Isaacs, also has a CIA background.