

S.F. Expert Blames Allende in Chile Coup

A scholar in Latin American history said here yesterday the democratic process was eroded by President Salvador Allende in Chile in the months preceding the military coup that climaxed with his violent death.

"It should be clear to any observer that by mid-1973 the once-thriving Chilean democratic system was not functioning," William E. Ratliff told a Commonwealth Club luncheon audience at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel.

"The military coup came in large part because many Chileans woefully considered the democratic institutions and the constitution mortally crippled."

Ratliff is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace located at Stanford University.

Asked by a club member if the United States government had contributed to the political and social problems in Chile during Allende's Socialist tenure, he replied:

"There is no question but that U.S. policies aggravated the Chilean situation . . . Goodness knows what the CIA was up to.

"We can assume that the CIA was nosing around in Chile, but I don't think this was a decisive element."

Ratliff forecast that "the climate for U.S. businesses will be better" under the military junta that evicted Allende's regime, "but the situation will continue to be unstable."

In his talk he said his research of the Senate ITT hearings showed that the company "clearly didn't look forward to Allende's administration, tried to drum up opposition to it, but evidently committed no illegal actions."