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Chile: The U.S. Burden

To the Editor:

The recent Times editorial "The C.I.A. in Chile" perpetuates the very "political myths" it warns against. American citizens are invited to take comfort from the fact that the United States was "not basically responsible for the overthrow of the Chilean Government" and that the \$7 million spent by the C.I.A. from 1970 to 1973 is a "derisory sum." The precise extent of U.S. responsibility for the events of Sept. 11, 1973, cannot be measured. We know that U.S. policy from 1970 on was to bring down the Allende Government through financing of propaganda, covert support for paramilitary groups, interference in elections, blockade and a severe credit squeeze. The strategists in the C.I.A. and Department of Defense (D.I.A.) sought to exacerbate the internal tensions that eventually destroyed Chilean democracy. All such covert operations are designed to play on conditions of internal unrest. Without such conditions covert intervention cannot succeed.

The point, however, is that the U.S. committed its power and prestige to the support of internal political processes it could neither understand nor control, and the result is a regime as vicious and incompetent as any in the hemisphere. Seven million dollars is an extraordinarily large sum in a small country like Chile, particularly when the purchasing power is multiplied twenty times through use of black-market exchange rates. The U.S. does bear a share of the moral responsibility for the bloodshed, terror and loss of freedom in Chile because it conducted continuous and intensive intervention over many years, the consequences of

which our unseen and unaccountable experts in "dirty tricks" could neither predict nor control. That was the basic lesson of the 25-year intervention in Indochina. We are now conducting another "bumbling" intervention in Angola, which will secure the real interests of the American people no more than the support our Government has lent to the Chilean generals.

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