
 SF Chronicle 'Keep Out of Chile's Affairs' DEC 24 1971

Editor — Presidential press secretary Herbert G. Klein has reported to President Nixon his "feeling" that the socialist government of President Salvador Allende in Chile "won't last long." Klein may know what we suspect — that tensions in Chile reflect the work of powers far greater than the 5000 women who recently marched to protest a food shortage.

In fact, Chile's food shortages and economic difficulties have been exploited by President Allende's opposition and misunderstood by the U.S. press. In its first year of power, the Allende government has stimulated economic growth and begun to redistribute income through higher wages for workers, which in turn, created a significant rise in the demand for consumer goods (including food) and services.

Moreover, Allende inherited Chile's food shortages, caused by an inefficient and unequitable agricultural system. Shortages of such items as meat, milk and coffee became marked during the Christian Democratic Administration of Eduardo Frei (1964-70). By early 1970, months before Allende's victory, Chilean markets sold meat only a few days of each month, and the milk supply was sporadic. After Allende's inauguration last November new obstacles were thrown in the way of food production: indiscriminate slaughtering of herds and refusal to plant by landowners whose properties faced expropriation; the earthquake and resulting damage in July 1971; and the heavy snows which killed crops and poultry.

The upper class (which these 5000 women represented) never experienced hunger pangs, as Chile's poor have for decades. Only when meat became difficult to obtain under Allende did these privileged women march in the streets with empty pots — pots which had previously been used only by their servants.

More than a year ago, shortly after Allende's election, the Chile-

an press reported that upper class rightist women rallied to urge the military to intervene to block Allende's election and ignore Chile's constitution. Later rightists assassinated Army Chief of Staff General Schneider, hoping to provoke a coup by attributing the murder to leftwing militants. But when the rightists were apprehended and the plot exposed, the military's commitment to constitutional procedure was actually strengthened.

The recent disruptions demonstrate the Right's determination to overthrow Allende's government and stop programs designed for the welfare of the Chilean poor. Herbert Klein's statement may express U.S. policy rather than his "feeling." As individuals and groups who believe the U.S. government should keep its hands off Chile's internal political affairs, we are alarmed and angered by Klein's statement, and we reaffirm our support for the Popular Unity government as it struggles to meet the needs of the Chilean people.

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