

Power Eluded Allende, Then Slipped

By ISRAEL SHENKER

When Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens was elected President of Chile, the first freely elected Marxist President in the Western Hemisphere, senators and deputies in the joint session of the Chilean Congress serenaded his choice by raising their voices in the national anthem.

But the course of politics never runs smooth, and a vibrant chorus of opposition to his leadership persistently roiled the harmony sounded on Oct. 24, 1970.

In recent weeks there have been almost daily demonstrations in Santiago, the capital, for or against the President. Crisis became endemic, with left-wing supporters of Dr. Allende talking increasingly of "people power" while conservative parties demanded his resignation and a military government that would restore law and order. The left saw a right-wing conspiracy supported from abroad; the right inveighed against a regime they thought was ruining the country.

Dr. Allende found himself embroiled in a prolonged politically motivated strike by thousands of truck owners—most of Chile's commerce moves by road—doctors, professional workers, shopkeepers and owners of small businesses. In a movement that Marx would hardly have credited, the middle classes were proving a vigorous mass force, supporting their demands with mass action.

Women by the tens of thousands paraded in protest against the coalition government.

Inflation and Shortages

The strikers blamed Dr. Allende's policies for rampant inflation — over 300 per cent in a year — the decline in agricultural and industrial production and food shortages. Demonstrators backing Dr. Allende accused Congress and the courts of hamstringing his efforts to reform the nation. Though the Government was Marxist, the Congress was controlled by Christian Democrats and the right-wing National party.

The role of the military was pivotal. In recent weeks the army and navy have played an increasingly independent role in crushing disorders, often without consulting Government officials. The navy helped the police quell disturbances between armed groups of leftist and anti-Marxist students in Valparaiso, and the army conducted raids in search of illegal arms.

Between them the army and navy had long had a reputation for political neutrality, but at times this seemed endangered by the increasing po-

From His Grasp



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Units of the national police assigned to guard the presidential palace grouped outside the building during a recent ceremony. Yesterday, the palace was bombed when the guards resisted the army's initial attack.

liticization of the armed forces.

To restore order President Allende enlisted the three commanders in chief of the armed forces and the director general of the national police into his Cabinet on Aug. 9. He had moved similarly last October, but this time discord in the military came to the surface. The air force commander resigned, protesting that he did not have the authority he needed to settle the truckers' strike, and Dr. Allende then removed him from his command.

A large majority of the generals called for the resignation of the Defense Minister and army commander in chief, Gen. Carlos Prats Gonzalez. General Prats had defeated an attempted coup d'état against the President on June 29, and he was reputed to be an Allende supporter. He resigned both his posts "so as not to serve as a pretext for those persons determined to overthrow constitutional Government."

The Chamber of Deputies adopted a resolution accusing the Government of violating the Constitution and calling on the military men in the Cabinet to restore constitutionality. Openly challenged, the President denounced the resolution and charged the opposition parties with "trying to promote a coup d'état."

Dr. Allende had been elected by a joint session of Congress after winning a plurality in the popular election of Sept. 4, 1970. It was his third try for the presidency in 18 years.

Though he did not win the required majority of the popular vote—he got 36.3 per cent—he did win a decisive 153 votes in the joint session, com-

pared with 35 for the runner-up, Jorge Alessandri Rodriguez. In the congressional ballot, Dr. Allende was given the support not only of his own Socialist party but of the governing Christian Democratic party as well.

"We must create a new society, a new conscience, new morals and a new economy," he said when he learned the results. "Now we need a disciplined people capable of sacrifice and work."

Dr. Allende and his coalition promised a sweeping socialist program — nationalization of mines and basic industry, banking and insurance, and foreign trade. They pledged economic and social planning and expropriation of farmland in an extensive agrarian reform.

The new President, who had a reputation for tolerance, came to office after repeatedly rejecting the course of revolution and violence. "A victory by the electoral route will be difficult for us, but it is the best way by far for Chile," he had insisted.

A Study in Contrasts

In a nation that is 90 per cent Roman Catholic he is a freethinker who proclaimed himself "anti-imperialist" and "anti-oligarchic." In a nation where the state already controlled oil, railroads, steel and power, he expressed the aspirations of middle-class leftists who dreamed of destroying the political and economic power remaining to a small number of wealthy families.

To deal with fundamental problems—poverty, with resultant hunger and poor housing—Dr. Allende wanted to remove what his party spoke of as "a bourgeoisie structurally dependent on foreign capital."

Chile stretches along a thin

strip of southwestern South America between the Andes and the Pacific and neither by geography nor the temperament of the people nor industrial development was she to be compared with Cuba, the other Latin-American country with a frankly socialist regime. "Chile is different," Dr. Allende insisted.

Though supported by the Communist and Radical parties, he insisted that he did not want a one-party government. He did not want to replace the constitutional system — legislative power in a two-chamber house—with an "assembly of the people" that would select new Supreme Court judges.

A physician who had served as Minister of Health in a "popular front" Government, he mixed his disciplines in terming the capitalist social structure a cause of nutritional deficiencies in the diet of Chile's nine million people.

Dr. Allende came to office despite tenacious opposition from the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, which had extensive holdings in Chile. The American conglomerate sought to bolster the opponents of Dr. Allende and to prevent his election, attempting to enlist the help of the Central Intelligence Agency. ITT offered a million dollars toward a plan to prevent Dr. Allende's victory. More recently it has been seeking over \$90-million in compensation for the seizure of its Chilean telephone company.

Chile also nationalized American-owned copper mines, notably the giant mine of Kennecott Copper at El Teniente, and then deducted "excess profits" of earlier years from the compensation offered. Dr. Allende maintained that the United

States retaliated by waging economic war against Chile, vetoing loans by international and American financial institutions.

The American official position was that Chile's credit rating was bad and that the Government had stopped paying its debts.

No Mandate, No Respite

But Dr. Allende's basic problem remained: The Socialist program he favored had no electoral mandate, his militant supporters gave him no respite and his opponents no relief, and the Congress with which he had to govern opposed him. The opposition had the simple majority required for impeachment in the Chamber of Deputies, but not the two-thirds needed in the Senate.

After suffering the frustrations of the power that had eluded him so long, Dr. Allende was hard-pressed to see the irony of his political position—a Marxist brought to the helm by the free vote of Congress and toppled by a middle-class revolution.

Though medicine was his profession politics was his life. His father was a Radical party deputy and Serene Grand Master of Free Masons in Chile. The President-to-be was born July 26, 1908, in Valparaiso; he is married and has three daughters. In 1933, a year after receiving his medical degree, he became a co-founder of the Chilean Socialist party and won a national reputation when he directed the relief effort after the earthquake disaster of 1939, in which 20,000 people died.

Dr. Allende served a long tenure in the Chamber of Deputies and Senate and is the author of more than 100 bills, mainly dealing with health, welfare and women's rights.