

Our Friends, the Tyrants

To the Editor:

Now we must add Chile to the roster of nations ruled by dictators, duly recognized by the United States Government.

The Chilean tragedy is a blossoming of the seeds that we have sown; our Government did everything in its power to isolate Chile from its neighbors, to sabotage the Chilean economy, to undermine President Allende's capacity to govern.

To be sure, Allende was a self-proclaimed Marxist, but he was chosen in a free election to execute the will of the Chilean people. Allende was chosen in a free election by a free people, but our policymakers in Washington would not heed the verdict; our Government has come to prefer the kind of "free election" that President Thieu stages in Vietnam, the result of which is certain to be acceptable to us.

We have learned to tell ourselves that the Thieus and the Francos and the Greek colonels are not such bad fellows after all, that it is in our "na-

tional interest" to give them aid and comfort. It is not in our national interest, for in the process of courting foreign tyrants we become inured to tyranny.

We have witnessed the workings of the dictatorial mentality right here in our own country, but we ought not to have been surprised by revelations of wire-tapping, burglary, "enemies lists" or anything else that falls under the heading of Watergate. On the contrary, it is a delusion to believe that the men who abet dictatorships abroad will safeguard our liberties at home.

If we are truly to clean up our scandal-ridden Government, we must also cleanse our foreign policy of the blight that infects it. At a prouder time in history, this nation was a symbol of hope for enslaved peoples all over the earth. Our words still articulate the yearning of men to be free, but our deeds belie the words. We are most at ease with dictators, with men whose loyalty we can buy. That is the corruption that can destroy us.

ROBERT WILBUR
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