

Chile: The coup of 1973
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Introduction

The socialist movement in Chile was spearheaded by Salvador Allende. He was the presidential candidate of the socialist party of Chile, which also included Marxism and Communism centered politicians due to the unpopularity of Socialist ideas. The opposing forces in the coup were lead by the Junta, or the four generals of the Chilean military collectively. These generals were Gustavo Leigh of the Airforce, Jose Toribio Merino of the Navy, César Mendoza of the Police, and Augusto Pinochet of the Infantry.¹

Chile itself was also heavily divided into those who believed in socialism (usually people who were more poor or middle class) or those who believed in capitalism (typically those with power and money), which collectively created a charged atmosphere that was waiting for conflict.²

Political tension in Chile began with the election of Marxist candidate Salvador Allende as President in 1970, which resulted in a coalition government of the Socialist, Christian Democratic and Nationalist parties. The United States was supposedly supporting dissenters of Allende since the start of his presidency; however, there is little physical evidence of this. Allende made radical changes to the government and economy, which in turn is believed to have caused Chile to gain severe debt. Many faced shortages of the necessities such as bread, drinking water, electricity, and other basic food items.³

¹ Arturo Fontaine Talavera, "The United States and Soviet Union in Chile," *Estudios Públicos*, Translated by Tim Ennis, Chile.

² "Salvador Allende Dies in Office During a Coup: September 11, 1973," In *Global Events: Milestone Events Throughout History*, edited by Jennifer Stock. Vol. 3, Central and South America. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2014. *World History in Context* (accessed October 24, 2017).
<http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/TJANQH005782613/WHIC?u=gree82036&xid=4acd5a9e>.

³ Rivera, Xiomana G. "Recollections of Living Under the Regime," Interview by Mateo F. Vega Rivera, November 11, 2017

The military decided to take matters into their own hands, and just days after Augusto Pinochet was promoted to general, he and the other three generals lead the attack that resulted in the death of Allende, and the Junta taking control of the country. Afterwards, the people of Chile had to deal with many compromises in the form of strict curfews and laws, along with many disappearances. Once Pinochet was taken out of office, human rights began to grow once again in Chile, and now both Chile's economy and human rights are able to grow simultaneously.⁴

The primary reason why many believe that the coup took place was that Allende's socialist reforms lead Chile into a significant debt. However, this debt may have, in part, been caused by foreign intervention. The United States, with President Richard Nixon, and other countries such as Australia and Soviet Russia have all admitted or are supposed of interfering with Chilean politics and economy. Another assumed reason is that the countries were fighting for their ideals in the battle between Communism and Capitalism through Chile, since it was near the height of the Cold War; yet there is also the possibility that it was a matter of financial interests.

Allende's election was the first step in the political conflict that overtook Chile. Then the coup followed as the physical manifestation of the conflict within Chile. Lastly, the Chilean people had to deal with slanted compromises as a result of the coup. Therefore, the coup of 1973, caused Chile's economy to recede, in part due to foreign interference, while the Junta undid all socialist changes, and lead to Pinochet gaining power.

Socialism on the Rise

⁴ Steve Stern, "Battling for Hearts and Minds," London: Duke University Press, London, 2006,

Allende's election as President in 1970 was the "final straw" for the U.S., and within the same year they began planning coup attempts under the Truman Doctrine.⁵ This can be seen in a CIA cable transmission, in which the leaders of a potential coup request eight to ten gas grenades and 3 machine guns along with ammo. The potential coup was discovered and stopped, but this made Allende wary of future revolts. Unfortunately this proved to be the case, as Allende had several attempts at unseating his presidency before the coup of 1973 was successful.⁶

Allende had much cause to be put under scrutiny. In order to implement some of his socialist changes, he circumvented the law, and in some cases created laws or used outdated laws in order to force the rich to give up some of their possessions.⁷ Further his economic reform seemed to be failing, as the country fell into more debt. The U.S. has admitted to influencing several world powers and organizations in order to sabotage Chile's economy, and turn the people against Allende. Two major targets were the copper trade, a large source of income for Chile, and the World Bank. This was in an effort to get the people of Chile to force Allende out of office without violence; however, it did not work and only succeeded in further harming Chile's economy.⁸

America primarily acted against Chile on the fear that communistic and socialistic ideas would spread throughout Latin America. This fear is from good cause, as the ideology of Nazi Germany was communism, and the ideology of Soviet Russia was also communism. Based on

⁵ "Truman Doctrine (1947)," ourdocuments.com, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=81>, (January 19th, 2018)

⁶ CIA agent to the "station", "Cable Transmissions on Coup Plotting"

⁷ Chile Limits Power of Socialist Allende," *The Prescott Courier*, February 20, 1972, Politics, vol.90 no. 43.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=886&dat=19720220&id=t5UpAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=dIA DAAAAIIBAJ&pg=2659,4550069&hl=en>

⁸ "Augusto Pinochet," In *Newsmakers*, Detroit: Gale

this, America viewed communism or other non-capitalistic ideas as negative, and saw that these ideas were becoming popular in Latin America. Cuba had been recently converted to communism with Fidel Castro leading the revolution, and Chile had recently elected Marxist President Salvador Allende. America feared that the rest of the Latin American countries would soon follow in their footsteps and elect or become socialistic, communistic, or Marxist countries.⁹ If Latin America became non-capitalistic countries, it would then greatly affect America's economy, and then Soviet Russia would then have a greater influence on those countries. However, most countries considered their interference with Chilean politics a top secret operation, withholding this information from the public for many years.¹⁰

However, Chile was not an entirely Marxist country; instead Allende led the country with a coalition government due to his slim victory margins.¹¹ This coalition government prevented Allende from making any drastic changes quickly, if at all. Allende did manage to find loopholes or old laws that allowed him to complete certain changes such as nationalizing the economy and changing the national budget.¹² This helped build tension within Chile's government, which ultimately resulted in the Coup of 1973.

The Conflict

On the day of the coup, the presidential palace was attacked by infantry, tanks, and even aerial bombing. The military Junta (the four generals collectively) began bombing any leftist radio towers in order to isolate Allende from the people. Despite all the bombing, there was still

⁹ "Salvador Allende Dies in Office During a Coup: September 11, 1973,"

¹⁰ Sarah Gilbert, "The Other 9/11," *SBS*, Accessed on November 28, 2017, <http://www.sbs.com.au/theother911/>.

¹¹ "Salvador Allende Dies in Office During a Coup: September 11, 1973,"

¹² National Security Council, "Policy towards Chile," *CIA*, November 9, 1970.

one tower loyal to Allende left, which broadcasted Salvador Allende's final speech.¹³ It is considered to be one of his greatest, and in it he thanks the people for their belief in him, his cause, and their patience with him. He ends it by saying "¡Viva Chile! ¡Viva el pueblo! ¡Vivan los trabajadores!",¹⁴ which translates to "Long live Chile! Long live the People! Long live the Workers!".¹⁵ These words conveyed Allende's gratitude towards the people of Chile, and made him a martyr of the socialist cause.

There are few pictures of this day, as the strike was swift and unexpected; however, there are some photographs of Allende during the attack. Allende has been put into question why he had a speech prepared beforehand, almost as if he expected the coup. The common belief is that Allende had not kept the speech written out, but had been prepared to give one final speech due to the great dissent to his presidency. Further controversy surrounding this day is on Allende's actual death. In his speech he says that he would rather die to prove his loyalty, than betray his people,¹⁶ yet the military claims that Allende committed suicide before the soldiers had even reached the palace. They claimed it was done using a gun given as a gift from Fidel Castro, however, since communication was cut off from the palace, and nobody can supply a reliable eyewitness account now, the truth is uncertain.

Many socialists and Allende supporters believe that this is a military lie in an attempt to sully Allende's name, as his last speech had made him seem like a martyr.¹⁷ There is no common belief here, as while the government maintains the idea that Allende had committed suicide,

¹³ "Salvador Allende Dies in Office During a Coup: September 11, 1973,"

¹⁴ Salvador, Allende, "Allende's Final Address," *Radio Magallanes*, Translation by Yoshie Furuhashi, September 11, 1973, 6:37.

¹⁵ Salvador Allende, "Últimas Palabras," Speech presented at La Moneda, Santiago, Chile, September, 1973.

¹⁶ "Salvador Allende Dies in Office During a Coup"

¹⁷ "Augusto Pinochet," In *Newsmakers*, Detroit: Gale

many others refuse to believe this and instead say that Allende had been killed. An autopsy report had stated that the angle could have only been done if it was Allende himself, but many believe that the report was faked, as it was done during the regime. Further, several important socialist supporters also had faked autopsy reports, such as Pablo Neruda, who was only recently revealed to have died by poison.

Compromise

After the successful coup, the Junta quickly took power in Chile with minimal damage or panic, and the people were content to let the Junta fix the economy and damage.¹⁸ However, this compromise also had problems, as the Junta also worked on reversing all of Allende's socialist reforms. This often included bringing back in foreign investors and returning land and money back to those who previously had power.¹⁹

This may seem like a significant drawback of the coup, but this compromise was satisfactory for most of the Chilean people at first, as it also meant more economic success. Since Socialism was no longer prevalent in Chile, the U.S. began investing in Chile once again, and lifted any embargo or other disadvantage that it placed on Chile. Further, they stopped actively influencing the politics knowing that the Junta would prevent socialism from spreading.²⁰

Initially the Junta was governed fairly, with the four military leaders rotating who had dominance; however, Pinochet suggested that they give him permanent control to further stabilize Chile. Pinochet was declared "president" of Chile soon after, however he was not elected by the people, nor was this what the people had thought was going to happen. The Junta had been attacking supposed socialists or socialist supporters since the coup; however, once

¹⁸ "Augusto Pinochet," In *Newsmakers*, Detroit: Gale.

¹⁹ Rivera, Xiomana G. "Recollections of Living Under the Regime,".

²⁰ Kubisch B. Jack, "Chilean Executions," *CIA*, November 16, 1973.

Pinochet gained full power, it became a much worse scenario.²¹ Pinochet continued the Junta's work for a time, further increasing Chile's economic growth, yet it was only a matter of time until he began working on his personal agenda.

Pinochet had many left supporters "disappear", and many of these people were never seen again. This tore apart families, and caused tension among the classes, further dividing them. On top of this Pinochet established many new laws to prevent the possibility of a rebellion. These included a strict curfew, no talk of anything remotely communistic, and no gatherings of any kind.²² While these laws may seem trivial at first, they were what enabled Pinochet to maintain power without fearing a coup. Further, violating any of these laws was punishable by jail time or worse, with people being encouraged to inform the government if any of these laws were being broken.²³ He also kept a strict control over the media often physically repelling them with water cannons.

Pinochet recognized that continuing on this path would cause him to lose the support of the lower and middle classes, and began supporting programs for the poor. This included handing out food, sharing small amounts of money, and giving job training in traditional motherly things to women. Despite this having a minimal impact in the long term, many in the lower class became grateful to Pinochet and believed themselves indebted to him.²⁴

Despite this, Pinochet was eventually voted out of office by the people in the first democratic election since the regime began, however, Pinochet became a senator for life due to a previous law he created. This senatorship gave Pinochet diplomatic immunity from all the grievous crimes he committed, and since they were scarcely documented, there was little

²¹ "Augusto Pinochet," In *Newsmakers*, Detroit: Gale

²² Ibid

²³ Salvador, Allende, "Allende's Final Address,"

²⁴ Rivera, Xiomana G. "Recollections of Living Under the Regime,"

evidence to prove the crimes had occurred. During an international visit Pinochet was arrested for his charges by other countries, yet they were eventually forced to release him due to his political immunity. Pinochet continued to be prosecuted for many years afterwards, yet before any official sentence could be carried out, Pinochet died of natural causes.²⁵

Conclusion

While the coup of Chile was the most obvious form of conflict, conflict had been brewing within the country for years before the coup, and many years afterwards. It initially began with Allende being elected, and the threat of socialism being realized within Latin America. Then America's constant interference with the politics of Chile also caused dissent, and supplied those who wish to upset the socialist government a means to do so. This was furthered by the international assistance that the U.S. received in this endeavor. Lastly, the military rallied the armed forces of Chile against the government, leaving the government alone and without any means to protect itself.

As can be seen Chile's past is extremely interwoven with other key events in the world, however it has since been on the road to recovery and independence. Since Pinochet managed such a strict and secretive government, it is impossible to say exactly what the truth is, for nobody truly knows the entire story except for Pinochet, who is dead now. This can make it hard for Chileans to talk about this time, especially since it was such a dark time for many. However, Chile is now able to increase both its economy and human rights simultaneously. The economy is a large lynchpin in either sides stories as to why the coup happened, which leads to the question of just how great of an impact did America influence Chile's economy, and would it still have failed regardless of U.S. intervention?

²⁵ "Augusto Pinochet," In *Newsmakers*, Detroit: Gale,

Appendix A



Julio Etchart, "Unnamed," Digital Image, The Guardian, September 7, 2013, December 3, 2017,

[https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2013/sep/07/snapshot-photography-chile-](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2013/sep/07/snapshot-photography-chile-pinochet-etchart)

[pinochet-etchart](https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2013/sep/07/snapshot-photography-chile-pinochet-etchart)

The media can be seen fleeing water cannons while protecting their equipment during the Pinochet regime.

Appendix B



Luis Lagos, "Allende's Last Stand," Digital Image, 1973. Accessed on November 28, 2017

<http://100photos.time.com/photos/luis-orlando-lagos-allendes-last-stand#photograph>.

Allende seen watching the sky after the first air raid of the coup

Annotated Bibliography

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Allende, Salvador. "Allende's Final Address." *Radio Magallanes*. Translation by Yoshie Furuhashi. September 11, 1973. 6:37.

This source is Allende's final address to the people, and therefore is a primary source. This source discusses Allende's feelings towards the coup which he states with "My words do not have bitterness but disappointment." towards the beginning of the speech. After listing the perpetrators of the coup, he says "I will not resign!" in an act of defiance and loyalty. He goes on to thank the workers, the women and mothers, and the youth of Chile for their dedication and belief in "a man who was only an interpreter of great yearnings for justice, who gave his word that he would respect the Constitution and the law and did just that." He finishes his address by saying "Long live Chile! Long live the People! Long live the Workers!". This source is of great value as it shows Allende's true thoughts at the end of his life. It was also written at the time and in the moment.

Allende, Salvador. "Últimas Palabras." Speech presented at La Moneda. Santiago, Chile. September, 1973.

This is the Spanish edition of his speech, but transcribed into words.

"Chile Limits Power of Socialist Allende." *The Prescott Courier*. February 20, 1972. Politics. vol.90. no. 43.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=886&dat=19720220&id=t5UpAAAAIBAJ&sjid=dIAAAAAIBAJ&pg=2659,4550069&hl=en>.

This source documents the coalition's attempts to stop Allende from making such radical changes, and Allende's methods of bypassing their decisions. It also details some important changes Allende is making such as nationalising the economy, and taking land from the wealthy.

CIA agent to the "station". "Cable Transmissions on Coup Plotting." Chile. Cable Transmissions. October 18, 1970. Chile and the United States. The National Security Archive. Washington DC.

This source is a Cable transmission, which makes it Primary as it is the same words that were said at the time of the transmission which was 1970. This source discusses how the US was negotiating with Chilean officials that wished to perform a coup, and even asked for "eight to ten gas grenades" and "Three 45 Calibre Machine Guns with 500 rounds each" within 48 hours. It later discusses who was in the discussion, however names were blacked out, such as the air forces officers who were not yet a part of it, and the men who were active duty military leaders as well "(Name withheld) separately has since tried to contact a Chilean air force official and will keep trying until established.". This source is valuable as it shows a separate coup attempt by the US and is evidence of how long this war against Allende had been going on.

Etchart, Julio. "Unnamed." Digital Image. The Guardian. September 7, 2013. December 3, 2017.
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2013/sep/07/snapshot-photography-chile-pinochet-etchart>.

This is a picture that displays that media getting attacked by water cannons in the attempt to destroy any footage captured. It serves as an example of the lengths Pinochet would go to, in order to maintain secrecy.

Kubisch B. Jack, "Chilean Executions." *Central Intelligence Agency*. November 16, 1973

It is a primary source, as it is a government document written at the time. It talks about the transfer of money from America to Chile in support of Pinochet, and also the many executions. Discusses how they were lying about the numbers used. It is an official government document that was declassified so it was not written with the public in mind.

Lagos, Luis. "Allende's Last Stand." Digital Image. 1973. Accessed on November 28, 2017
<http://100photos.time.com/photos/luis-orlando-lagos-allendes-last-stand#photograph>

This photograph displays Allende's look of determination as he observes the sky, during the coup of 1973. It also shows some of the loyal soldiers in the background, and Allende with a helmet and looking worse for wear.

National Security Council. "Policy towards Chile." *Central Intelligence Agency*. November 9, 1970.

This is an email directed to members of the security council, written at the time which makes it primary. This source discusses the main objective against Chile and the rules of "engagement" for this conquest. They also discuss motives and other countries that may be need to be taken into account.

Rivera, Ximena G. "Recollections of Living Under the Pinochet Regime." Interview by Mateo F. Vega Rivera. November 11, 2017.

This was an over the phone interview, with Ximena Rivera, a Chilean who lived under the regime. She dealt with many of the struggles that most middle class families did under the Pinochet reign, more so due to her status as a teacher. This is a recounting of some of the most important aspects of life under the regime, and even some comparisons to Allende's Presidency.

"Truman Doctrine (1947)." ourdocuments.com.
<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=81>. (January 19th, 2018)

This is an image of the original Truman Doctrine, detailing all the key points, and also has a brief summary of the doctrine below. This source is primary as it does contain the original document, and was useful in understanding the motives of the United States.

"Augusto Pinochet." In *Newsmakers*. Detroit: Gale. 1999. *World History in Context*. (accessed November 9, 2017).
<http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K1618002686/WHIC?u=gree82036&xid=ae4b3b83>.

The source chronicles Pinochet's life and especially focuses on his life after the Coup. This is a biography on Pinochet created from a myriad of sources which makes it a secondary source itself. The book states that Allende's rule was doomed to dissent as it had started having economic troubles "inflation spiraled, food shortages ensued, and business suffered.". It then comments on how Pinochet had a much better fiscal country, yet it suffered much more in the human rights department "the country's average growth rate rose to about 6.5 percent, inflation fell by 65 percent, and the tax system was restructured. ... the United Nations in December of 1977 condemned Chile for human rights abuses in a 96-14 vote". It finishes by chronicling Pinochet's extremely rocky legal troubles post-presidency. This source is valuable as it seems more or less non-partial. It also provides details on what exactly happened and the pros and cons of each ruler.

Gilbert, Sarah. "The Other 9/11." *SBS*. Accessed on November 28, 2017.
<http://www.sbs.com.au/theother911/>.

This sources provides thorough information on the Australian influence on Chile. This includes the fact that Australia considered it a top secret operation, their direct involvement with Pinochet, and their current Chilean immigration status with both refugees and officers from Allende living in proximity.

"The Geography of Chile." *ChileCulture.com*. Accessed on December 5, 2017.
<http://www.chileculture.org/geography-chile/>.

This source has documentation on the zones of Chile and its width. It also supplies limited information on the resources of Chile, and provides comparisons of Chile's length against other large distances.

Stern, Steve. "*Battling for Hearts and Minds*." London: Duke University Press. London. 2006.

This is a book that is a secondary source It is as secondary source because it utilizes research done in the past to look back on the Pinochet years. It talks about what Pinochet did as dictator and on the day of the coup, how he became out of control, and of his aid from America. It is written by an accredited historian who also helped write a series on latin America.

"Salvador Allende Dies in Office During a Coup: September 11, 1973." In *Global Events: Milestone Events Throughout History*. Edited by Jennifer Stock. Vol. 3. Central and South America. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2014. *World History in Context* (accessed October 24, 2017).
<http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/TJANQH005782613/WHIC?u=gree82036&xid=4acd5a9e>.

This is a secondary source as it recounts the history of the coup in 1973 and was published in 2014, over 30 years later. This book gives a detailed overview of the coup, focusing more so on the Chilean aspect of the coup instead of the international affairs. It covers both the ideals of Allende and the shortcomings of his presidency, which eventually lead to the coup, but does not include information on how international interference could have affected his presidency or his plans. However, it does talk about the aftermath of the coup, and how the country responded to the coup. It does seem to be biased towards the US though, as it does avoid mentioning US intervention when possible.

Talavera, Arturo Fontaine. "The United States and Soviet Union In Chile." *Estudios Públicos*.

Translated by Tim Ennis. Chile.

This source is an article documenting the help received from the US and the Soviet Union by Chile's Leaders. This makes the source secondary, as it was not written at the time nor was it from the perspective of someone who was there. This article documents the fact that Pinochet was receiving money from the US and Allende was receiving money from the Union, and how Chile effectively became an ideology battleground. "The documentation published here relates exclusively to donations in money from the Soviet Union Communist Party Central Committee to the Communist Party of Chile" and "The documents presented below vouch for the hidden economic intervention in Chilean politics, both by the United States... and by the Soviet Union, a fact that is proven and published for the first time in the journal *Estudios Públicos*." are both examples of quotes where they state that the sole mission statement of this article is the economic support both sides received. This source is of value because it is all supported by facts that are thoroughly cited. It also is non-partial documenting both sides, something that is rare.