

The Fascist Coup in Chile

Cheddi Jagan

The Popular Unity coalition government led by Salvador Allende, after nearly 3 years in office, was overthrown by an army coup. President Allende himself was murdered.

The military coup has the backing of the rightist business interests, local and foreign. But the US government was quick to deny any involvement.

Such denial however, is not to be taken seriously. US administrations have a long record of deceit to cover up their misdeeds.

The Kennedy administration said that it recognised the PPP government because it came to office by democratic elections in 1961. Yet soon after, it used the CIA to undermine the PPP, and pressured the British Government to dislodge it.

The Eisenhower administration lied about spying over the Soviet Union until the Russians produced the wrecked U-2 plane and the spy, Gary Powers.

Ambassador Adlai Stevenson denied in the United Nations US involvement in the "Bay of Pigs" invasion of Cuba in 1961. Later, however, the involvement was documented.

BIG BUSINESS

US business interests were concerned about Chile not only because of internal developments. There was also concern about its political significance for the Western Hemisphere as a whole. Another socialist country would be a pace-setter for Latin American and Caribbean countries where revolution is high up on the agenda.

US involvement before and after the 1970 elections in Chile, was brought out in hearings before the US Senate Subcommittee on multinational corporations. Attempts were made by International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) and William Broe, Western Hemisphere head of the Central In-

telligence Agency (CIA), to defeat Allende, to prevent his inauguration, and to carry out economic aggression against his government.

COLD WAR

TIME magazine (April 9, 1973) under a headline "The Worse Things Get The Better", gave the following chronology of collaboration as was unravelled during the hearings:

"July 16, 1970: Broe met with ITT Chairman Harold Geneen in Washington. The meeting had been proposed to Richard Helms, then the CIA chief by John McCone, an ITT director and former head of the CIA. Broe said that Geneen told him that ITT was willing to put up a 'substantial fund' to support a conservative candidate for President in the election in Chile to be held September 4. According to Broe, at that time the CIA declined the proposal because the US was not supporting a candidate in the Chilean election.

"September 4: Allende won a 36 per cent plurality but still had to face a run-off vote in the Chilean Congress October 24

"September 9-10: Geneen told McCone at an ITT board meeting that he was willing to put up \$1,000,000 for the US government to use in Chile. A few days later; McCone made offers to both Henry Kissinger and Helms of 'up to \$1,000,000 to support any government plan for the purpose of bringing about a coalition of the opposition to Allende'. McCone did not receive an answer.

"September 29: Broe then made what amounted to a counter-proposal to ITT Senior Vice-President Edward Gerrity Jr. Broe said that he discussed with Gerrity 'the feasibility of possible actions by US companies designed to create or accelerate economic instability in Chile'. Broe mentioned such measures as the cancellation of credit lines to Chile by American banks, a slowdown in delivery of machinery spare parts, action to force savings and loan institutions to close down, and the withdrawal of technical assistance. Broe gave Gerrity a list of American companies that might help in such a plan, 'providing the economic course was feasible'. Gerrity said that he was opposed to creating economic disturbances, but later organised, according to the

testimony, at least two meetings with representatives of such companies as Anaconda, Kennecott Copper, Bank of America; Pfizer Inc., and Ralston Purina. The other companies were not willing to go along with such adventurism.

NIXON AUTHORISED

Before Allende's election it was disclosed that Nixon authorized the US Ambassador in Chile "to do all possible to keep Allende from taking power". And the Chilean army was promised "full material and financial assistance for the effort against Allende".

Actually, in 1972, the US extended US \$10 million to the Chilean air force to buy transport planes and other equipment.

Rights forces inside Chile and some conservatives outside have tried to blame the Allende government for causing its own downfall. Its policies, they say, led to inflation and grave dissatisfaction.

But the inflation was largely due to the US campaign to create an economic squeeze "aimed at introducing an economic collapse".

Thus, while the Pentagon agreed to give military aid to Chile's brass, the US Export-Import Bank refused in August 1971, "to make a US \$21 million loan to Lan-Chile airline to buy three Boeing Jets, even though the airline had a perfect repayment record".

COPPER PRICE

The monopolists dropped the price of copper, Chile's main export, from 59 cents in 1970 to 48 cents in 1972, resulting in a loss of US \$240 million annually, a large sum considering that foreign currency earnings were only \$1,400 million.

At the same time, foreign credit was reduced from US \$240 million to \$32 million a year. And prices of imports increased. In 1972, it cost about US \$100 million more to buy food, medicines and supplies overseas.

The US government also pressured other lenders not to agree to reschedule the huge annual debt repayments.

There was also legal seizure of copper shipment to France.

All these acts of economic aggression robbed the Chilean economy of foreign exchange to buy needed foods and supplies.

In addition, Allende's wealthy opponents went in for a policy of hoarding and black-marketing.

OUR CONVERSATIONS

On five occasions Allende and I talked — at the Inter-American Conference for Democracy and Freedom in Venezuela in April 1960; in Chile in 1961, in Havana, Cuba in 1966 at the Tri-Continental Conference, in Moscow in 1969 and again in Chile in October 1972.

Always it was the same theme — how to get and hold political power for the benefit of the masses.

In 1958, he lost the Presidential elections by about 40,000 votes. That was about the total number won by a left-winger who had ratted and broken away from the alliance he led.

SOLIDARITY

At Maracai, Venezuela, when he successfully battled against an American manoeuvre to isolate Cuba, he talked about the need for a hemispheric organisation. Solidarity, he pointed out, was absolutely essential; imperialism was capable of overtly and covertly operating everywhere. Similarly, the people's force in every country must also be able to lend support to each other.

This viewpoint took form later in the Tri-continental Organisation (OSPAAL) in 1966, and the Latin American Solidarity Organisation (OLAS) in 1967.

In our conversation a day before I left Chile in October 1972, Allende and a couple of his closest aides were keenly interested in my account of the US and CIA involvement in our affairs, the extensive propaganda campaign, the fomenting and financing of strikes and riots.

Interest was keen because there were so many similarities between Guyana and Chile.

Guyana under the PPP, said the witch-hunters, was going to be a second Cuba in the Western Hemisphere. So it was said would Chile be under Marxist Allende.

CRUSADE

The Christian Anti-Communist Crusade admitted spending US \$45,000 during the 1961 election campaign to defeat the PPP. International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) and others spent millions to defeat the Unidad Popular. According to the influential WASHINGTON POST, the CIA alone threw in about \$20 million to help Allende's opponent, Eduardo Frei, during the 1970 elections.

What evinced the greatest interest was the subversive activities of the CIA in fomenting the 80-day strike, how the CIA agent Howard McCabe operated through the Public Service International and NUPSE, how CIA funds were channelled through the Gotham Foundation to pay the workers during the strike, how local trade union leaders had been trained in subversion in Washington by the CIA and the Institute for Free Labour Development (AIFLD), how big business closed their doors and paid their workers to go out and demonstrate in the streets.

Allende asked me to send all the available literature we had. He instructed that publicity should be given to the CIA activities in Guyana as a warning to Chileans.

VIOLENCE

At one point, Allende asked in the light of our experience for my observations on the situation in Chile.

The reactionary forces, I said would not immediately resort to a military coup. They would bide their time, hoping to defeat the Unidad Popular on the election front, that imperialist economic aggression (drop in prices of copper, freeze on foreign credits, higher prices for imports, etc.) coupled with local reactionary strife (demonstrations and strikes) and sabotage would result in hardships for the working people; that inflation, shortages and high prices will lead to dissatisfaction and loss of electoral support.

The danger point would be the March 1973 elections, I pointed out.

If the Unidad Popular gained support, then the right-wing forces, frustrated through their failure to get their anticipated majority to enable them to impeach the President, would argue that with the passage of time, the electoral position of Allende would be strengthened. They therefore would see violence as their only hope. The danger of an army coup would then be great.

ARMY

As regards the army, I said that its tradition of non-intervention in politics cannot be relied upon completely. In Brazil, it had been said that there was a democratic-progressive base in the army, particularly at the sergeant's level. But the army overthrew the reformist Goulart government in 1964.

And while it is true that there are progressive tendencies in the army, as in Peru and Panama, one must remember that the contending forces fought bitterly in the Bolivian army, leading to the overthrow of the anti-imperialist General Juan Jose Torres by the present right-wing General Hugo Banzer.

In Chile itself, General Rene Schneider was kidnapped and murdered by top rightist military conspirators as part of a co-ordinated putsch to prevent Allende's inauguration and to "save the country from communism."

C I A

Events developed almost the way I predicted. At the March 1973 elections, Allende's Unidad Popular increased its voting strength from 36 per cent in 1970 to 43 per cent.

The reactionaries then decided on creating chaos to prepare the way for the army intervention. The lorry owners' two-month strike, like the 80 day strike in Guyana in 1963, coupled with strikes of other middle strata groups — doctors, airline pilots, etc. — had a crippling effect.

As in Guyana the CIA played the role as financier of chaos. TIME (September 24, 1973) wrote that its correspondent Rudolph Ranch "visited a group of truckers camped near Santiago who were enjoying a lavish communal meal of steaks, vegetables, wine and empanadas (meat pies). 'Where

does the money for that come from?' he enquired. 'From the CIA' the truckers answered laughingly".

In Guyana, the British army and the British-commanded police sat tight while the opportunist, pro-imperialist politicians and labour leaders created strife and disorder, which was then used by the British government to renege on its 1960 pledge to grant independence.

In Chile, the right-wing military brass, after pushing aside the head of the armed forces, General Carlos Prats Gonzalez, seized power in one of the most brutal military coups.

SOCIALISM

With Allende's downfall, the big question now posed is: "Is there a peaceful electoral road to socialism?". Many will now be saying: "I told you so: that road is impossible".

However, this question must be viewed dialectically and not dogmatically. While it is true that for Latin America the strategic political road to socialism will be largely through armed struggle, the electoral road cannot be ruled out everywhere. Much depends on the national and international balance of forces, and the concrete conditions.

The basic weakness of Allende's Unidad Popular Government, was that it had the legal, but not the political capacity to bring about socialism. With only 36 per cent (1970) to 43 per cent (1973) of electoral support it did not have enough popular support to deter the army.

Two other problems compounded its difficulties;—firstly no parliamentary majority in Congress; secondly, opposition not only from the rightists, but also from the ultra-leftists inside and outside the government.

REVOLUTION

The latter created difficulties for Allende. Seeing no difference between a national-democratic anti-imperialist revolution and a socialist revolution, they forced a too-rapid internal domestic programme. The opposition Christian Democratic Party, it should be remembered, supported the nationalisation of the foreign companies, but refused to go

along with some of the domestic measures the government pursued. They fought inside and outside of parliament (National Congress) to embarrass the government and ultimately to prepare the way for the army coup.

In Chile, as elsewhere, ideological work among the masses, including the armed forces, is a pre-requisite to success. Only in this way will the people be prepared to bear short-term difficulties due to economic aggression, and at the same time will the government be able to combat the rightist conspirators in the army.

SOLIDARITY

The military junta by its acts is now demonstrating that it intervened on behalf of big business. Communists and socialists are being rounded up and murdered. And a policy of de-nationalisation has been inaugurated.

Business is back in the political saddle. The sham of army neutrality and non-intervention is now exposed. A new stage in the Chilean struggle for revolutionary people's power has dawned. All Guyanese must express their solidarity with the Chilean people.

The PNC took office on December 15, 1964, over 9 years ago. Instead of things getting better, as promised the nation by the PNC leader, they are getting worse. Today, PNC mis-rule is characterised by the following realities:

Rising crime, prostitution, corruption, prices, and taxes; cuts in social services; squeeze in wages and salaries; economic depression; galloping inflation; rigged elections; political murders; attempted kidnappings, and attempted assassination of a political dissident; army massacre in the Rupununi in 1969; rising unemployment; police harassment; shortages of essential items of consumption; black-marketing and hoarding; muzzling of the mass media; persecution of honest journalists etc.

The fascist clique which is now in office, maintains that it is "socialist". Adolph Hitler said the same thing in Nazi Germany.