

Day two

“Segunda pata” (second leg)

Our presence in Scotland can be explained by the following stories reported in The Scotsman of the 12th September, 1973 and by a string of other British newspapers.

ALLENDE SUICIDE REPORT AFTER MILITARY COUP

“Tanks blasted the presidential palace after air forces jets attacked the building a dozen times with rockets. Dr Allende, supported by members of his presidential guard and civilian police, held out for more than two hours against heavy fire... Thousands of vehicles were marching on the city from the north a few hours after sporadic resistance by armed supporters of Dr Allende had been crushed” The Scotsman also reported the bombardment of Allende’s home and his bodyguards mounting resistance here.

“EXIT ALLENDE”

Read The Scotsman editorial of Wednesday 12th September.

“Just about midway during his six-year term of office, President Allende has been deposed by Chile’s armed forces. In almost any other country Latin American country, without the constitution and democratic traditions of Chile (to which he paid scant attention) military intervention would have occurred much sooner. Indeed the generals first of all tried to avoid direct military action against the president by agreeing to co-operate in his government, after its effort to drive Chile too far and too fast along a rough Marxist road had produced economic chaos and the growth of violence forces on both Left and Right. Even as recently as the end of June, the military leaders intervened to stop an attempted coup by some units against the President.

The military leaders can scarcely be accused of acting precipitately, although they have prevented Dr Allende from revealing his latest plan - perhaps including a plebiscite to decide on his continuance in office. It was rather late in the day for Dr Allende to present himself as the reconciler of his dangerously divided nation; for he had insisted (egged on by his extremist supporters) that socialist measures should take priority over the general consensus in Chile. A Marxist President, having been (unusually, and on a minority vote) elected, has a duty to pay attention to the wishes of the electorate. Dr Allende did not, and even those who deplore the existence of the middle class, should expect it to resist the wholesale undermining of its economic position - “divide and rule” may be a sound maxim for a country’s conquerors, but a policy of “rule and divide” inevitably and rightly has led to Dr Allende’s removals. A coup is unfortunate, but a civil war, which was looming, would have been worse. The social divisions which were opened up by Dr Allende will take a long time to heal.”

My thoughts in relation to the above articles:

What a lot of rubbish from the Scotsman!

What happens when a President works hard on behalf of the underprivileged people?

The bourgeoisie, oppressing the underprivileged people, tries its best to destabilise his government using all their power which will include the use of nasty tactics: creates economic and social chaos for example. What happens when a Latin American President try hard to put a stop the very advantageous economic privileges given in Latin America, by the bourgeoisie, to American multinational companies? The United States Government will use extreme force to remove him from office and installs, if necessary, a bloody dictatorship. At this point the bourgeoisie and the United States of America are not interested in the welfare of the working class people or concerned with democracy and freedom.

The social class division in Chile was not a creation of Dr Salvador Allende. The social division in our nation existed long before Salvador Allende came to power. The social and economic division in our nation was a political design of the bourgeoisie -

it consisted of allowing its members, a minority, to enjoy power and privileges and allowing the majority to suffer underdevelopment. Allende wanted to reverse this situation and by doing so the bourgeoisie and the United States were in turmoil. The bourgeoisie did not want to lose their grip on power and their privileges. The American multi-national companies were, on the other hand, not prepared to lose “the right” to exploit Chilean natural resources to the advantage of their shareholders in the United States.

Many errors in understanding the economy were committed by the Allende’s government. By 1973, however, there was already plenty of evidence to suggest that this economic and social chaos found in our nation was the direct result of a dirty work on the part of the bourgeoisie and the United States, to which the Chilean economy was so closely linked. The CIA was channelling funds to different concern including the right wing press, for example, El Mercurio*.

The growth of violence in our nation resulted from the desperation of the right-wingers to stop Dr Allende at the ballot box. By 1973 President Allende was gaining more and more support, despite all the difficulties. Allende had been elected in 1970 with 36.3% of the electorate and by 1973 his support was close to 44%, which might be thought to suggest an opposition of 56%. However, part of this percentage included people who were simply undecided whether to vote for the UP or the opposition. Victor Jara, murdered by the Junta, wrote a famous song about these people. It was called “Ni chicha ni limoná” – roughly, neither one thing nor the other. What is sad is the undeniable fact that, in the plebiscite of 1988, 43% of Chileans voted for the Pinochet regime. That is to say, almost half the population unashamedly supported the Pinochet regime and its bloody actions.

Since The Scotsman highlighted the fact that Allende had been elected in 1970 with a minority vote, we should note that, in 1958, the right-wing candidate Jorge Alessandri won the presidential election with 31.6% against 28.95% obtained by Salvador Allende. Alessandri won by a very narrow margin of around 33,000 votes. A priest by the name of Antonio Zamorano (el cura de Catapilco) took 41,000 votes effectively preventing Allende to become president of Chile.

In 1964 the Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Montalva not only beat Allende with the help of the CIA but his government received a lot of “economic aid” from the United States through the Alliance for Progress - estimated at around US\$720 million between 1961 and 1970, the largest amount, on a per capita basis, given to any Latin American nation**. The Allende government, on the other hand, did not receive economic aid from the US. On the contrary, the Government of the United States worked hard to destabilise the Allende’s government. Allende had to be seen in Chile and the world as a failure and the role of the United State and the bourgeoisie was to make sure that it was the case.

* I recommend the documentary El Diario de Agustin. (2008). Agustin Edwards Eastman being the owner of the Mercurio.

** A History of Chile 1808-1994, Simon Collier, William F. Sater, Cambridge Latin American Studies, Cambridge University press, 1996,p.310

Most Chileans never accepted a political class which held more than three quarters of the population under economic and social submission and underdevelopment. By the late 1960s, there were already strong desires for changes which could help to bring justice for the underprivileged. Deep economic and social changes by a government of the left, to allow the underprivileged to succeed, mean a lot of trouble in all fronts: It means a declaration of war against the bourgeoisie and the U.S. While the war was fought by the left at the ballot box, Allende's opponents were soon killing important members of the Chilean Armed Forces. The assassination of the Chilean Army General Rene Schneider by a right-wing extremist group happened soon after Dr Allende had been elected President of Chile. It was an attempt by the right-wingers to stop Dr Allende to become President of Chile. The aim was to create uncertainties and chaos in our nation. Chile was not used to political assassination.

Salvador Allende had been a parliamentarian since the 30s and to say he paid scant attention to the democratic tradition of Chile is just first class ignorance from the Scotsman. S. Allende was a profound democratic socialist man with a lot of prestige among the working class people. It is difficult to entertain the thought that Allende would ignore Chilean democratic traditions. He defended these traditions with a gun on his hand on the 11th of September of 1973.

Chile was never about to embark on a Civil War. The Chile of 1970s was not the Spain of the 1930s. In our nation there was only one group with the desire, they have the enterprise, to embark in any nasty activity to stop the socialist government: the multi million Armed Forces and the Police ready to act on behalf of interests of the bourgeoisie and the United States. As far as the coalition of left-wing parties, supporting Allende, was concerned, the civil war was accepted but at the ballot box.

US KNEW OF CHILEAN COUP IN ADVANCE

The Scotsman. September 13th, 1973.

".....but a US spokesman stressed that the Administration who often in the past made clear their dislike of President Salvador Allende, were not involved in the coup, either in support of or against the Chilean Government...The administration sources indicated that members of the military Junta, who seized power on Tuesday, have been in touch with official or unofficial American representatives before the coup in which Dr Allende died"

We all know by now that the US was very much involved in the coup and we know that the new rulers of Chile were already knocking at the door of the Nixon administration to get the all-clear. Nixon and the 1973 "Peace Nobel Prize" winner Henry Kissinger backed the bloody Pinochet coup.

AFTER ALLENDE

The Scotsman editorial of Wednesday 14th September read:

"The overthrow of Dr Allende has aroused great and perfectly understandable indignation in certain quarters, such as the Soviet Union and Cuba, where the road to, and the maintenance of, socialism did not depend upon the ballot box".

In this way The Scotsman began its editorial by using the coup, a terrible tragedy for the Chilean people, to attack the Soviet Union and Cuba. In the development of the article The Scotsman displayed a venomous desire to use the Pinochet coup to attack not only these countries but also President Allende, Che Guevara, communism, etc.

Today (Dec 2008) capitalism is trembling as a result of “its economic success” based on speculation, greed and bad economics. There is complete chaos in the markets of the United States and Europe (its people in fears) and nobody knows how to deal with the crisis. What the capitalist countries will do to get out of this crisis? On the international front will be to pass the crop of its failures to the underdeveloped world in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Gross economic irresponsibility in the West will mean, for the ordinary people of these continents, hardship and perhaps wars. The ballot box in the West serves to tell lies to the voters and to invade countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The ballot box in the West mean for the ordinary people to live under siege in so many fronts: alcoholism, violence, deceit, double standards, greediness etc.

The Scotsman with disdain condemns the whole Chilean proletariat for daring to elect a Marxist as President. Why not? The coup is portrayed as a consequence of Chileans daring to elect a socialist president open to the communist world. Why not? What we know is that, immediately after the coup, the whole world, including Scotland, was to condemn the coup and the horror brought upon the people by the evil Junta and its chief, General Pinochet.

We refugees, who managed to leave Chile in 1974, were able to see immediately the ferocity of the coup and its terrible consequences. We could also see, with satisfaction, that in most western countries there was instant outrage against the Junta and their backers, the Government of United States.

In this extensive editorial the Scotsman newspaper clearly justified the coup - as it had done in its editorial of Wednesday, 12th September. As a Chilean I am left with a sour feeling. What if the coup had taken place in Scotland and democracy and freedom of the press had been abolished, as happened in our country? (The Right-wing press was allowed to function of course!) What if thousands of Scots would have been tortured, murdered and then made to disappear? Two days into the coup and most of us knew that mass murder was already taking place. It was common knowledge that the Mapocho River in Santiago was already being used as a dumping site for corpses riddled with bullets. (Poor left-wing comrades who firmly believed that the revolution in Chile was taken place at the ballot box)

It is unacceptable for a newspaper to project the view that a coup may be appropriate because it served to get rid of a Marxist government. It is as if a coup was justified and legitimate because it took place in South America. Chile was not a typical South American country, populated throughout its history by bloody right-wing dictators, supported by the United States. For the Scotsman it was legitimate to depose by force a democratically-elected president, using the argument that Allende had, after all, been elected on a minority vote. I have already argued that it was wrong to use this argument against Allende: remember Alessandri in 1958 and Eduardo Frei Montalva in 1964 ? Allende came to power in 1970 with only 36, 3% of the vote, however, there was a high turn-out in this election. Tony Blair, in 2005, was elected Prime Minister with a much smaller percentage than this and with a low turn-out:

“JUST 22% OF THE ELECTORATE BACKED TONY BLAIR: HE WON WITH 36% OF THE VOTES CAST” (The independent’s front page of the 17th of May, 2005) this minority vote took us, in Britain, to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

By 1973, Allende, despite many difficulties, still continued to hold on to one-third in the congress:

"Given the high rate of inflation, the food shortages, the long lines outside shops, and the rampant black market which were now part of the everyday scene, many outside observers assumed that the UP would lose heavily. A maxim of Chilean politics held that no government party did well during a period of high inflation...The UP won 44% of the vote"

The Civil war at the ballot box was for the opposition a failure! They had, therefore, to act immediately if they were to win the hearts and minds of the Chileans opposing for different reasons, Salvador Allende. A bloody coup was the only option open to the bourgeoisie and the United States and the Allende's government was never prepared for it. Ordinary Chileans were not equipped to confront the Chilean Armed Forces. But why Chileans decided to get a Marxist Government in the first place? The Scotsman recognised that Allende's predecessor Eduardo Frei Montalva has:

"failed to live up to expectation with his programme of more moderate, liberal reform and his failure encouraged some Chileans to think that more drastic measures offered by Allende were required."

Frei failed in the eyes of the Chileans proletariat because his economic policies tended to benefit the middle classes and the American multinationals exploiting our vast natural resource, the copper mines. Chile was in need of deep changes and what Frei proposed the underdeveloped was: cosmetic solutions. Nothing more!

The Chilean working class was never part of a grand design in Chilean right-wing politics. The great merit of Salvador Allende was to look for ways to turn this situation round in favour of the working class: I agreed and so were millions of Chileans.

Thirty five years have passed since the death of President Allende and the country's working classes are still waiting to have the same opportunities to develop economically, as the middle and upper classes have done, under the Pinochet regime and "La Concertación". (The left-centre- right coalition which came to power after Pinochet) Chilean wines, produced with cheap labour, populate the shelves of British supermarkets such as Sainsbury's, who sell a Merlot, Viña Maipo Reserve, at only £2,99 (The Guardian, May 19th, 2005).

By the 1970s it was very easy to govern a South American country by carrying out moderate economic policies beneficial to the bourgeoisie and the American multinational companies. To lead a government which was a beneficiary of open credits from the United States was also very good. In South America politics, a president had to be accepted and "allowed" to govern by the governments of the United States. This means, that a Latin American President had to accept the ripped off of the natural resources of his country by American multinationals. Allende refused it and was right to do it. The Bourgeoisie and the United States were, of course, not used to be rejected by a South American President.

* A History of Chile 1808-1994, Cambridge University Press, 1996

For the Scotsman, Salvador Allende was an incompetent president. Like it or not, from the point of view of the Chilean working class Allende was a competent hero. He was a decent and an honest man as he wished to change the nasty political spectrum in our nation. The political spectrum in our country favoured, until the 1970s, the very conservative element in our society: the bourgeoisie* the owner of Chile. (La burguesía los dueños de Chile)

The Scotsman also wrote:

“it is romantic nonsense to imagine the proletariat has benefited from the Allende era”.

There was nothing romantic during the presidency of Allende except to say that for the left-wingers means to expose themselves to be killed, by furious right-wingers, for believing in freedom, democracy and development for all Chileans and not just for a few. The proletarians, and their children began immediately to benefit from the Allende’s era and especially the proletarian children, living in the innumerable shantytowns (a creation of the bourgeoisie) found all over the places on Chilean territory. The underprivileged were glad to have for the first time in Chilean history a government looking their interests. If this statement were not true, then it is inconceivable that a right-wing coup would have taken place in our country. It means, that Allende was not looking after the interest of the powerful. The bourgeoisie, after all, had for centuries governments looking their class interests.

Bourgeois hostilities against President Allende mounted with the passing of time and yet, left-wings Chileans, under president Allende, were a passive lot. It was hard and uncomfortable for the right-wingers, and the world, to accept that the ballot box was the democratic traditions of most Chilean left-wingers of the 1970s. Allende and its left-wing parliamentarians in the 1970s belonged to this democratic traditions. During the Allende’s years Chileans were not instructed to handle weaponry to kill right-wingers. ** (Contrast this state of mind in Chile with the Pinochet era)

The democratic tradition of the left in our country was one of the main reasons for the Europeans Governments to accept, on their territories, thousand of defeated left-winger refugees after the coup in 1973. (No extremists among us!) The ballot box allowed Chileans to learn about the history of the working class people and what had happened to them under the boot of the bourgeoisie. The ballot box allowed the Allende socialist governments to favour the underprivileged. The carnage that took place in Chile in 17 years of dictatorship was the result of Allende taken a firm stance on behalf of the poor and a firm attitude against the bourgeoisie, including the landowners, and the United States’ Government and its multinational companies. It was the result of Pinochet taken a harsh instance against the underprivileged who had dared to challenge, at the ballot box, the established order.

* La Burguesía se caracteriza por poseer medios de producción y, gracias a esto, establecer una relación de explotación con el proletariado.

** in the same way as today(2008) Chavez in Venezuela and Morales en Bolivia does not encourage their supporters to handle weapons to kill their right-winger opponents. (Economic changes in these countries are shaped by the results at the ballot box)

For the Scotsman, everything seemed to be in a mess during the presidency of Allende. Yes - insofar as the economic decisions were ultimately taken by the Allende government. It is very difficult, however, to sustain the view that, by 1973, the mess was the sole creation of Dr Allende. Chileans were able to see the hostility emanating from all fronts, including the CIA against Allende. We all know that the CIA was channelling money to the opposition to bring down Allende. The role played by the bourgeoisie and the United States in this "mess" was clear and comprehensive and it helped to create the misery of almost all of us Chileans. It was easy for the Edinburgh newspaper to structure Chilean history using as a point of departure a narrow view, little research and a biased, right-wing stance.

HOW ALLENDE WAS MURDERED

Was The Morning Star headline of September 15th, 1973. It was followed by a long article, written by Jorge Timossi*, about the military assault on La Moneda, the Government Palace, on the 11th of September, 1973.

'It is right on to the end. Allende is shooting with a machine-gun. This is infernal. The smoke is suffocating us. President Salvador Allende fell defending the government palace and his convictions after demanding guarantees for the Chilean Working Class in the face of the fascist military coup. *"I will never leave la Moneda - I will not resign from my post and I will defend with my life the authority given to me by the people"*, he said on the morning the coup began.

"A group of reporters who reached La Moneda were forced by the rebels to 'clear out' at the double with their hands in the air.

At 9.15 I succeeded in calling in the palace. One of Allende advisers said: "You say that we'll die right here, that we will resist to the end."

At 9.30 communications with the rest of the world were brought to an end. Entel-Chile, the state telecommunications agency, was occupied by the army and at 9.45 the notorious ITT cut off a news agency call to Paris.

Tanks moved on the Moneda, three planes continued low flights while scattered shooting began to intensify. It grew deafening at times. At 11, the coup makers issued their ultimatum. Allende had three minutes to surrender. But in his third speech the president once again declared that he would remain in the palace. "This will be the last time I speak to you," he told the people of Chile.

Infernal

The smell of explosives, oil and burned flesh reached our office on the 11th floor. The noise was steady, concentrated and produced by all kind of weapons, from rockets and 30mm shells to the artillery of a Sherman tank plus the authentic weapons of the army. Streets were deserted. Some parked cars began to be used as parapets or else become heaps of scrap under the tank treads.

At 1:52, I received a phone call from La Moneda . It was Jaime Barrios, a presidential economic adviser, who was fighting from one of the windows in front of the building. It is right on to the end. Allende is shooting with a machine- gun. This is infernal. The smoke is suffocating us. Augusto Olivares is dead **.

"The chief sent Fernando Flores and Daniel Vergara to speak with them. He demands a written guarantee for the working class and the gains that have already been made. As soon as he gets an answer he'll decide what to do."

I myself heard the above-mentioned strident noises of the bombardment of "La Moneda" and we "Santiaguinos" were terrified by it.

* Jorge Timossi a journalist and writer born in Argentina but a Cuban citizen)

** Augusto Olivares was one of the best known journalists in Chile and a friend of president Allende

JUNTA IN COMPLETE CONTROL OF SANTIAGO

A tiny article, appearing inside The Scotsman of the 15th of September, of 1973.

CONDEMNATION

"The Junta which has dominated a military-dominated Cabinet have already begun another battle- to win recognition in the face of worldwide condemnation of the coup. Early success on the home front came yesterday when the Christian Democratic Party and the National Party, who led a congressional assault against Dr Allende, announced their support of the coup. Only two right-wing South American military regimes, Uruguay and Brazil, have so far recognised the new government..."

By this time the newspapers began to recognise that condemnation of the coup was occurring not only in the Soviet Union or Cuba but throughout the world.

Here we have Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic Party, supporting the coup instead of condemning it. (Eduardo Frei was the person helped by the CIA in 1964 to overcome Allende in the presidential elections of that year.)

Early Scotsman accounts suggested that Chile, under Allende, was a nest of armed men from the right and from the left. In the article quoted above, we learned that the Junta was in complete control of the country four days after the coup which means that few left-wingers had weapons. It demonstrates that armed resistance throughout the country against the Junta was poor. If the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) represented, for some, the extra-parliamentarian forces of the left, for its "extremist views", then we have to say that their extremism was confined to small actions: some bank robberies to fund their movement. The MIR in the 1970s was not in the same league as the Tupamaros in Uruguay or the Montoneros in Argentina.

Allende was one of those resisting at the presidential palace with a gun given to him as a present by Fidel Castro. It does not make him an extremist. He and the rest of his body guards in La Moneda were, in a losing battle against the powerful multi-million dollar Armed Forces, defending democracy and freedom in our nation.

What happened on the 11th of September in Chile produced delight in Washington. Nixon and Kissinger were behind the Chilean tragedy. What happened in New York and Washington on the 11th of September 2001 produced in me a natural ironic smile, together with a sincere sadness for the many innocent people who died in that terrorist attack. Washington instigated the terrorist attack on "la Moneda". Washington itself was the scene of a terrorist attack by Pinochet's men - the killing in 1976 of Allende's former ambassador to the U.S., Orlando Letelier, by a car bomb which also killed Letelier's American assistant, Ronni Moffit. Pinochet brought a terrorist attack to Washington and yet never was asked by the American authorities to appear in front of an American judge.