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Nota de Archivo: *Summary: This study examined what problems would result from Allende's Presidency and whether a Communist take-over of the Chilean Government was possible. Source: National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73, POL 15 CHILE. Confidential; No Foreign Dissem; Controlled Dissem. The study was produced in the Office of General and Strategic Research on September 30.*

CHILE: IS ALLENDE THE PRELUDE TO A COMMUNIST VICTORY?

While the outlook for the survival of Chilean democracy does not seem favorable, this paper examines a number of elements present in the situation that do not point to an imminent or even inevitable Communist victory.

ABSTRACT

Allende's likely accession to the Chilean Presidency will pose serious problems for US interests both in Chile and throughout the Hemisphere. However, these problems would be vastly increased were the Communists to control the leftist coalition that would govern Chile under these circumstances. Just what are the chances that an Allende Presidency will lead to a communist take-over?

While the outlook for the survival of Chilean democracy does not seem favorable, there are a number of elements present in the situation that do not point to an imminent or even inevitable Communist victory. In particular, the rise of a Soviet-type regime in Chile under the leadership of the Chilean Communist Party seems far-fetched, partly for the following reasons: a) the checkered history of Communists in coalitions in the post-World War II period, b) the long-standing fractious relationship between Chilean Communists and Socialists, and c) the erosion of Soviet authority in the Communist movement leading to ambiguities concerning the nature of a Marxist-Leninist state.

Communists in coalitions in the post-World War II period were generally unsuccessful in seizing power in the absence of direct Soviet military pressure and in cases where they encountered massive internal political resistance. Hence indigenous as well as environmental factors contributed to the fall of Czechoslovakia in 1948 while imposing a policy of "hopeful waiting" on the large Communist parties in France and Italy.

In this context, Chile's experience in 1946–47 is not so different from that of many Western European countries during the early post-World War II period. For Chile too had its brief second fling at popular frontism under President Videla before he ousted the Communists from office and outlawed their party.

The question remains whether the Chilean Communists might not use the currently more favorable situation in a quick move to seize power. This eventuality cannot be excluded, but there are some indications that the Communists themselves are not persuaded of the successful outcome of such a venture in the light of their relatively small popular following (15.7% of the vote in the 1969 parliamentary elections), their uncertain control over their often more militant but also more

undisciplined Socialist coalition partners, and in the face of still sizeable and distrustful opposition parties as well as a watchful military. In short, Chilean Communists are likely to test the ground carefully before embarking upon the next step in what for them can only be a gradual ascent to power. In taking this stance the party reflects not only its close identification with the Soviet line but also its aversion to any adventurism. While this cautionary approach has brought Chilean Communists into repeated conflicts with assorted Chilean leftists of more extreme persuasion, it takes into account the Communist leadership's appreciation of the fact that the party's physical distance from the Soviet Union leaves its fortune and fate in the short run pretty much in its own hands.

In consolidating a communist victory in Chile, the Chilean Communist Party also will have to neutralize and eventually control its principal coalition partner, the Chilean Socialists. This task may prove difficult inasmuch as the ostensibly militant Marxist Socialists represent a rather different brand of leftism that is really an amalgam of strident nationalism and populism. As a jumble of the most disparate elements, the Chilean Socialist Party has shown remarkable resilience in its 37 years of existence in spite of an unending series of splits and reunifications. Furthermore, its currently more muted expressions of resentment towards the Communists, largely an outgrowth of its electoral alliance with them, should not obscure the fact that, ideologically speaking, the Chilean Socialist Party has more in common with the leaders of the Third World, who follow a policy of non-alignment and anti-imperialism.

As eclectic and often erratic Marxists, the Chilean Socialists have in turn welcomed Peronism, Titoism, Fidel Castroism, and Maoism. Their choices of symbols and currents have often been not only at odds with those of the Chilean Communists but also shaped by an unending competition with the latter for claiming the only truly left position in the Chilean political spectrum. However, these ideological commitments have not prevented the Socialists for many years from seeing merit in collaborating with communists for practical political purposes. This underlies their present collaboration with the Chilean Communist Party when, beginning in 1952, their then still violently anti-Communist leader Allende became a leading exponent of collaboration.

While this collaboration has now lasted over 15 years to the mutual benefit of both parties, it has not served to diminish Socialist distrust of and hostility towards their Communist coalition partners. Nevertheless, Socialists share with Communists a deep hostility against the "Colossus from the North". If anything, the Socialist opposition to "Yankee imperialism" is more vehement because it is the product of an extreme nationalistic resentment of the US role in Chile which, in their estimation, constitutes the principal obstacle to social change.

In discussing whether Chile, under Allende, will become a Marxist-Leninist state, it is important to note that there is no textbook definition for such a state. The extent to which states, professing to adhere to Marxism-Leninism, follow Soviet practice is due more to complex reasons of power politics, historical circumstances, and a host of other unique factors than to doctrinal necessity. In fact, the multipolar character of contemporary communism has given rise to states like China, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and the short-lived experiment in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, all of which were self-declared adherents of Marxism-Leninism, yet have come to differ in their interpretation of doctrine from the Soviets and are no longer willing to subordinate their interests to those of the Soviet Union.

The belief systems of communists and socialists alone cannot determine whether a Chilean-style constellation, professing to adhere to the principles of Marxism-Leninism, can be transformed into a one-party dictatorship of either the Soviet type, or, more usual for Latin America, into an authoritarian nationalist-populist regime. Domestic factors, external influence, and the perception of these elements by key actors involved in the struggle for power will govern the speed at which any putative communist take-over is likely to take place. All one can suggest here is that communists have had clear sailing only when the opposition was under direct Soviet pressure.

In the last analysis, prospects for the continuation of a competitive political system in Chile, in the event Allende takes over, are likely to be determined more by practical circumstances than by the ideological preconceptions of either Communists or Socialists. As for the Communists, they are likely to be cautious for doctrinal as well as for practical reasons. The more visceral Socialists have a more ambivalent attitude towards the system which makes them bombastic revolutionary rhetoricians on the one hand and opportunistic participants in it on the other.

Whether socialist bombast is now likely to engender just enough tinder to spark a coup, or will be tempered by more pragmatic considerations is hard to predict. At any rate, the fluidity of the situation and the uneasy relationship between the two principal leftist alliance partners are factors militating against a communist take-over in Chile.

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