



Salvador Allende was a founder of the Socialist party in Chile in 1933, a member of Congress from 1937 to 1970, and president from 1970 to 1973. His family had long been active in Chilean politics: His great-grandfather fought for Chilean independence under José de San Martín, and his grandfather was one of the leading reformers in 19th-century Chile.

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Frei, Allende, and Pinochet

As the 1964 elections approached, the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties lost ground to the relatively new Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and to the coalition of Socialist and Communist parties. On election day, a majority of Chilean voters, discontented with the political and economic stagnation of the past 30 years, elected the PDC candidate, Eduardo Frei Montalva.

Frei began to implement a program he called a Revolution in Liberty and proposed a process of "Chileanization," in which copper mines owned by foreign companies would gradually be bought by the government. He also backed an amendment to the constitution that would allow the government to take over parts of large estates that were not being well used and make them available to poor farmers. Groups that had had little power before, including workers, peasants, women, and poor people, became more politically active.

The programs of the Frei government also ensured that by 1973 Chile's educational system was the best Latin America had to offer. Enrollment in primary schools increased even in rural areas. The university system was expanded, and greater emphasis was placed on the study of Chilean history and on training students to solve the

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problems of economic development that had long confronted Chile. Money was set aside to build schools and increase teachers' salaries.

But the government's goals were too ambitious, especially in the area of economic policy. During the last years of Frei's administration, which ended in 1970, the wealthy and conservative right-wing elements of the population criticized his reforms; the left-wing elements claimed that the reforms had not gone far enough or fast enough. The rate of inflation increased, the economy stagnated, and shortages of consumer goods occurred.

During Frei's term, many Chilean voters, especially the working classes, the poor, and students, moved further to the left—that is, they favored more government action to bring about social and economic change. In 1970, these voters elected Salvador Allende, who was sponsored by the Socialist and Communist parties, to the presidency. The PDC also agreed to support Allende, who in return promised to honor all the provisions of the constitution in governing the land. It was the first free election of a Marxist (that is, someone influenced by the socialist and communist theories of Karl Marx) to a presidency in the Western Hemisphere.



Cheering crowds greeted President Eduardo Frei (center) on his return from a trip to Europe. The people's enthusiasm turned to discontent as Frei's economic policies failed to satisfy their expectations.

Chilean Socialism

Allende wanted to set Chile on a course of peaceful but extreme changes, a program that he called the Chilean Road to Socialism. Soon after taking office, he called for a completely socialist economy—in other words, he wanted to do away with all private ownership of land and industry—and he established full diplomatic relations with Communist and Socialist countries such as Cuba and the People's Republic of China. He also wanted to give unused land to peasants and to do away with social classes by distributing wealth evenly.

From the beginning of his presidency, Allende had trouble achieving these goals. He was supported by a coalition, or group of six different parties that had pooled their votes to get him elected; the members of the coalition, however, often disagreed on just how far down the road to socialism they wanted to travel. Allende spent government money to increase the number of jobs and raise wages, but when wages rose, prices rose also for two reasons: first, because people had more money to spend on a limited number of products, and second, because higher wages increased the cost of producing goods. Prices skyrocketed; between 1971 and 1973, the rate of inflation increased from 22 percent to 508 percent—which meant that each peso lost its buying power about 25 times faster in 1973 than it had in 1971.

More members of Allende's coalition were elected to Congress in 1971 and 1972, but by 1973, Allende was losing the support of the PDC, the Roman Catholic church, and the middle class. In addition, Allende's government was undermined to some degree by a right-wing plan to sabotage the national economy by manipulating workers to call strikes or slowdowns in agricultural and industrial production. Copper workers, professional workers, and truck owners went on strike, not suspecting that some of the strikes had been set up by opponents of Allende in order to discredit him.



One week before Allende was overthrown in a coup, throngs of middle-class women joined farm laborers, truck drivers, copper miners, and others protesting the dizzying rate of inflation under Allende's coalition government.

U.S. Interference

In addition to this internal resistance, Allende encountered opposition from the U.S. government. The United States opposed Allende both because of his Marxism and because he planned to nationalize, or seize ownership of, American-owned copper mines in Chile without paying the American companies anything. U.S. interference in Chilean politics is known to have taken place in the 1960s, when the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) contributed at least \$3 million to Frei's campaign to ensure that he would beat Allende. In 1970, the United States again tried to prevent Allende from winning. Once he was elected, however, U.S. opposition continued.

The United States was the leader of a group of nations and international financial organizations that refused to make loans to Chile or to invest in the country. Furthermore, U.S. congressional hearings have shown that the United States secretly encouraged some of the anti-Allende strikes and marches in Chile and also supported certain anti-Allende organizations, including extreme right-wing groups such as Fatherland and Liberty, which called for strong military control of the government. The CIA may have given as much as \$8 million in aid to anti-Allende groups. The CIA had help from the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation (ITT), which had a large investment in Chile's telephone company. Because ITT feared that the telephone company would be nationalized the way the mines had been, the American company gave another \$1 million to the anti-Allende organizations. These organizations, in turn, urged the armed forces to take power from Allende, who had lost all control of the military.

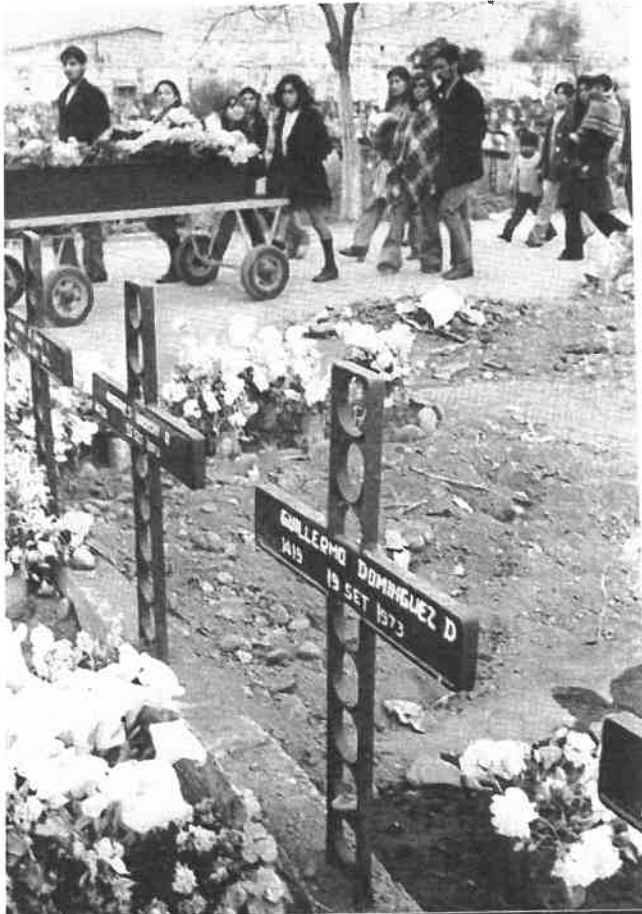
Pinochet Comes to Power

On September 11, 1973, the military seized control in a coup. Major General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, whom Allende had recently appointed to head the army, joined leaders of the other branches of the armed forces in demanding that the president resign. On the morning of the coup, a Chilean air force general offered Allende a plane that would take him out of Chile and into exile. Allende replied, "The president of Chile does not flee in a plane." In a radio speech he said, "I am ready to resist by any means, even at the cost of my life, so that this may serve as a lesson in the ignominious history of those who use force, not reason." *Ignominious* means "disgraceful," and Allende was referring to Chile's national motto, *By Reason or by Force*.

Although Allende survived the explosion of 18 air force rockets that severely damaged the presidential palace, he died when troops

later stormed La Moneda. The new government insisted that Allende committed suicide but refused to release photographs of the scene of his death, and some people believe that Allende was actually executed by the military. The truth may never be known.

Just hours after the storming of La Moneda, a four-member ruling junta, consisting of the chiefs of the armed services and the *carabineros* (national police) and led by Pinochet, had taken control of the government. The junta ordered the nation's legislators to disband, dissolving Congress for the first time in the 150-year history of independent Chile. It then issued a "decree-law" naming itself the sole government.



One week after the coup, mourners march past iron crosses that mark the graves of Allende supporters and other victims of the 1973 violence.

The new government outlawed the activities and publications of all political parties; it outlawed the very existence of the Socialist and Communist parties. The junta also suspended civil liberties, censored the press, and brutally repressed all politicians who had had anything to do with Allende, as well as labor leaders, university professors, and anyone suspected of being a Marxist. In what it called a "holy war" against Marxism, the military junta arrested as many as 90,000 people, or 1 in every 125 Chilean adults. At least 2,500 people died in, or soon after, the coup; the death total is probably closer to 10,000, although some anti-Pinochet groups claim that it could be as high as 80,000. Thousands more were tortured, threatened, or imprisoned without trial. The mutilated victims were sometimes dumped in rivers or left on street corners as a warning to others. Some Chileans disappeared entirely, their bodies buried in secret graves or dropped into the ocean.

The case of Lucho Alvarado, former director of a public agency that provided housing for the poor, was typical. Three weeks after the coup, the *carabineros* arrested him and took him to the National Stadium, where thousands of others were also being held. Like most of the prisoners, Alvarado was tortured for days. He was then shipped to a concentration camp in the northern desert and held there for nine months.

In a statement soon after the coup, Pinochet recalled that "Chile was one of the first countries in the world to abolish slavery." Now, he said, "our country has broken the chains of totalitarian Marxism, the great Twentieth Century Slavery. . . . We are thus once again pioneers in Humanity's fight for liberation."

