

## 40 years on from September 11<sup>th</sup>: the military coup in Chile

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### **Abstract**

My aim in this article is to recapture the essential features of the political conflict that preceded the civil-military coup in Chile by setting out from one of Salvador Allende's speeches delivered in May 1973. I believe that an analysis of the events surrounding September 11th in Chile have a special significance in a time when there is still an ongoing intense debate, though now largely based on memories.

### **Keywords**

memory, Allende Government, Civil-military coup in Chile.

### **Introduction**

Some time ago, it was noted how important is to retrieve an event, or fact, for historical science. The historical fact is becoming of increasing significance whether from a perspective of a circular relationship between a fact and a framework, as argued by Jorge Lozano (1987) or as a method of drawing closer to deeper phenomenon, in the opinion of Carlo Guinsburg (1983). It should not be regarded as a simple narrative tool that can be employed to explain reality in terms of a cause-and-effect sequence, but rather as a mechanism through which it is possible to intertwine the different analytical strands of a particular situation. The purpose of narrative, which is extremely important in this respect, is to bind events together so that they can endow historical discourse with a rational meaning. It acts as an instrument and not as an end in itself. Facts and past events work together to form a particular set of memories which are directly related to the planning of social projects. The analysis of these factors is not always conducted by historians, which underlines the importance of entering into a dialogue with sciences such as anthropology, political science, philosophy, literature and other subjects.

### **Historical Facts And Memory**

In formulating the heading given above, I am citing Gilberto Velho. The author stresses the importance of valuing and outlining a memory to form representations and social projects in the present (Velho, 1994). Memory provides biography with a degree of consistency – whether of the individual or the group – as well as tracing a continuous pattern and laying down the conditions by which a project can be formulated and endowed with legitimacy based on the past. Thus the consistency of the project will depend on the benchmarks that are grounded on this past which “has created the circumstances of the present without which it would be impossible to have or prepare any projects” (Ibidem: 101).

In this way, it can operate as an active agent that has a direct influence on the structuring of systems of representation, since it is an essential feature in the process of finding a

significance in the world that can be employed for a reading of the present. The question of whether or not to speak of a particular event can lead to an attachment to particular symbols that are linked to the facts in question and be the reason why an individual adopts a particular kind of behavior.

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Michel Foucault (1970), for example, states that there is a struggle for the domination of discourse that is driven by the fear of its free proliferation and which can be situated here as a conflict for the predominance of a narrative and a given perspective of the past. The author suggests that the domination of these factors is closely bound up with the control of power. His general hypothesis is that there are mechanisms in every society that seek to control, select and redistribute its production with the aim of uniting the powers and risks, dominating random events and removing its materiality. Foucault argues that discourse is not only a means through which the desire for power is expressed but is the object itself of this desire. It is both a manner through which conflicts or systems of domination can be translated, and the means through which the struggle occurs.

Baczko (1985) believes that at times of social and political polarization and "serious social conflicts" the dispute for symbols is accentuated. The reason for this is that at these extreme moments, attitudes are governed by the representations of the social agents involved in the argument.

However, although it may not occur in a dispute that is stirred up, the search for symbolic control evolves from (and is an essential feature of) political confrontation (Bourdieu, 1989). The past that finds itself in the present through the act of recalling particular dates, is one of the instruments employed for the representation of a social or natural world and hence, the modeling of different kinds of behavior.

There are significant "risks" involved in recalling certain dates. By retrieving particular events, the issues, sharp conflicts and different social projects related to them can come to the surface and by virtue of their topical significance "wake society up" to the problems it often wants to forget or sweep under the carpet. It is within this perspective that I intend to approach the civil-military coup in Chile – as 40 years have now gone by since this event occurred.

On September 11th 1973, the events unfolded that led to the overthrow of the democratically-elected government of Salvador Allende, putting an end to the first experiment in democratic socialism in the world. The brief "socialist" government of the Popular Unity Party was brought to a close in an extremely violent manner with the death of the President inside the La Moneda Palace during the bombardment launched by the forces led by General Augusto Pinochet. I will begin by sketching the background beginning with the political games that were played out in Chile in the 1960s, moving on to factors that characterized the Allende government and then addressing some of the issues that determined the effectiveness of the coup and the establishment of the dictatorship.

### **The Situation in Chile in the Period 1950-1970**

What drove the economy throughout the 20th Century, was the industrial exploitation of saltpetre and copper. This was developed after the conquest of the present northern region of the country during the War of the Pacific (1879-1883), when these economic activities soon fell into the control of foreign capital (Rouquié, 1984: 264), initially British and subsequently North-American. Hence, what some authors call "the enclave economy" was structured with the establishment of a pocket of economic prosperity under the

direct control of international capital and its surrogates (Cardoso and Falleto, 1970). 194

At the same time, there was a good deal of intense agricultural activity – cereals, cattle-farming and wines – although this was on a secondary plane and did not lead to the same degree of prosperity as that obtained from the mining industry.

After the 1930s, there was an expansion of industrialization which was largely stimulated by import substitution as an alternative policy, as the great depression unfolded with its ramifications in several Latin American countries, including Chile. Despite this State control, the economy did not undergo a complete transformation with regard to its previous characteristics – the existence of enclaves in the north and agricultural production in the south.

Chile appeared to be a country characterized by a political stability that had been achieved in the first half of the 20th Century. Rouquié (1984) argued that this was the outcome of a political power structure established through alliances that were forged between the large landowners and the financial bourgeoisie (Liberals and Conservatives). With the assistance of the groups linked to the economy of the enclaves, from 1930 onwards, the middle classes were gradually incorporated. Aggio believes that this democratic stability resulted from other factors, and involved a rotating exchange of power between the different political groupings, which, for much of the period, even included the Communist Party (Aggio, 1993: 17-8).

At the same time, among the Armed Forces, there was a growing isolation that was fostered by an aristocratic air of superiority towards the rest of society which had, to a great extent, been inculcated during the presence of the German military missions at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century (Herrera, 1986). However, despite these tendencies, the loyalist ideal predominated in the military environment until the mid 1960s.

Although the working-class was growing in numbers and importance, it was mainly located in the zones of the enclave and separated, to a great extent, from the rest of the country. If the protest movements that occurred in these regions took on a radical form, they were met with violent repression but these did not reach the point of affecting the urban concentrations or centers of power.

The antagonism that was found there was basically between international capital and the working-class, with the State still managing, for much of the time, to project an image of neutrality. Finally, the rural population was kept under the political control of the landowners who, until the 1960s, based their relationships with the working-class on pre-capitalist forms such as the traditional system of collective tenancy.

Rouquié states that the image of the neutrality of the State was formed by separating economic power from political power. The eventual intervention of the State in support of the workers and the temporizing role of a middle-class linked to state bureaucracy, also helped bring about this situation and meant that rivalries remained in the sphere of political negotiation (Ibidem: 270).

In party-political terms, it can be seen that, during the 1930s, a framework was established based on three pillars: the right consisting of the Conservative and Liberal Parties; the center made up of the Radical and National Falange (which later formed the origins of the Christian Democrats); and the left made up of the Communist and Socialist parties. Yocelvezky states that in the period 1938-1952, the concept of *frontism* adopted

in Chile was adapted in ideological terms to “the dominant trends in the world during the 2nd World War (...) that politically expressed the social alliance that gave support in the whole of Latin America and to the development plans” (Yochelevzky, 2002: 44). In Chile, the alliance resulted in the leadership of the Radical Party, combined with the Socialist and Communist parties. The Radical Party, which represents the middle classes, ended by leading a bloc that also benefited the most organized sectors of the urban workers. In effect, the system had altered very little in the elections of 1958 – with the Christian Democrats as the party of the center – and it can be stated that this party-political framework lasted until the elections of 1962.

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From the end of the 1950s onwards, there were a number of pressures that allowed urban and rural workers to have a greater degree of political participation. These included the following: cultural factors linked to the struggle for democracy which characterized the first half of the 1940s, and the growing industrialization and urbanization (Bitar, 1980: 41) as well as the outbreak of the Cuban Revolution<sup>1</sup>.

These sectors were, to a great extent, led by sectors of the left (Yochelevzky, 2002: 80). Sections of the middle class and small bourgeoisie were adherents of this struggle, which also encompassed a series of claims by labor. At a party-political level, the time was notable for a growing unification of the parties of the left, which were increasingly articulated after the presidential elections of 1958 and were gradually altering the composition itself of the party-political scene (Lundahl, 1989: 18).

It was in this setting that the electoral victory of the Christian Democrat candidate, Eduardo Frei, occurred. The party had been formed as recently as 1957 and drew up plans to overcome social antagonism through the creation of solidarity groups that envisaged social control by the elites (Ibidem: 27-8). Frei was allied to a “Revolution in Freedom” scheme of a reformist character which sought to follow the precepts of the *Mater et Magistra* encyclical – and was staunchly anti-communist in outlook. In this way, he was able to drum up popular support for his candidature while at the same time, winning support from the right (Liberal and Conservative) who were fearful of a victory by Salvador Allende, the candidate of the popular front for the third time. The elections to replace a deputy who had died, ended up by giving victory to a politician from FRAP<sup>2</sup> and against all the predictions, stirred up feelings of “confusion and dread” among those on the right. They conveyed the idea that the elections of 1964 could “give the presidency to the FRAP candidate, the socialist Salvador Allende Gossens” (Aldunate, 1999: 38).

During his government, Frei set in motion a project involving the political integration of the subordinate sectors. The scheme was characterized by an encouragement of agrarian unionization, the formation of “family centers” and the organization of “district councils”, while seeking to end the system of the collective tenancy system in the rural areas. At the same time, by seeking to avoid the “radicalism” of the left, the president attempted to introduce economic reforms that were inspired by the North-American stance towards changing societies in the continent which had deep social divisions. The North-American project was embodied in the Alliance for Progress program<sup>3</sup>.

These were thus the first, albeit timid, signs of Agrarian Reform. The Frei government was also characterized by embarking on schemes for “chilenizing” some sectors of the economy such as the sale of copper and the setting up of joint enterprises for the exploitation of this product (although in a limited way).

It can be conjectured that these reforms released social forces that were also fomented by the reformism of the Christian Democrats and which now led to people wanting more. Thus they thought that their capacity to make their claims real was of significance. They began to see Frei's government itself as being an impediment to the extension of these changes. In the rural environment, this mobilization was directly linked to the reforms implemented by the Frei government and removed some of the hurdles that hampered efforts to organize the rural workers and peasant farmers.

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Although its objective was to exercise control, the stimulus given to the trade union and people's organizations that characterized the final stages of the Frei government, took place in an unfavorable climate. According to Lundhall (1989: 34), "in several communities the Christian Democrat organizations were outflanked by the left and popular militias which had been set up to help administer them". This was partly brought about by a significant slowdown in the speed of economic growth, inflation, the reduction of the price of copper in the international market and the weakness of the social reforms caused by a vigorous conservative opposition in the Congress. As a result, Frei resorted to the Armed Forces as an instrument of repression in conflicts that did not find "institutional channels of agreement" (Zárate, 2003: 36-38).

By adopting a center-left position, in its initial phase, the Frei government provoked a reaction from the parties that represented the social groups whose interests were directly affected, such as the Liberals, Conservatives and National Action Party. Thus divisions between the forces of the center-right marked the elections of 1969. Jorge Alessandri Dominguez represented the recently formed National Party<sup>4</sup> and Rodomiro Tomic Romero was the Christian Democrat candidate. Both thought that the conditions were right to defeat Salvador Allende who was the candidate for the Presidency of the Republic for the fourth time and represented a broad coalition of the forces of the left. The Popular Unity Party brought together dissidents from the Christian Democrats (MAPU<sup>5</sup>), the Radical Party, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party (which Allende himself belonged to), and was even supported by the revolutionary left (MIR), even though this was not an effective part of the government<sup>6</sup>.

Allende's victory was by a very small margin (36% of the votes against the 35% of Alessandri). With a Congress dominated by Christian Democrats, the result was only confirmed because there was a tradition to support the candidate who won the most votes, which went back to the 1930s<sup>7</sup>. According to Lundhall, the result was without precedent in the history of Chile. It was the first time that a candidate had won the elections with an openly declared socialist agenda and not for a middle-class program supported by the workers, as in the elections of 1938 (Lundhall, 1989: 38).

In contrast, the conservative groups headed by the National Party attempted to resist the ratification of Allende as President. Some began to forge close links with the rebellious factions of the Armed Forces, although these were not predominant. They attempted to kidnap General Schneider who was an exponent of the loyalty of the Armed Forces. In their third attempt, – all with the financial backing of the US and under the guidance of the CIA<sup>8</sup> – the general was killed while offering resistance. This incident led to a momentary unity among the Armed Forces with regard to the question of constitutional legality. (Chomsky, 1998: 221).

### The Allende Government

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What changes were set in train by the Allende government? Or to put it in another way, why exactly was an alliance formed during the three years of the Popular Unity government which led particular political groups to carry out or support the coup? In response to these questions, I think it is useful to refer to the speech made by Allende before the National Congress that was held in 1973, and thus only four months before the fateful "September 11th"<sup>9</sup>. In May, as through the greater part of the Popular Unity government, the government set in motion discursive strategies of an intense campaign. Finally, at a moment of serious social and political confrontation, there were strenuous attempts to shape both a self-image, as well as an image of the enemies.

On methodological grounds, I have divided the speech of the then President into three basic points: achievements being made at that time; a list of measures which aimed at broadening and deepening the changes being carried out and finally, an identification of the groups who, according to the President, formed the resistance to the set of government measures already under way and being made viable.

#### **Achievements:**

According to Allende, in less than three years of government, there had been radical steps taken to introduce agrarian reform in the country, a policy that during the government of Eduardo Frei had been restricted to unproductive landed estates. In the period of Allende's government, all properties that were larger than 80 hectares were transferred to the peasantry. On the eve of the coup, approximately 35% of the land had already left the hands of the landowners. Councils and peasant cooperatives were formed to establish control over the production of these farms. This was in a country where until 1965, there had hardly existed any trade union representation in rural areas and the policy was to a great extent stimulated by the Frei government, as mentioned above.

The control of about 30% of manufacturing industry was transferred to the workers in a system of workers' self-management with broad mechanisms of worker participation. Approximately 90% of credit was under the public control of the Central Bank and the banks that had been nationalized by the Allende regime. At the same time, the exploration, processing and marketing of natural resources had also been transferred to the State.

#### **Broadening the changes:**

The Allende government planned to consolidate a series of achievements that had been made up to that time. According to one statement in the President's speech, it was not enough to nationalize the production of goods; they had to be socialized too. At the same time, his speech in May 1973, proposed to enact a new law of agrarian reform that was designed to expropriate areas of less than 40 hectares, as well as ensure that the minimum conditions would be created for the organization of the farming sector. He also declared that a list of companies with ties to financial sectors, insurance, the distribution of goods and foreign trade, would pass directly to the Social Property Area<sup>10</sup>. The President stated that:

The definitive goal is the effective socialization of the essential means of production and their use, with an understanding of the objective interests of the workers and the vast majority of the public. There is a considerable difference between nationalizing the means of production and their effective socialization. It is what exists between the control of property and the capacity of the workers and society to make use of it, in a way that corresponds to the interests of the majority (Allende Gossens, 1973).

He intended to bring about a complete change in the economy with a system of planning that was centralized in its establishment and decentralized in its execution, "mandatory for the social and mixed sectors and a guiding principle for the private sector" (Idem).

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These measures had to be accompanied by a presentation to the Congress of a preliminary draft of a Constitutional Charter that democratized the administration of Justice and broadened constitutional rights and guarantees. This aimed at setting up "Communal Commandos", a kind of council elected by community organizations that would be responsible for the popular control of administrative institutions. Another measure was aimed at democratizing the system of social security. It can thus be stated that:

It is here that some of the most urgently needed changes in the institutional system are most cogently displayed and as we have already said, they must culminate in the new Constitution, without the interposition of a judicial order to cause any break in continuity. The basis of the new institutional order emerges from a collective experience and must be discussed with all the people. The effectiveness of the state apparatus, the democratizing of political and economic power and the accelerated expansion of our country, depend, to a large extent, on its timely establishment. This is how the government defines its position before those who seek to undermine the democratic system by blocking the executive power and destroying the apparatus of the State (Idem).

Allende pointed out the fundamental importance of supporting a reorganization of the economic ties between industrialized nations and those that were on the way to industrialization. Within this perspective, he denounced the harm caused by "the power of the large multinational consortia in the places where they operate, and the way they be little the political sovereignty of governments and the dignity of the people" (Idem). If at first the speech seems to be general, its criticism of transnational and multinational capital is made in starker terms further on in phrases such as: "the dire proceedings of the ITT" and "the attacks of another multinational, the Kennecott Copper Corporation" (Idem).

In the same way, there was a need for the socialist government of Chile to reformulate its inter-American relations that were based on the Organization of American States (OAS), by altering a framework which "had an influence on maintaining the relations of dependence between the United States and the Latin American people". It was not long before there was a reply to all this. In effect, this had been coming ever since the beginning of the Popular Unity government, – a factor I will discuss later on.

#### ***Identification of the groups opposed to reform:***

In his speech, the President made clear where a part of the resistance to his government could be found. At first he cited the resistance from North America, which acted by imposing a financial embargo on the government of Chile through economic institutions under its control. The economic interests of North-American capital were affected by the nationalization of the financial system, which had been set in motion by the government. In the opinion of Allende, given the international situation regarding détente, this opposition was the outcome of a purely economic reaction and not on account of his socialist project.

The attempt to prevent the changes taking place was not confined to the world overseas. It also arose, with a considerable degree of intensity, in Chilean society. According to the President, the nationalization of the banks and their control by the State, directly affected the interests of a bourgeoisie that was closely bound up with foreign capital. In the same way, the increase of State control of the manufacturing sector served to anger the national bourgeoisie even though it was not necessarily linked to foreign capital.

The large landowners who, since the time of the Frei government, had been affected by the movement towards agrarian reform, were even more alarmed by the acceleration of this process during the presidency of Allende. As a result, the period 1970-1973 increasingly led to the union of the forces of the centre-right at the far extremity of the political spectrum. As they kept control of the legislature during most of this period, (and given the fact that the majority of the deputies and senators of the National Party and a faction of the Christian Democrats opposed the measures of the government) resistance to the Popular Unity government was largely, though not entirely, confined to the sphere of legality.

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According to Allende, the representatives of these groups prevented the legal regulation of a series of essential instruments that could be employed to perpetuate the reforms that had been set in motion.<sup>11</sup> The President cited some of them:

It is here that some of the most urgently needed ministries of the Family and the Sea, the structuring of the Area of Social Property, the participation of the workers, the provision of funding to the municipal corporations, placing companies under a self-management regime and many others of even greater importance. (Idem).

At the same time, Allende accused the Congress of enacting economic laws without the necessary funding to make them viable. Readjustments of the salaries of public servants, the payment of extra Xmas bonuses, laws regarding the compensation payments to workers for high transport costs and food products and the law about advance payments among others, represented an additional government expenditure of 60 million escudos which had to come out of existing funds of only 12 million. These groups aimed at wiping out the popular support obtained by the government and put it in the difficult position of having to veto them, (which was in some cases carried out). They also sought to make the State financially inviable.

There was also extra-parliamentary pressure, although it was not necessarily unconstitutional in its broadest sense. This was exerted through a reduction of agricultural and industrial production, lockouts of industrialists and the effective encouragement of strike action, which put the government in a delicate situation. The danger for these groups increased even more with the government's projected reform in the Constitutional Charter of the country. This could have been made viable since there was a gradual broadening of support for the Allende government that was evident in the elections that took place between 1971 and 1973.

The decisive moment came with the elections of March 4th 1973, which gave a majority (though not by a wide margin) to the government parliamentary bloc in the Congress (Bitar, 1980: 243).

Although the diagnosis carried out by the President is largely correct, perhaps two serious mistakes can be noted in the assessment of his position. The first of these was the belief in the continuity of a traditional loyalty that was not ingrained in the Chilean Armed Forces. After all, during the 20th Century at least one military intervention can be found in every decade (Comblin, 1979).

Since the 19th Century, the world of the barracks in Chile was characterized by an extreme isolation from the rest of society. This isolation was intensified by the presence of German military missions that visited the country until the middle of the first decade of the 20th Century. This is apparent, for example, in the existence of an unwritten code, which discouraged relationships between the military and civilians.

The teaching that was provided for the Armed Forces was also different from that of civilians in so far as it was more technical and scientific. These factors led to a feeling of superiority that not only characterized the Armed Forces of Chile but also the military in most of Latin America. In addition, there was a deep-seated anti-communism in the Armed Forces, which appeared at the same time as the presence of the military missions who were partly responsible for it.

According to Herrera, the "Prussian" army was characterized by its contempt for parliament, the workers' movement and socialism, which were described as anti-patriotic and representing an internal threat to order (Herrera, 1986: 79).

There was a mood of pacifism and opposition to compulsory conscription among Chilean socialists and anarchists and a campaign carried out by them at the beginning of the 20th Century, resulted in these political sectors being viewed as the special enemies of the Chilean Armed Forces.

To add to this picture, there was the Doctrine of National Security, which became increasingly pervasive. This was formed by a considerable section of the middle and high-ranking officers and was a phenomenon that was also found, to a greater or lesser extent, in the whole of Latin America. The Doctrine penetrated into Chile either through training courses in North-American military colleges or the military missions that existed by virtue of bilateral agreements<sup>12</sup>. Between 1950 and 1970, more than 5% of the total effective Chilean military personnel received training or instruction in the United States.

As a result, the Doctrine gave added strength to a conservative perspective of the world that was opposed to radical change or social fragmentation.<sup>13</sup> It reasserted the concern with internal order that from the beginning of the 20th Century was spread by the FFAA (Chilean Armed Forces). And the geopolitics that emerged from the foreign military missions was rearticulated in a way that combined it with the notion of bipolarity. Zárate states that the 1960s were characterized by the rise of a new officer corps – the first generation trained "under the imprint of the East-West conflict, with studies in the United States"

It was a group of officers with access to universities doing courses related to their respective weaponry or responsibilities, with a broader range of knowledge and "a complete preparation in the terrain of the defense of internal order" (Zárate, 2003: 24). However, as the author states with regard to the concept of the enemy within, the Doctrine of National Security only had a greater effect on the officer corps during the period of the *Popular Unity* and especially, after 1973.

According to the author a turning point can thus be seen with the triumph of Allende lending strong support to this thesis and the nationalist movements of the right enforcing the anti-communist tendencies of the officers (Ibidem: 69 and 84). During this period of Popular Unity, the emergence of groups who supported an armed alternative, was a further contributory factor to "military consensus about an insurrectionary way-out" (Ibidem: 91).

Despite all this, at least until Allende was in power, these officers did not represent the majority of the force. This did not prevent representatives of factions that contemplated making a direct intervention into the world of politics, from seeking to set in motion various military putsches. Initially the aim of these attempts was to prevent an elected president from taking power. Subsequently, after the victory of the *Popular Unity Party*, they sought to make their overthrow a feasible proposition.

The constitutionalist perspective that conferred the "principle of legality" on the president prevailed until almost the end of the Allende government. This predominant view that legality would still remain in the hands of the government was strengthened by the assassination of the General Schneider, Commander-in Chief of the Armed Forces (1970) and by the *lockout* carried out by traders and haulage carriers in 1972. However, the situation was reversed during the period 1972-73.

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There was a significant faction of the Popular Unity Party that adopted a revolutionary standpoint. Members of the government's own party (the Socialist Party) and other groups such as the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) and recent breakaway factions from the Christian Democrats (DC) such as the Popular Unitary Action Movement (MAPU) and Christian Left (IC) had an instrumentalizing perspective of the democratic political regime. They sought rapid and radical measures to change Chilean society and exerted increasing pressure on the government in this respect.

The situation of general chaos with assaults from the right combined with shortages of supplies and the stagnation of economic growth, were also key factors in this perspective of government illegality and isolation. These last points were the direct outcome of the activities of the right. Bitar states that:

At the same time, the right supported its political activities with a propaganda strategy and psychological warfare that was astutely planned. This gave prominence to the shortages and economic problems, while also highlighting the conflicts and image of anarchy and public disorder that its activists undertook to foment and exacerbate with a good deal of animus (Bitar, 1980: 180).

The second error made in the analysis of Allende was evident in his understanding of the position of the international community. In his speech, the President alludes to a context colored by the spread of the Cold War. Within this situation, when "disarmament and peaceful coexistence open up a path among the most powerful nations" there will be room to pave the way for socialism in Chile. Although he was aware of the North-American pressures that were opposed to his government, Allende seems not to have understood that the general framework of expansion did not directly include Latin America – the zone of direct influence of the main Western capitalist powers.

Even if the assessment is not made that September 11th was triggered by the United States and one adopts a stance that qualifies the role played by the "Great Satan", it is impossible to disregard the leading role played by North America in this fateful event<sup>14</sup>:

The White House had already been giving considerable financial support to the presidential candidates of the Center and Right since 1964. But notwithstanding this, it was unable to block the election of Allende. The CIA was a co-participant in the attempts to kidnap General Schneider in 1970, one of which resulted in his death. The North-American intervention gathered momentum after Allende assumed power. Three kinds of activities were carried out with the aim of creating a climate that was conducive to the coup:

to gather information about any officials willing to take part in an uprising; to create a subversive climate by means of propaganda, disinformation and terrorist activities destined to provoke the left (...); and to inform military personnel willing to carry out a coup that the US government would give them their full support, with the only exception being a direct military intervention by the United States (Chomsky, 1998: 224).

The events of "September 11th" were unleashed in the face of support of this kind, but mainly as a result of their resistance to changes being directed by key civilian sectors of society – such as the landowners in general, the middle class that was fearful of proletarianization and "communist atheism", and some sectors of the working-classes, as well as the crucial role played by the military.

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### The Coup

It can thus be seen how a government was established under the leadership of General Augusto Pinochet, an officer who had declared himself a "loyalist" on assuming the command of the Armed Forces. Pinochet was a lecturer and director of the War Academy, an institution that was the direct outcome of the establishment of the German mission and founded on the example of the *Kriegsakademie* [Military Academy] of Berlin (Soto and San Francisco, 2006: 8). Apart from the fact that this institution was one of the main propagators of the Doctrine of National Security, by the 1960s, Pinochet can already be included as one of its leading spokesmen, together with a new generation of officers from the Chilean armed forces. In the course it followed in the 1950s and 1960s, it carried out activities that had a profound effect on its role as an active opinion maker (Mendes, 2012)<sup>15</sup>.

According to Zárate, in its initial stages the conspiracy was plotted by commanding officers of the Navy and Air Force. The army, in the form of its oldest officers – Augusto Pinochet and Orlando Urbina Herrera – was not involved in the original core structure, which comprised officers of "the group of generals of the lower ranks of the hierarchy" who were responsible for plotting the coup. (Zárate, 2003: 98).

In the political scheme, Yocelvezky states that the "disruptive" alternative was at first subordinated to the legal course advocated by the sections of the political right and that in the early stages of the Popular Unity Party, this subordination corresponded to the supremacy of the Christian Democrats over the National Party. The first political assembly supported the institutional path of resistance to the plans of the Popular Unity. It was to a large extent grounded on the idea that Allende had enough support to take control as president but did not possess enough legitimacy to implement the reforms, since he had not been elected by an absolute majority. In this regard, he did not represent the greater part of Chilean society.

Nonetheless, gradually groups that were formed outside the part system – such as *The Fatherland and Liberty*, *the Rolando Matus commandos*, *FIDUCIA*<sup>16</sup> and the Gremialist movement – took on a leading role which supported the 'disruptive' alternative and leaned increasingly towards the leadership of the right-wing elements of the National Party. There were various political schemes among the different sectors aimed at removing Allende from power and they very often moved in different directions. .

But during the 1,000 days that the Popular Unity party was in power, particularly after 1972, these sectors gradually became increasingly unified in a negative consensus – the overthrow of Allende.

The violence that erupted had not had any parallel in any other Latin American coup until that time. Loyalist officials were immediately imprisoned and some murdered during torture sessions. During the period of one year, it is estimated there were between 30,000-50,000 victims. There were sporadic skirmishes that lasted for three days. Thousands of workers put up a scattered resistance but it was in vain and soon dismantled. Persecution was set in train at every level of Chilean society. The violence was

even expressed in a symbolic form: the bombing of the La Moneda Palace with the death of the President who refused to surrender. Unfortunately, the final words of his May 1973 speech ("We will win") did not materialize. According to Yocelvezky,

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The legitimacy of the Popular Unity regime should be measured by the intensity of the violence unleashed by the supporters of the coup in 1973. Repression, which is always justified when there is the presence of armed groups, was directed against social and political organizations that support the government. This support can be gauged by the wide range of sectors affected by the repression in the first phase of the dictatorship. (Yocelvezky, 2002: 35)

A State of Terror was thus established which, on the basis of the definition of Luigi Bonanate, can be characterized as "an emergency measure which a government resorts to so that it can keep itself in power" (Bonanate, 2008: 1242). The terror wielded by the State was prolonged for 17 years with a general degree of violence that was designed to enable it to govern by fear. However, the military forces did not exercise power alone.

Although the economic and political elite were relegated to a secondary plane, it should not be forgotten that the political right played an extremely important role and that its main representative was the National Party. Aggio believes that this group was the winning party in 1973 and the *El Mercurio* newspaper was the spokesman of the Chilean right. (Aggio, 1993: 22).

Angel Soto cites the leading role played by *El Mercurio*, in an attempt to justify the democratic stance he claimed was adopted by this periodical, both during the period of the Allende government and the Pinochet dictatorship. The author stresses the "impartiality" of the paper and points out that it cannot "be defined as pro-government or as supporting the opposition" (Soto, 2003: 38), since it was only committed to "the underlying principles and essence of the Chilean nation". In the periodical, this 'essence' is linked to particular ideas about economic management (the liberalism of the *Chicago Boys*), combined with opposition to the Marxist development model, respect for "the benefits of all individuals and freedom" and the defense of individual rights. (Ibidem: 41).

The newspaper was owned by Augustin Edwards, "the head of one of the most powerful economic groups in the country at that time". However, despite this, according to Soto, it was not a vehicle for the expression of the views of the business sector (Ibidem: 43). Finally, it should be noted that the same principles inherent in the 'essence' of the nation had also been supported by Pinochet since 1968<sup>17</sup>, when he stated that 'Chilean-ness' was being threatened by "the expansion of communism".

It is really worth noting that the launching of Soto's work about the newspaper where he worked for several years took place exactly 30 years after the overthrow of Allende. Questions of memory after all.

### Final Considerations

The "September 11th in Chile" still retains a powerful symbolic meaning both for the opponents of the regime and for its supporters. In the case of the former, the date marks the abrupt ending of a unique experiment in Chile and Latin America, while for the latter it means the beginning of the reconstruction of the country through a transformative undertaking, and represents the success story that saved Chilean society. The Pinochet government which was institutionally safeguarded by the Chilean armed forces and backed by sections of society, was aware of this symbolism and sought to prevent (with a relative degree of success) the expression of a negative account of what happened on that date and thereafter.

With the government brought to a close, there began a transitional period that was imposed by the dictatorship (Yocelevzky, 2002; Aguero, 2003; Pagni, 2004; Saavedra, 2006), a point that is borne out by the fact that at that time the military forces enjoyed a level of autonomy that can be described as one of the greatest in Latin America (Saavedra, 2006: 25 e 34).

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In the name of the consensus attached to the groups that had then come to power, this policy of "forgetting" was given continuity. According to Pagni, "the dictatorship forbade anyone from speaking about what they had witnessed with regard to the origins of the coup and its sequel of deaths and disappearances – and the post-dictatorship period has imposed a policy of forgetfulness in the name of this consensus." (Pagni, 2004: 17).

The course followed by this memory, which can be characterized as a "willing amnesia" pursued its path, while the ability of the military and their civilian allies to impose this model of transition on the rights of Chileans was lost. The situation underwent a profound change at the end of the 1990s when there began to be a progressive withdrawal of rights from the military. They, in their turn, sought to give up their isolation with regard to the rest of society through "a more cooperative stance in matters of human rights so that they could begin to free the FFAA (Chilean armed forces) [from this legacy] (Aguero, 2003: 263)<sup>18</sup>.

Today, there is a set of factors that is leading to a revival of the conflict in Chile's recent past with an added force, since the key event discussed in this article has become a center of discussion. Jelin states that when the State fails to open up institutional channels to acknowledge their responsibility for past event, this stirs up a conflict about the past with numerous key players giving their own accounts. The shock is so great that no uniformity can be found even within the State itself. (Jelin, 2001: 43-44).

In their analyses of memory, authors like Lesgart (2006), Jelin (2001) e Montesperelli (2004), point out that the general issue has a special significance, both in instigating a fresh discussion about the ways to represent what took place and because a demand has now arisen to understand it. In the case of Chile, the time has come when the clamour for reviving memories and obtaining justice are broadening. This is the result of increased pressure by society both for clarification of issues regarding human rights and violence and also those concerning the diverse legacy of the dictatorship, such as the educational system, the economic model and social inequality. With regard to this, the Chilean journalist and lecturer Roberto Brodsky points out:

Whereas during the long historical cycle of the regime of General Augusto Pinochet and the years of democratic transition, the Chileans made their complaints to heaven for fear of upsetting the national reconciliation agreements, today they are looking at their neighbors a without any fear of conflict. Nobody stands still.<sup>19</sup>.

It should also be noted that the year 2013 has been marked by a presidential election, which has coincided with the completion of 40 years since the establishment of the dictatorship. This coincidence has only occurred on one other occasion since the departure of Pinochet from the presidency. However, in 1993, when the government of Pátricio Alwin came to an end (exactly 20 years after the civilian-military coup), the scenario was quite varied. Pinochet still possessed great power while the military were still the key political players and had the full support both of the judiciary and the political parties of the right (Independent Democratic Union –UDI and National Renewal – RN). As well as this, the social movements did not display any capacity for significant mobilization and the general issues were still not being articulated.

The coincidence helped to broaden the scope for a confrontation of the attitudes to the past on account of the two figures that contested the presidency Evelyn Matthei and Michele Bachelet. In oversimplified terms, the candidates can be viewed as representatives of the political projects that support (Matthei) or attack (Bachelet) the legacy of the dictatorship<sup>21</sup>. Both are daughters of officers in the Air Force and were in prominent positions at the time of the overthrow of Allende. Since they are military figures who are polarized at opposite ends of the political spectrum and have diametrically opposed destinies, what was it that placed them right at the center of the confrontation of memories?<sup>22</sup>. In a certain manner, the pretenders to the presidency ended up by personifying the antagonism surrounding the two plans for Chile in so far as they can be regarded as heirs of the political debates that culminated in the coup.

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Thus, even though the loss of the legitimacy of the State as a guardian of the past has made it possible for a large number of accounts to proliferate, the context outlined above seems to suggest that there is a dichotomized memory surrounding "11th September in Chile".

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#### Notes

1. When the publications of the military periodical *Memorial del Ejército* [Army Memorial] were analyzed, Francisco e Soto (2006: 79-80) asserted that within the Armed Forces there was an awareness of an extreme political polarization with the recent upsurge of a revolutionary climate. The analysis conducted by authors like Yocelvezky (2002: 59) endorsed the fact that, since its outbreak, the Cuban revolution has had a direct effect on political life in Chile. In his analysis of the political discourse of the Christian Democrat Party, Aldunate stated that during the electoral process of 1964, "the Christian Democrats used every opportunity to exploit the anxiety about the revolution and infractions of the law that characterized the 1960s" (Aldunate, 1999: 42).
2. FRAP – Popular Action Front. Coalition made up of the Chilean Socialist Party and Communist Party.
3. However, this was not the only policy that was adopted by the United States. It was claimed that the North-American government was

sharply divided with regard to the best path to follow after the Cuban Revolution. One, supported by the State Department, was based on the Alliance for Progress. The other supported by the Pentagon advocated an alliance with the main conservative and reactionary forces of the continent. The objective of both policies was to contain the advance of the forces of the left in the region. I argue from the standpoint that these policies were not complementary but rather can be seen to be rivals. Their coexistence among the North-American policymakers suggests the presence of different political representations of the problems facing Latin America and that at that time they were the cause of an extreme anti-Americanism. (Mendes, 2009).

4. The National Party resulted in a union between the Liberal, Conservative and National Alliance parties in 1966.

5. Popular Unitary Action Movement

6. MIR – Revolutionary Left Movement. During the Allende government, another dissident movement of the Christian Democrats which decided to join the Front was the Christian Left.

7. In the political system of Chile, a candidate who did not obtain an absolute majority (more than a half) had his victory submitted to the National Congress. Despite the feeling of distrust felt by the Christian Democrats towards Allende, the established tradition throughout the 20th Century was to confirm the candidate who had a majority even if it was not absolute. Lundahl points out that the election of 1958 also ratified the victory of Jorge Alessandri even though it was by a narrow margin.

8. According to Aldunate, “ the attempt had its roots in decisions made under the pressure of President Nixon, the backing of his Ambassador in Chile, Edward Korry, and decisions which authorized an underhand and unsuccessful intervention by the CIA in Chilean affairs” (Aldunate, 1999: 86).

9. Message from Presidente Allende before a plenary session of the Congress 21/05/1973. Available at: [http://www.salvador-allende.cl/Disursos/discursos\\_lista.html](http://www.salvador-allende.cl/Disursos/discursos_lista.html)

10. The Allende government outlined an economy based on three types of property: areas of private property (APP), areas of mixed property (APM) and areas of social property (APS)

11. Mats Lundahl states that one of the three main obstacles that faced the Allende government was the judiciary. On most occasions, the controllership took up a position that supported capital assets and the landowners. The two other obstacles were the parties of the right and the internal opposition to the Popular Unity Party. (op. cit.: 45).

12. According to Rouquié, there was a North-American military advisor for each of the 1,250 military officers between 1964 and 1968.(Rouquié, 1984: 61).

13. A similar factor can be observed in the Brazilian civilian-military movement unleashed against the government of João Goulart (Mendes, 2005: 241).

14. Authors such as Collier and Sater point out that the measures taken by the US with regard to the credit squeeze and the CIA activities were important. Despite this, it should be understood that the Chileans organized the real action. (1996: 304).

15. During the years 1951 and 1953, Pinochet was a lecturer at the *Escuela Militar*, at the same time as he carried out the responsibilities of Assistant Lecturer at the War Academy and was the director of a magazine aimed at the officer corps called *Cien Aguilas* [A Hundred Eagles]. In 1953, he was appointed as an official lecturer at the War Academy, a position he held in the period 1953-1956). In the years that followed (1956-1959), Pinochet took part in a military mission in Ecuador with the objective of running the War Academy of this country. He returned to the War Academy in Chile at the end of this period and in 1963 continued to give lessons as a sub-director until 1968.

16. Chilean Society for the Defense of Tradition, the Family and Private Property

17. PINOCHET UGARTE, A.J.R. 1979. *Ensayo sobre un estudio preliminar de unageopolítica de Chile en el año 1965* [A provisional preliminary geopolitical study of Chile in 1965]. Santiago, Memorial del Ejército de Chile/Biblioteca del Oficial, [Memorial of the Chilean army/ Official Library] vol. LXII.

18. The departure of Pinochet as Commander-in chief of the Armed Forces was a decisive factor in this regard. Added to this were both his imprisonment in England in 1998 and also the new legal decisions that took him to the courts. Another factor was the Riggs case which entailed the existence of secret overseas bank accounts held in the name of Pinochet and his family. This tarnished the symbolism of the "purity of ideas" that had led to the coup and was supposedly a feature of the civil-military government itself.

19. Special report for the BBC World Service. Available at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2013/09/130902\\_chile\\_golpe\\_edad\\_madura\\_crz.shtml?s](http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2013/09/130902_chile_golpe_edad_madura_crz.shtml?s)

20. The first president to have command of the nation after the fall of Pinochet

21. Matthei is the candidate for the Center-Right Party which brings together parties that gave support to the civil-military regime in the 1980s: the Independent Democratic Union (UDI) and the National Renewal Party (RN). Michelle Bachelet was president of the Chilean Republic in the period 2006-2010 and represents a center-left front called the. New Majority. This is linked to the Chilean Socialist Party.

22. Fernando Matthei ended up becoming a part of the military junta while Alberto Bachelet was imprisoned and tortured at the Military Academy.

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