

# CHILE

## THIRTY YEARS LATER

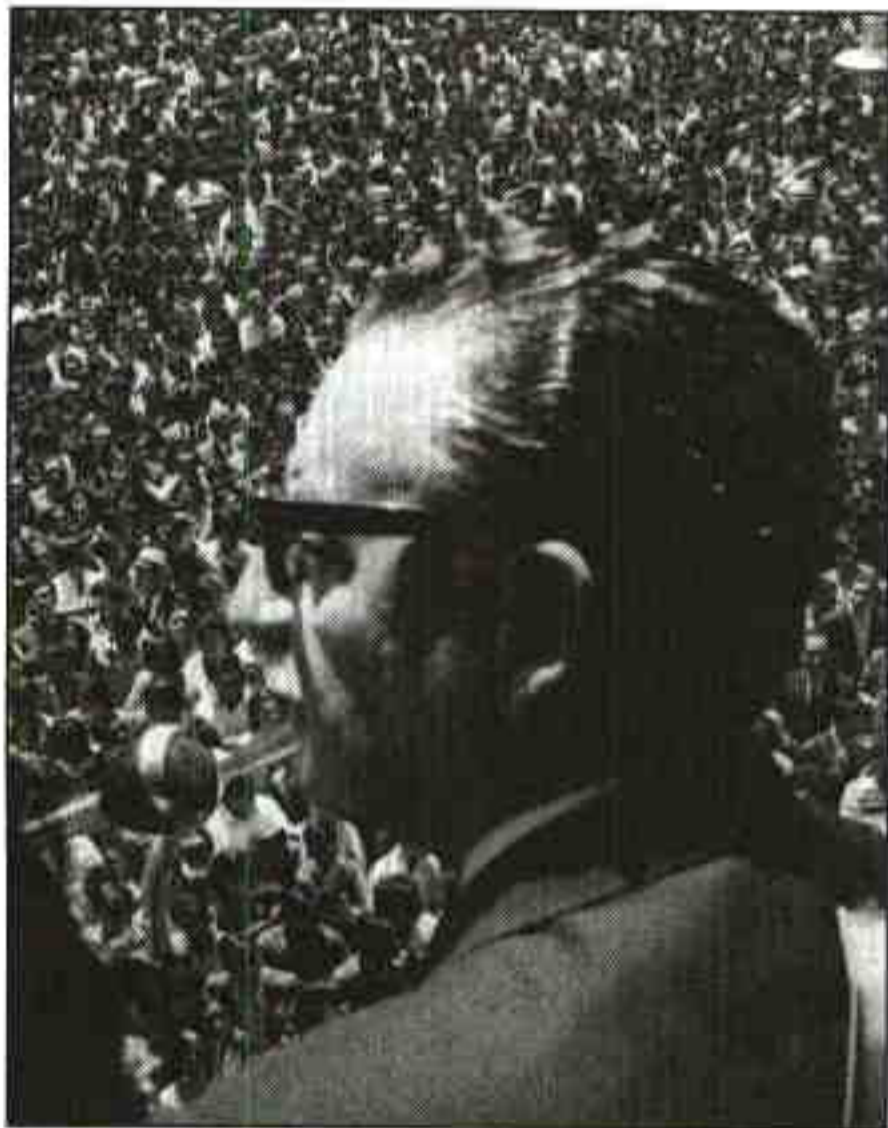
The historical importance of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity (UP) coalition, which governed Chile following its electoral triumph in 1970 until its overthrow by Chile's military on September 11, 1973, cannot be overstated. The Popular Unity government represented the first attempt anywhere to build a genuinely democratic transition to socialism—a socialism that, owing to its origins, might be guided not by authoritarian bureaucracy, but by democratic self-rule.

On this, the 30th anniversary of the coup led by General Pinochet and underwritten by the Nixon White House, we remember the UP project, assess its legacy and examine some of the central aspects of Chile today.

Writing in these pages ten years ago, our colleague and NACLA compañero Steven Volk commented that during the UP experiment, and more so following the coup, the term “Chile” achieved symbolic status above and beyond its geopolitical designation. “Chile” came to signify alternatives to both Soviet socialism and Western capitalism; with the coup it came to signify the dangers inherent in standing up to dominant powers. “Riding on Chile's narrow shoulders,” wrote Volk, “was nothing less than a world historical test of whether the transition to socialism could be achieved through peaceful, democratic means.” “Chile” has thus had a great deal of historical resonance over the past three decades, a resonance that forces some consideration of an Allende legacy.

Legacies, when they are meaningful, are complicated. For the global right, Allende's legacy amounts to a disrespect for private property and for the norms of domestic and global power. For the Chilean right, the Allende era is a chapter of national history that is best forgotten. Katherine Hite's recounting of the long struggle to build a public monument to remember Allende is a powerful testament to that negative feeling.

On the left, by contrast, Allende's memory is nearly sacred but his legacy is not without its controversies. In this report's lead article,



Philip Oxhorn argues that the “most enduring” aspect of Allende's legacy was his strong commitment to—and willingness to die for—the preservation of democratic institutions. Others on the left argue that his enduring legacy was less his commitment to the formal institutions of political democracy and more his commitment to inclusive popular participation and social equality. This needn't be a contradiction, but these disagreements, in settings detailed by Hite, are particularly bitter among the now-divided members of the old UP coalition.

Dissident Chilean leftists Carlos Molina and Manuel Cabieses argue that without the substantive commitment to equality and genuine democratic participation—what Molina calls “popular sovereignty”—the deal-making of Chile's center-left political parties has, in fact, seriously compromised the broadening of democracy in the post-Pinochet period.

One thing that remains clear is that Washington—with Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in the lead—had a stake in not allowing the UP experiment to succeed. Had an independent political economy taken root in South America, U.S. power might have been significantly challenged, and the Nixon White House vowed not to let that happen. The evidence of U.S. backing for the military coup is now indisputable thanks to the diligent work of investigators like Peter Kornbluh, whose report on the prying open of the files appears in this issue.

What is also clear is that the post-Pinochet period in Chile has created another “Chile,” that of the lead player in the neoliberal transformation of Latin America's economies, a case study of which is reported here in Rachel Schurman's assessment of labor relations in the Chilean fisheries. Over the course of the decades, the Washington agenda of political rule has become the Washington Consensus of economic transformation. Chile has played a major role in each. ■