

THE CHALLENGE OF CHILE

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When Salvador Allende assumes the Presidency of Chile on November 4, the shape of Latin America will be changed. For Dr. Allende will be the first freely elected Marxist to assume the leadership of a country in the Western Hemisphere. And the silence which issues from official Washington in ever-mounting waves is impressive evidence of the force with which Chile's recent election has struck the U.S.

How significant is Dr. Allende's election for Chile, for the rest of Latin America, for the United States? To respond to these questions in reverse order: President Lyndon Johnson once said that another Communist regime in Latin America—in addition to that of Cuba—would not be tolerated. And, to cite but one example, there is the evidence of United States military intervention in Santo Domingo in 1965 to show that this was more than idle rhetoric. But there was, in the Dominican Republic at that time, the hum and buzz of sudden great confusion to obscure the greater confusion of U.S. actions. There is no confusion about the electoral returns in Chile. As distinguished from many other Latin American countries, Chile has a fairly well-developed tradition of democratic elections and respect for that tradition.

Why do many in Washington regard Allende as a spectre which may stalk Latin America in years to come? The first reason is that he was given a plurality of votes by a coalition that has for a core the well-developed Communist Party of Chile. Second, though not a Communist he is a strong Marxist and one of the founders of the Chilean Socialist Party. Third, he has proposed in his campaigning a platform that runs counter to U.S. policies. He said that he would, for example, not only extend recognition to but develop close ties with Cuba, China, and North Vietnam. Further, he would nationalize rather than simply "Chileanize" major industries, i.e., fifty-one per cent control would not be sufficient. And he would pursue vigorously a program of agrarian reform. In terms of the descriptive slogans that are used in Latin America, this represents a pro-nationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-oligarchic program—all terms that resonate loudly in Chile. They resonate, too, in Washington, but less loudly and less pleasantly.

If Dr. Allende implements his declared policy, he will become more important to South America than Castro was or could be. For his is a program that radicals in other Latin American countries would like to adopt. If socialism can come rapidly through democratic means, why push for violent revolution? But also why tolerate the creeping advances of present leaders, self-proclaimed progressives? Why follow those who are afraid to provoke the colossus of the North when others can do it successfully? Assuming, of course, what is yet to be demonstrated, that it can be done success-

fully, neither Peru nor Bolivia—nor Cuba—having conclusively made that point.

And for Chile itself? Dr. Allende's plurality in the presidential election was slight. The conservative candidate, seventy-four year old Jorge Alessandri, was close behind and the Christian Democratic candidate, Radomiro Tomic, ran a poor third. Traditionally, the Chilean Congress elects one of the two front runners to the Presidency and, traditionally, it has elected the front runner. There is a possibility, encouraged mostly by right-wing dissidents, to refuse the election to Allende, to form a Congressional coalition that would elect Alessandri. But this possibility remains slight, and if realized would plunge Chile into great internal dissension and civil conflict. The radical, and moderate left, will not allow seeming victory to slip easily from their grasp.

In the meantime—that is, between now and the ascension of Allende to the Presidency—Chile must cope with the severe tremors that have swept through the country since the election results were announced. These tremors represent both hope and fear, by Chileans and others, that Chile will change radically, and an uncertainty that the changes will be made democratically and non-violently.

For Latin America and for the United States, Santiago is more important than Havana, and Allende will be more important than Castro. Chile, in the next months and years, will be a testing ground for Allende and his radical program. Will he be able to carry through his program to the benefit of his people and free from the domination of other countries? But it will also be a testing ground for the United States and its Latin American policies. Will it be able not only to tolerate a regime so critical of its own stance, but to cooperate with it, to respect the self-determination it proclaims to admire? J.F.

FALL IS THE TIME . . .

Fall is the time of resignation, of feelings of mortality and repetition. And this fall, there being little in recent months that can be recalled with honor, carries an additional sense—one of betrayal and denial; the political air is foul. Those who support the government or identify with its spokesmen find this a time in which they fear chiefly disruption, violence and a loss of control. These citizens feel deprived of peace and security,

denied the normal functioning of their government's programs and institutions. Still others feel denied the right to produce change and compete for power. They also feel betrayed by their "leaders" for, in spite of their opposition, they have seen the war in Indo-China institutionalized, handed over to professionals, and emerge as a diabolic *status quo*.

For both sides it is a time of acute frustration, in relation to the war and to necessary changes in the distribution of hope and power. The government, having been able to make few positive advances and finding promises and especially harangues more expedient, sees in the left and the poor a scapegoat. Its rhetoric becomes arrogant and petulant, its deeds find image in the sorrow and anger of its people. And the national administration, helpless for all its power, makes itself and its supporters seem in their negotiations and proclamations either grossly cynical or dangerously exhausted. But, by the same measure, the left, with all its swellings, collapses, and occasional lashings out, has been only slightly more impressive. For what has been accomplished by the Movement has not been the political challenge of a Castro, an Allende, or even a Dubcek. What we still have is critique and protest, the voicing of demands by people who lack the power to make the change themselves.

Both insiders and outsiders are burdened by the knowledge of powerlessness and desperation. One still can, if he wishes, take his fatalism about Indo-China into the political arena and see what happens. And if nothing does happen it will be easy to be frightened of a frustrated establishment, of those who have power but feel powerless. Or, one can become part of the left-opposition, substituting styles of resistance for more familiar political and personal patterns. But those who are in this camp will realize—they have been here before—the difficulties, in terms of repression and exhaustion, that complicate the move from protest to power. They will also feel little relief in knowing that they have added a degree of integrity to public debate and some completeness to the political spectrum.

Few will feel relief this fall, and many will continue to feel a sickening, dreamlike impotence. At the same time it seems that all that one can say is that we continue to live in a time of infinite suspension where the government neither governs nor falls, where events neither start nor end, and where moments seem drawn out and out with no solid ground in sight. K.Z.