

Surely, this will be the last opportunity for me to address you.

I address you, above all, the modest woman of our land, the country woman who believed in us, the mother who knew our concern for children.

I address the youth, those who sang and gave us their joy and their spirit of struggle.

I address the man of Chile, the worker, the farmer, the intellectual.

Surely, Radio Magallanes will be silenced, and the calm metal of my voice will no longer reach you.

It does not matter.

You will continue hearing it.

I will always be next to you.

At least, my memory will be that of a man of dignity who was loyal to his country.

Because of my country, I have faith in Chile and its destiny.

Other men will overcome this dark and bitter moment when treason seeks to prevail.

Go forward knowing that sooner rather than later, the Great Avenues will open again, and free men will walk through them to construct a better society.

Long live Chile.

Long live the people.

Long live the workers.

These are my last words, and I am certain that my sacrifice will not be in vain.

Dominic, as you well know, because you actually sent me that as part of your briefing notes, that was the last radio address of Salvador Allende, the president of Chile, on the 11th of September, 1973, hours before his death, before he was conclusively toppled in a coup led by General Pinochet.

I mean, we'll discuss this because this is one of the many intriguing aspects of this story.

It's a seismic episode, isn't it, in the history of Latin America, the toppling of Allende?

It is.

So, Tom, we are literally, I mean, we're recording this on the 11th of September, on the 50th anniversary of that day, the coup that toppled Allende's democratically elected socialist regime, and brought General Pinochet to power, and there are lots of Latin American coups. We've covered some of them, haven't we?

In Costa Rica, we talked about, or Uruguay, in the 1970s, but this is often seen abroad as the textbook example of American imperialism, ruthlessness, the kind of sacrifice of principles in the Cold War, and people will often point their finger at Richard Nixon, and particularly at Henry Kissinger.

So, Kissinger, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday, and as always, there was a sort of torrent of article saying, Kissinger is a war criminal, Kissinger is an evil man because of what he did in Chile, and that shadow has hung over him and Nixon's reputation ever since 1973.

Do you think, I mean, you said we're recording this actually on September 11th, so 9-11.

Do you think that the memory of this coup has been slightly blotted out, certainly, in the English-speaking world, by the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and so on?

There is a sort of very dark irony there, that the date that for Americans is the sort of...

Lives in infamy.

Lives in infamy, like Pearl Harbor.

Often Chileans say, whoa, September 11th is our day of suffering, and your government was complicit in this.

So there's definitely an irony there, I think, for a grim irony for a lot of Chileans.

And actually, I think, outside in the English-speaking world, it is easy to underestimate the absolutely

titanic resonance that this has in Chilean history, but also in Latin American history more generally, because, of course, Pinochet's regime lasted till 1990, and the arguments about the economic experiments, but also about the death toll and the torture and what not under the general...

I mean, those rumbled on and on, as we know, Tom, into British politics in the 1990s.

Yes.

Really, I mean, this coup had a huge impact on the way that people in certainly Britain and across Europe in the left thought about revolutionary politics in South America, but also its relationship with the United States.

Exactly.

So, I mean, I don't know if he listens to the rest of his history, but the former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, I don't know that he's a big fan of ours, is he, Tom?

Who knows?

I'd like to think so.

He's reaching all parts.

He's exactly the kind of person who would bring up the Chilean coup, unbidden, and say, here is your textbook example of U.S. imperialism, U.S. cruelty, all this interfering in elections and all this stuff.

Okay.

So, what generally happens with events that become totemic, that come to have a kind of mythic resonance, is that it can sometimes be hard to identify what the reality is.

In this case, is the myth deserving of its status?

Well, this is what when I'm picked, I think, Tom.

Let's start with the obvious sort of very basics.

So let's start with Chile.

Chile is the world's southernmost country.

Obviously, famously, it's a very long and thin country, 3,000 miles long, only about, at its narrowest point, I think it's about 40 miles wide.

The rest is geography.

So it's a very strange looking country.

It became independent from Spain in 1821 and for a long time was one of the poorest countries in the Latin American world.

And that's with, is it Bernardo O'Higgins or something like that?

Good knowledge, Tom.

He's one of the absolute...

Yes.

Chilean dependence.

The most Irish sounding liberator in South American history.

Well, there's lots of people like that in Latin America in the 19th century.

But Chile became rich from mineral exports, particularly from copper.

And copper makes it, by the end of the 19th century, one of the richest countries in what we would call the developing world.

So like Argentina or Uruguay, it's seen at the end of the 19th century as a country that's likely to overtake a lot of European countries.

And actually, most Latin American countries, their history in the 20th century is pretty bleak and conflicted, but not Chile.

Chile from the 1930s onwards is this kind of oasis of democratic stability.

And there's no military intervention in politics.

In fact, it's very important to Chile's sense of itself that, unlike in other countries, we don't have coups, the military don't intervene in politics.

Because the military have been initially trained by Prussians.

Yes.

Is that right?

That's right.

And instilled them a sense of, you know, importance of obeying orders, absolute discipline, all that kind of thing.

Loyalty to the state.

Exactly right.

Yeah, they're very kind of Bismarckian military.

So this is all the background for the rise of our protagonist today.

We'll talk about General Pinochet later.

Let's start with the man he topples, the man you quoted, Tom.

You were going to do it in a Chile accent, but you were persuaded not to.

So this is a guy who, for many people, is a martyr, if not a saint.

So nice sacral element for you.

Salvador Aende.

So he's a figure from the kind of the great liberal tradition that, say, in Costa Rica, one thinks of great liberal heroes such as, say, Dr. Valverde, the martyr for Costa Rican democracy.

Yes.

Well, the Aende is further to the left, I think, than Dr. Valverde was, Tom.

But he is, in a sense, the Dr. Valverde of Chile.

Would you say?

Would that be fair?

I would go further than that.

For people who haven't listened to our podcast about the Costa Rican Civil War, they will not have no idea what you're referring to.

Everyone's heard of Dr. Valverde.

Stop listening to this.

Well, finish listening to this.

Listen to Costa Rican Civil War.

But Aende was born in 1908 in Santiago.

He is from an upper middle class family, very reformist, very liberal, as you say.

So his father had opened one of the first kind of secular schools in Chile.

He was good at sports.

Aende, you'll be pleased to hear, as an elite sportsman yourself, Tom.

He was a member of the Everton de Vigne Del Mar.

Yeah, that's brilliant, isn't it?

Named after...

I love Everton.

So named after Everton.

Named after Everton.

And then in the 1920s, he is a medical student at the University of Chile in Santiago.

He's a student activist.

So he's kind of the representative of the medical students and then students generally.

So does he become a doctor?

He does.

Yeah, absolutely.

So he's Dr. Aende.

Yeah.

So the parallels with Dr. Valverde really are quite strong.

Very good, Tom.

So he's an animatopathologist.

I don't know what that is, but he's that anyway.

He wrote a doctoral thesis called Crime and Mental Hygiene.

Very kind of early 20th century subject.

He's also Tom.

This will please you.

He's a Freemason.

That doesn't really please me.

Doesn't it?

I thought you were all over links with previous podcasts, aren't you?

You're not a Freemason yourself, but you'd like to see it.

No, I'll be honest.

I think it's a waste of time.

Oh, my word.

Cracky.

I think Freemasons are a bit better off playing cricket or something.

So obviously that wouldn't have been a possibility for Aende, would it?

I bet you.

No, maybe there's a cricket club.

Probably Everton.

I bet you there's some kind of cricket club.

The Everton Football and Cricket Club.

Exactly.

So he gets very involved in socialist politics in the 1930s.

He actually helps to set up a branch of the Socialist Party of Chile in Valparaiso, which is on the coast where he is based, and he becomes the union leader.

But somebody called Marmaduke Grove.

Yes.

That sounds important.

Where's that come from?

Well, it's actually Marmaduke.

Grove.

Yeah, grove.

I don't know anything about Marmaduke Grove.

As with Dr Valverde, Tom, let your imagination run riot.

I see him as being a ramrod back, very austere, very honorable.

He's probably an anglophile.

He probably wears excellent tailoring that he orders in from Savile Row.

Tweed.

Yes.

I think he probably smokes a pipe and later corresponds with Borquez about his short stories.

Yes.

Okay.

Right.

I didn't expect the podcast to take this turn.

I have to say, I don't think there's any other podcasts about General Pinochet that have begun in this manner.

Allende becomes Minister of Health in the late 1930s, he becomes a senator, he helps to establish Chile's National Health Service.

So this is before British National Health Service?

No, afterwards, 1950s.

Ah, okay.

And is that inspired by the British, for example, or not?

I don't think so.

Maybe I'm wrong.

I'm wondering whether Marmaduke groves anglophilia.

Maybe he's kicking in.

Right.

Who knows?

Whether like Anayran Bevan, the founder of Britain's NHS, he'd grown up with a grey fryer store as Tom.

I think that's possibly the case.

Chilean history, we've got it.

Right.

Listen, the big thing about Allende is Allende becomes this great organizer on the left.

You used the word liberal earlier.

He's more than a liberal.

He is a full card-carrying socialist.

He's a Marxist.

He's a Marxist intellectual.

Okay, but socialists aren't necessarily Marxists.

No, but he is a Marxist.

He is a Marxist.

Okay.

But of a relatively, he's never seen as on the sort of more extreme, fire-breathing end of the spectrum.

A kind of Italian communist?

Yes.

He wants to come to power by parliamentary means.

There's no hint of kind of revolutionary paramilitary politics or anything like that with him.

You know, he's in the Senate.

He's on committees.

He's on kind of panels and...

He doesn't want to abolish democracy.

No, there's no hint of that at this stage.

Never hinted at any hint of that.

No.

There's three unsuccessful bids for the presidency in 1952, 1958, 1964, and he keeps losing.

And he actually jokes with, again, a grim irony.

He says, you know, on my tombstone, it will say, here lies the next president of Chile because he keeps losing.

So in 1952, he actually only won 5% of the vote.

In 1958, he does a lot better.

He wins 28.5% of the votes, almost a third.

And here's the interesting thing.

Even at this stage, the Americans are very worried about Allende.

So in the early 1960s, Allende is clearly, you know, he's gearing up for another run at the presidency.

That will be in 1964 because it's a six-year term.

And that means the administration in Washington is the Kennedy administration.

Now, the Kennedy administration, in a break with previous American administration with Eisenhower, Kennedy and his chums say, listen, we've always backed the most oligarchic, conservative

repressive kind of people in Latin America.

They've been our allies.

We shouldn't be doing this to stop Marxism, to stop communism and the rise of the left and Fidel Castro types.

We should actually back kind of reformist parties of the center-center-right, so Christian Democrat-type people.

And in Chile, they identify a guy called Eduardo Frey and they actually, he comes and visits the White House and the CIA.

They start to pump money into Chile, as they are doing in so many other countries, to support the Christian Democrat-center-right Frey.

And they spend about two and a half million dollars giving him direct money.

But in Chile with its kind of democratic traditions, is there a kind of very hard-right junta that's been in power?

No.

No, there isn't.

There are right-wing pro-business kind of oligarchic parties, but in a mass democracy, the Americans recognize, listen, there's no point us backing, you know, the most right-wing party because they're probably not going to win.

We should back a party of the center-right who will carry out reforms because that's the best way to beat communism, to show that, you know, center politics can deliver. And presumably they're particularly kind of sensitive to this in the early 60s because they've got the tension between Kennedy's progressivism and the fact that they've got the Cuban revolution on their doorstep.

Exactly.

They're obsessed with Cuba.

The Kennedy administration was completely fixated on Cuba.

They'd been humiliated in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, of course, that you'd had the Cuban missile crisis in 1962.

Cuban exiles in the United States are very vociferous about their failure to topple Castro. And the Kennedy administration are desperate not to, as they would describe it, lose another Latin American country to Marxism.

So they spend about \$3 million on anti-AND propaganda within Chile.

We know this from the committee hearings on CIA activities a decade later in the 1970s.

They would spend all this money on films, on radio programs, on pamphlets, on leaflets, even kind of paintings on the streets, kind of wallpainting murals, all of this stuff.

Now as the election approaches 1964, Kennedy is, of course, dead.

Lyndon Johnson continues this effort.

We know that his secretary of state, Dean Rusk, wrote to him in 1964 as follows, we are making a major covert effort to reduce the chances of Chile becoming the first American country to elect an avowed Marxist president.

Our well-concealed program embraces special assistance, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

So the Americans are, I mean, among themselves, they completely upfront about this and it works.

I&A loses in 1964 to Eduardo Frey.

And how important do you think the influence of the American support for I&A's opponents up?

It is important.

I think it's pretty important.

Of course, it's very hard to say, would I&A have won without that?

I mean, of course, he does end up winning six years later, which we'll come to.

And the Americans make even more of an effort then, but it doesn't work.

So one thing that I think is really important to get across is the Americans are not omnipotent.

They have allies in Chile and without the allies, they wouldn't get anywhere.

So the idea, just to sort of spoil your alert, the idea that the whole of Chilean politics is just a kind of playground for interfering with Americans, the Americans are puppet masters and the Chileans don't have any agency themselves, I think is wrong.

I mean, paradoxically, that is the opinion that's very much there on the hard left, I guess, of European politics.

Yeah.

That it overestimates American power.

It does indeed.

Anyway, I&A didn't win in 1964.

Christian Democrat guy won.

The Americans pumped in loads of money.

They pumped in more money into Chile than any other country in Latin America.

So about more than a billion dollars between 1962, 1970, and quite a lot of money to the Chilean military.

So they start to establish big links with the Chilean military.

And they're putting money into anti-I&A campaigns because yet again, I&A who just keeps losing elections says, I'd like to run again in 1970.

It's important to stress I&A is a Marxist, but he's seen as being on the sort of more moderate side of that spectrum.

So there are people who are further left to the left than I&A.

It's important for people to get into their minds.

He's not as terrifying a figure to the conservative middle classes as other people might be. He's not Castro.

No, he's not Castro.

He's not Castro at all.

It's the fact that he keeps losing.

This doesn't kind of brand him a serial loser on the left.

They're happy to continue supporting him, are they?

They still think that he's their best candidate.

Yeah, they think he's well known, he's popular.

He's the image of being a kind of kindly doctor, which he has, kind of cerebral doctor.

That plays well.

And they sort of think, you know, he's the man and eventually one day he'll get over the line.

And this is looking quite likely in 1970.

And the people who are particularly alarmed about this are American business interests.

So I mentioned copper before.

There are two big American copper companies, Anaconda and Kennecott Copper.

And there's also ITT, the International Telephone and Telegraph Company, one of America's biggest companies.

And they have \$200 million in holdings in Chile.

They own a large proportion of the Chilean telephone company.

This is really important.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 370. The 1973 Chilean Coup: Allende, Nixon and the CIA

They fund a really big Chilean newspaper called El Mercurio, right wing newspaper. They own hotels, all these kinds of things.

And they are plowing money into the election in 1970, giving money to his conservative opponent, his guy called Alessandro.

But they're also talking to the new administration in Washington, which is Richard Nixon's administration.

So Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger and ITT in particular are saying to them, you can't let this guy win.

This guy is a Marxist.

It runs against everything we believe in, you know, we're in broad in Vietnam.

America's going to be humiliated again somewhere else, all of this stuff.

But they're basically saying this because they don't want to lose their money.

I mean, that's the bottom line.

Well, they don't want to lose their money, of course.

Yes.

We know now from an amazing stash of declassified documents, which have been published by a guy, a historian called Peter Cornblum, in his book, The Pina J File.

So these documents have been declassified and they're all online.

If you go to the National Security Archive run by George Washington University, you can see them all.

That in the summer of 1970, the election is going to be in the autumn, in the summer of 1970, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger are already talking about a day winning and whether or not they should try to ferment a coup.

So an amazing quotation, the 27th of June.

Can I read it?

Are you going to read it as Henry Kissinger?

I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people.

The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves.

So that was Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Well, it was obviously Kissinger.

I mean, that's an amazing, amazing quotation.

To talk about the irresponsibility of its people and all this, Iende actually wins.

He wins by 36% to 35% over Alexandria because there's a split vote now.

When there's a split vote and nobody has an absolute majority, the Congress will choose the winner.

And the tradition is that the Chilean Congress will always choose the person who got the biggest vote.

That's fair enough, I think.

Yeah, it's absolutely fair.

And Kissinger couldn't oppose that.

No.

So, Iende is actually going to win.

So we know again from these declassified documents on the 15th of September, 1970, that

afternoon

Nixon has a meeting with Henry Kissinger, his Attorney General John Mitchell, familiar to fans of Watergate, and the director of the CIA, Richard Helms.

And we have Helms' handwritten notes, Tom.

Do you want to read the handwritten notes?

One in 10 chance, perhaps, but save Chile worth spending, not concerned risks involved.

Low involvement of embassy, \$10 million available, more if necessary, full-time job, best men we have, game plan, make economy scream 48 hours for plan of action.

So there you have it, make economy scream.

So basically, their plan is they want to somehow subvert the election and they're trying to think of ways to do it.

Now, before we massively beat up on Nixon and Kissinger, other American administrations have done similar things.

So in 1954, Eisenhower had approved a coup to overthrow the elected government in Guatemala.

There was a threat to the American United Fruit Company, Tom.

Can't know that.

And of course, Kennedy had, all the time now, been trying to support action against Castro and Cuba.

Of course, the difference is Castro isn't democratically elected, but the idea of Americans using the CIA to overthrow Latin American regimes, that predates Nixon and Kissinger.

But this is the first time they have done it in a big country like Chile, which is clearly devoted to its kind of democratic tradition.

And they have two ideas.

One is called track one.

We don't need to massively go into that.

Basically that is, they will somehow bribe or persuade the Chilean Congress not to vote for A&A.

They decide that's not going to work.

And the other is what they call track two, and that is basically to have a coup.

And the way they will do that is they will persuade the Chilean military to have a coup because they will basically tell them, if you don't do this, we will, as you said from Helms's notes, make the economy scream.

And Nixon says, he tells his aides, start cutting off loans, put pressure on banks to cancel their loans to Chile, get the banks to downgrade Chile's credit rating.

Basically, all of this is a massive warning to the Chilean military.

The problem they face is that the Chilean military have this tradition of non-interference in politics.

And their commander-in-chief of the Chilean military is a guy called René Schneider.

He has had a meeting of his staff that summer in July 1970.

He has made it absolutely clear to them, we will not interfere in politics that is not our job.

It's not what we do in Chile.

Other countries do it in Latin America, but we are the guardians of the Constitution.

The Americans say, the ambassador actually, it's actually the American ambassador who

comes up with this idea, a guy called Edward Corrie.

He says, if we just get rid of this bloke who's the commander-in-chief, maybe the others will fall into line.

Because he knows, now this is a really interesting thing, because the Chilean military have not been involved in politics, they're actually worse paid than army officers in other Latin American countries because they don't have the same kind of stake in politics, they don't have the same capital as it were.

So they can't afford dark glasses and massive braid on their uniforms and big hats.

Yes, exactly.

And actually in 1969, there had already been something called the Tacnazo where the artillery barracks, there'd been a mutiny about their low pay.

So the Americans say, listen, there's a lot of discontent in the Chilean military.

If we can just get rid of General Schneider, maybe we can persuade them to interfere in the election.

They find these guys and they make two attempts to kidnap Schneider and basically neutralize him in some way.

When they make their third attempt, which is October 1970, a couple of days before the Congress is due to vote on IA&A, Schneider fights back.

So there's a sort of gunfight and he is shot and killed.

This wasn't quite what the Americans were planning.

And the guys who are trying to kidnap him, they are posing as kind of leftist terrorists.

Yes, they're going to frame the left and use that as an excuse to kind of cancel the election.

Well, this doesn't work at all, Schneider is shot.

There's a great outpouring of sort of shock.

And two days later, IA&A does a deal with the Congress.

He says, I promise I will guarantee the Chilean constitution.

It's not going to be Fidel Castro style.

Yeah.

He's a Democratic politician and they overwhelmingly vote to ratify him as the winner of the election.

And so it is that on the 3rd of November, 1970, IA&A becomes president of Chile.

Well, Dominic, I think that we should take a break at this point.

And when we come back, let's see whether IA&A hits the ground running as president.

So we'll be back very soon.

I'm Jason Pack, senior analyst at the NATO Defense College Foundation and author of *Libya and the Global Enduring Disorder*.

And I'm Alex Hall Hall, a former British diplomat and ambassador to Georgia.

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Hello, welcome back to The Rest is History.

We are recording this on the 11th of September, the 50th anniversary of the coup against President Allende of Chile and Dominic.

Allende has just become president on the 3rd of November, 1970, just very, very quickly before we come to what he did as president, looking back at the American attempts to stop him becoming president.

So trying to spawn the military, using lots of money to bribe people, using right-wing press.

I mean, these are the nightmares of people on the left about US interference, not just in Latin America, but in Europe as well.

I remember there was a book by Chris Mullen, who I think was Sunderland MP, which was a very British coup, which kind of imagined, I guess, a kind of Jeremy Corbyn-type prime minister coming to power and being overthrown in exactly the way that...

I mean, it sounds very, very reminiscent of the way that the Americans tried to operate against the end.

Presumably that is not a coincidence.

No, it's not a coincidence, Tom.

All of this casts a shadow over the left across the West.

It does, absolutely.

So Chris Mullen is absolutely one of that generation of British left-wingers who were very strongly influenced by what happened in Chile, and are thinking about it a lot in the 1970s and 1980s.

There's lots of talk about coups from the mid-70s through to the mid-80s when Mullen writes his book and then it's on TV.

The prime minister is called Harry Perkins.

He's played in the TV version by Ray McEnally, and it's exactly that.

There's always this image that you see in all these kind of Ken Loach-type films and whatnot of the sort of shadowy hand at the US embassy, picking up a phone and saying, get me MI6 or whatever it might be.

And they're following morning a fake news story in the newspaper that destroys the left-wing candidates or something.

The Americans had already employed techniques like this before, by the way, in Italy, and I guess in places like Greece in the late 1940s, early 1950s.

So if you'd asked them, what's your justification for doing it?

You'd ask Helms, Kissinger, or indeed Kennedy, or Eisenhower.

Fighting communism.

They would have said exactly that.

They would have said, listen, this isn't the vicarage tea party.

We're in a fight to the death with world communism.

They use the techniques of dissimulation and deception and so on to beat them.

I mean, this is the moral dilemma at the heart of John Lucari's novels, to beat them.

Sometimes you have to use their own techniques against them.

I mean, that's what they would have said, and that's the sort of shadow that hangs over this.

Okay.

I slightly diverted you from saying what A&A does when he becomes president.

So 100 days, does it go well?

It's an extraordinary start, actually.

So when A&A comes in, in November 1970, he has, as I said, he's actually been approved by the Christian Democratic representation in the Congress.

He has signed this thing saying he will uphold the Chilean constitution, although he's a Marxist, he won't scrap it.

But it's a lizard of change and legislation.

I mean, we can't go through it all, but he announces, we are going to nationalize or continue and complete the nationalization of the big industries in Chile, notably the banking system and copper, of course.

He announces tons of new spending on health and on education.

Program of free milk for children, I see, just at the time that Mrs. Thatcher was abolishing that in Britain.

She is.

She is.

Mrs. Thatcher, the milk snatcher, as she was called.

I think very unfairly actually, Tom, because she was actually continuing what had started in the 1960s.

However, that is a subject for another podcast, but he also wants to massively expand land redistribution.

Of course, always a huge issue in Latin America because the Spanish Empire left a grossly unequal system of land ownership.

Lots of things like scholarships for Mapuche Indian children, social security, amnesties for political prisoners, tax relief for the very poorest taxpayers, sending out tens of thousands of volunteers into the countryside.

These volunteers will often be students, young people who are full of socialist enthusiasm. They will go out into the countryside on a mass literacy campaign to teach reading and writing.

There's a new minimum wage.

There's free school meals.

He does all this within weeks.

Basically, it's like a left-wing wish list and he's going to do everything.

It's very like the Starmer government when it comes to power.

Do you think so?

It's a redistribution, Tom.

I haven't said that yet.

An exciting new beginning.

There is also another element to this, which is I think one of the reasons why A&A has become such a sort of saint in Amata outside Chile is there's a cultural dimension.

They're really interested in the Chilean government and things like that.

They spend lots of money on music festivals and on publishing poetry and all this kind of thing.

That explains why people who are at British universities in the 1970s go all misty-eyed because they love all that stuff.

Because in the long run, after the coup, lots of intellectuals and artists will end up in European capitals, including London.

Of course, exactly.

People like Isabelle A&A or the playwright Ariel Dorfman, they become great proselytizers, I suppose, for the A&A message.

Ariel Dorfman, the playwright, he said, the thing about this is it's not just a remarkable redistribution of income and services to the most underserved members of society, but perhaps more important, he says, this is in the New York Review of Books, that more important than these material advantages was the dignity felt by so many disadvantaged citizens, their sense that they were now the central characters of their nation's history.

Which is lovely, but all of this comes with a cost, of course, because spending money has to come from somewhere.

One of the problems for A&A is that his timing is really terrible.

So the world economy is obviously about to go into the great kind of slough of the early 1970s.

Because of the oil crash.

Because of the oil crisis and whatnot.

The price of copper, the one commodity in which it really depends more than anything else, is four times the price of the oil crisis.

It's falling at unprecedented levels in the early 1970s.

So it's down by about a third.

I get that, but is there also American string pulling going on behind the scenes to make the impact worse?

There is, Tom, and we'll come to that.

We'll come to that in just a second.

You see, the American string pulling is really important, but it's not the whole story.

If the United States had not existed, you know, had been destroyed by a tsunami, A&A administration

would still have run into severe economic problems.

Because basically to pay for all this stuff, his economics minister pumps money into the economy, inflates the currency and so on.

And the result of this is, first of all, you get hyperinflation.

At the beginning of 1973, inflation is already 163%.

By the end of 1973, it's 500%.

So you're getting kind of not quite via my Germany levels, but not that far off.

Real chain GDP has contracted year on year at a rate of about 5% to 6%.

I mean, that is colossal, Tom.

That's a colossal downturn.

And people's wages in real terms are probably worth about half of what they were in 1970

by about 1973 or so.

So presumably the middle classes don't like that, but all the people who are benefiting from these reforms presumably still remain hugely enthusiastic for A&A's program despite all this.

Right.

You've got a minimum wage.

You've got now-

Your poetry festivals.

There's a poetry festival in the local village.

Your kids are being taught to read by volunteers.

You're very excited about all this.

If you're a lawyer in Santiago, you've been toiling away, working hard for a few years.

You've seen the value of your savings wiped out by inflation.

You're obviously up in arms, absolutely up in arms.

Of course, what the middle class is fear is that Chile will become the next Cuba.

Now, even though A&A had signed this pledge, this guarantee that he would not mess with the constitution, he does frighten people because he restores relations with Cuba, which had been cut off in the 1960s, he accepts aid from the USSR.

And in 1971, he actually invites Fidel Castro on a state visit.

So Castro pitches up and Castro loves it.

He absolutely loves it.

He never goes home.

So he's meant to come for seven days and he ends up staying for 23 days and he goes around the country.

He looks at the free school milk and the land expropriations.

He looks at the poetry festivals and he says, oh, this is absolutely brilliant.

The one thing Castro does say very presciently to A&A is, you want to be careful here because people will probably move against you.

And Castro, of course, basically says, you should tool up.

Well, don't worry about this democracy business because Castro is a ruthless man and Castro actually gives A&A a gun, an AK-47, I think it is, which will come back.

Future later.

Yeah, future later.

Castro, you could argue, is not entirely wrong because two days after A&A had been inaugurated on the 6th of November, 1970, we know from the declassified documents that Nixon convened in Washington, his entire National Security Council, to discuss ways, and I quote, to bring about his downfall.

And actually the quotes here are pretty extraordinary.

So this is Nixon.

Our main concern in Chile is the prospect that he can consolidate himself and the picture projected to the world will be his success.

No impression should be permitted in Latin America that they can get away with this, that it is safe to go this way, all over the world, it's too much of the fashion to kick us around.

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Secretary of State Bill Rogers, he was actually a bit of a figurehead, Bill Rogers says, yes, we want to do this right and bring him down.

The Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, we have to do everything we can to hurt A&A and bring him down.

And the way they...

I mean, it's a sort of multifaceted approach.

The main thing they do is economic pressure, which you mentioned already, Tom.

So that note that Richard Helms, the CIA director had put, that handwritten note, make the economy scream.

That is what they do.

Right.

And all financing, all American financing, all American loans to Chile, they lobby private investors to do the same.

They put massive pressure on US banks and indeed international banks like the World Bank or the Inter-American Development Bank to cut off all their loans to Chile, even such small things but important things like this.

Lots of Chilean trucks, cars, factories, machines and so on are dependent on US parts, parts imported from the US.

The Nixon administration works very hard behind the scenes to shut all supplies of these things down to cut off the flow, basically.

So things are bad anyway because of the global economic situation, but this really isn't helping.

Exactly right.

Exactly.

Meanwhile, millions of dollars being pumped in on an unprecedented scale to opposition newspapers, to opposition groups, right-wing groups, I'll just give you three examples.

They spend about \$4 million, I would say, in total in gifts to the newspaper El Mercurio, the newspaper that is part-owned by ITT.

And what is El Mercurio like, Dominic?

So what kind of newspaper is that?

That's probably like the Daily Express or the Daily Telegraph, Tom, I would say.

So it's a staunchly right-wing, best-selling newspaper.

Yes, it is.

It's inflammatory.

El Mercurio is crucially creating the coup atmosphere, the pre-coup atmosphere, and saying, we have to have a coup.

Someone has to step in.

He's a Marxist.

I've got to, they're openly saying this.

Oh, yeah, absolutely.

They're sort of saying...

So that's quite punchy.

Yeah.

Isn't that against the law to incite a coup?

I imagine it would be.

I don't know about Chilean law, but...

I've probably incited a coup in some of my pieces over the years, Tom.

I mean...

I don't think overtly, have you?

I don't...

Sandbrook admits the inciting coups.

So there's the aid to El Mercurio.

Secondly, they pump in a lot of money to business groups that are opposed to A&A.

So particularly the truckers, the truck owners, because they have the power to paralyze the economy if you cut down all kind of...

Yeah, of course.

All transport.

So there's that because the A&A government is beset by truckers' strikes.

And the third thing is they pump money into the Christian Democrat Party, so the biggest opposition party.

But crucially, the Christian Democrats had previously been a sort of semi-reformist party.

Now they are being pushed further and further to the right under CIA influence.

They basically want to transform the Christian Democrat Party to prepare the ground for some sort of action against A&A.

And when you say further to the right, do you mean economically, or do you mean further right as in, let's get out the dark glasses and lock people up and start applying electrodes to poets kind of thing?

Yes, because the economic right...

So lots of people will associate that with a group called the Chicago Boys, economists who came in to subject the Chilean economy to this extraordinary economic experiment in the 1970s.

There's not much talk of that at this point.

It's actually the sort of electrodes and dark glasses, right?

Yeah, okay.

I'm amazed that A&A is letting...

I mean, it's absolutely a tribute to what you were saying that he's not...

I mean, he's absolutely not Castro, but he's allowing newspapers to kind of promote this.

But Tom, what can he do?

Well, change the law, I would have thought, to say that you can't foster coups in the press, I would have thought.

He doesn't have an absolute majority in Congress, and the Chilean Supreme Court is dominated by much more conservative figures.

So Chile has a system of separation of powers.

And so this suggests that actually democracy is working pretty well.

Well, because of the nature of A&A's experiments and the nature of the passions involved, the early 1970s is putting more strain on that system than it's ever been under before.

So by 1973, as we will find out next time, there is enormous tension between the Supreme Court and the Congress on one hand, and A&A himself on the other.

So the more conservatives...

And those people who basically are saying, he's going much too far, you shouldn't be doing this in a democracy, because they basically say his experiment is turning everything to rack and ruin, and the economy is falling apart and all of this kind of thing.

But you're right, A&A, he does not appear at all to be a violent man, a man who is keen to employ violence or repressive or anything like that, because he would have tried it. He would have done so, and he doesn't do so.

And actually, maybe one reason he doesn't do so is he knows that he still has a lot of support in the country.

And in the spring of 1973, there was going to be a congressional election.

So this is on March the 4th.

And the CIA, Nixon and Kissinger, the State Department, El Mercurio, the truckers, the middle classes, all of these people have pinned their hopes.

A&A will get a massive bloody nose in the congressional elections that will allow us, it will give us a two-thirds majority in Congress, so he could be impeached if necessary, and all his stuff can be blocked, and we can put Chile back on what they regard as the road to sanity.

And actually, what happens is, although the opposition parties between them get the majority of the votes, A&A's candidates actually pick up two seats in the Senate, two extra seats, and they get six extra seats in the Congress, so he's better off than he was before he started.

I mean, this to the Americans, to the CIA people who are based in Chile, to the embassy and whatnot, is unbelievably infuriating.

As far as they're concerned, this now means a sort of parliamentary option using straight parliamentary politics to beat A&A is off the table.

It hasn't worked.

It hasn't worked at all.

And that, in their minds, leaves them with only one option.

And that option is now to work towards a full-scale military coup.

Okay, so that sets us up for tomorrow's episode, where we will look at the coup.

But Dominic, I think what impresses me about this story, and I really know very, very little about it, as I'm sure listeners will have been able to gauge, is just how deeply rooted and secure the structures of Chilean democracy seem to have been in the early 70s.

I mean, all this strain, but they seem to be holding.

Yes.

Chile hasn't had a coup for best part of half a century.

It becomes important sometimes to countries' sense of identity, who they are, that they are a democratic country.

Of course, yeah.

I mean, Chile, if you'd asked a Chilean in the beginning of 1973, they would say, we are not Brazil, we're not Argentina.

We are South America's outlier.

We are a democratic, civilized, sophisticated people, the country of Pablo Neruda and fine wines and all this sort of stuff.

We don't go in for the dark glasses and the cattle prods, and of course, things would turn out rather differently.

Okay.

Well, that terrible story coming up tomorrow, when we will look at the coup that topples at IND and brings General Pinochet, Pinochet, Pinochet, however you pronounce them, we will discuss that tomorrow on tomorrow's episode.

Bye-bye.

Bye-bye.

Bye.

Bye.