

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

Until the arrest of the former President Pinochet last October, Chile had achieved three remarkable successes, all of them in large measure due to former President Pinochet. First it had seen the total defeat of communism, at a time when that ideology was advancing throughout the hemisphere.

As Eduardo Frye, the former Christian Democrat President of Chile put it, the military saved Chile.

Secondly, Chile has seen the establishment of a thriving free enterprise economy which has transformed living standards and made Chile into a model for Latin America.

Thirdly, Chile is also remarkable because President Pinochet established a constitution for a return to democracy, held a plebiscite to decide whether or not he should remain in power, lost the vote, though gaining 44% support, respected the result, and handed over power to a democratically elected successor.

So that, Dominic, was Margaret Thatcher speaking in 1999, by which point she was Baroness, Margaret

Thatcher, in the House of Lords, and I'm vaguely remembering this.

General Pinochet, he'd become a senator, he came to Britain, didn't he, on a visit to Mr. Thatcher, and there was a kind of extradition warrant put out for his arrest.

Spanish judge on human rights violations charges.

The Labour government, today, was put in a very difficult position, but they decided to honour the request for extradition.

Pinochet was placed under house arrest, but eventually they found a loophole, which was his failing health, because he was then advanced years.

They claimed he was, it was said that he was suffering from dementia, I think, and he was free to return to Chile, and this was a very controversial story.

Because my sense is that by and large, I mean, I can't imagine anyone who would be on Pinochet's side.

That would be my gut instinct.

My gut instinct would be, you know, the coup's a terrible thing.

Yeah.

But that's a reminder that there were certainly people in Britain, and I guess in America, because they were busy fostering the coup, for whom I ended up absolutely was a menace and a wrath of Pinochet.

Yeah, you're absolutely right, Tom, you're absolutely right.

In the last Chilean presidential election, which was in 2021, the winning candidate was a guy called Gabriel Boric, and he is an avowed fan of Allende, born long after Allende's demise, but he made a point on his inauguration day of going to the statue of Allende in Santiago and kind of bowing before it in kind of prayer and contemplation, you know, to say, I'm kind of in your shadow.

But the man he beat, José Antonio Kast, who is actually leading in the polls today for the next Chilean presidential election, who's a kind of right-wing populist, he's the nephew of Pinochet's banking chief and campaigned for Pinochet in that very referendum that Mrs. Thatcher mentioned when he was a student.

So in other words, there are still, you know, this is not an open and shut case, as it were.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

There is a large proportion of Chilean opinion that would absolutely agree with everything Mrs. Thatcher said.

And I think there are three points to make about that.

One is, it's easy probably for us to forget that in the Cold War, a lot of people felt that you just had to pick a side.

And that's what Mrs. Thatcher was saying there about communism.

And what Nixon and Kissinger would have said, you're with us or you're with them.

And if you choose to go with them, well, you know, God help you.

Second thing is Mrs. Thatcher's economic program, the kind of what people now sort of call neoliberalism.

I don't really like that terminology, but people call it that.

There are some, the attack on inflation, the very sort of abrasive, astringent medicine.

There are definitely some similarities.

And the third thing, and I think the most important thing for Mrs. Thatcher and from the British point of view, and there was no doubt about this, we talked about this in our Falklands War podcast, Pinochet did back Britain in the Falklands War.

I mean, the thing is that Argentinians, to outsiders, the Argentinians and the Chileans look kind of identical with their dark glasses and their enthusiasm for electrocuting poets.

But they absolutely despised each other.

I remember it, yeah.

And the Chileans gave Britain loads of assistance in the Falklands War.

Well, so Baroness Thatcher, Dominic, in that same speech described Chile as this country's oldest and truest friend in Latin America.

Right.

Well, so there you go.

So there you go, exactly.

But Dominic, what sets this episode up?

Because I don't really know the truth about any of this.

I want to find out whether Allende was as much the goodie and Pinochet the baddie, as I've always kind of just vaguely assumed.

Well, we ended last time in the spring of 1973.

They've had congressional elections in Chile.

Allende has been in for less than three years, but he has made this extraordinary beginning, redistributing land, nationalising copper and banks and so on, pumping money into the economy and we're on a welfare spending and things.

And yet at the same time, inflation has not really gone through the roof, it's gone through the stratosphere, people's savings have been completely kind of debauched, people's living standards if they're middle class are falling rapidly, there's a sense of great hysteria among the middle classes.

And I think it's actually politics is always the clash of competing interest groups, isn't it?

And you can completely see why if you're living out in the countryside very poor, Allende is your savior.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

Allende is somebody who speaks for you and as Ariel Dorfman said last time, makes you feel seen, gives you dignity.

If you are a professional person, a lawyer or whatever, whose Uncle Jose's land has been redistributed, your savings have vanished because of inflation, you go into the shops, you can't, the shelves are empty, you buy stuff on the black market and those people are frightened that this is merely the beginning.

I think that's the thing.

We talked last time about Allende personally, Allende is clearly not Stalin, he's not even Fidel Castro, but a lot of these people think this is just the start of something.

And actually, if it's not checked, what happens to Allende is neither here nor there because somebody will replace him who will be much more left-wing, more repressive, all of this kind of thing.

So that's the anxiety on the right, I guess, which is important to understand.

And so it's a class-based as well.

Oh, it's absolutely class-based, it's very class-based, absolutely.

So we talked last time about how the results of those parliamentary elections in the spring of 1973 means that the Americans have basically given up all hope of stopping Allende by democratic

means with a lot of money before the end of his term.

Dominic, just one last question on that.

Do they have any qualms about that?

Because the whole thing about America is that it's upholding democracy and the right of people to choose their own form of government and that is one of the massive points of principle in the Cold War.

Do they have no qualms about this?

I wouldn't say they had any qualms whatsoever.

I mean, I think that because they've been doing it for 20 years, they would say, I mean, I think if you're, so, I think if you had, you know, not just Kissinger, because I think Kissinger is often too easy to make him a, I think he's often made escape goats, actually, because of his, because if he's a German Jew, I mean, I know that's a, that may seem a heretical thing to say to some people, but I think it's very easy for people to pick on him rather than his predecessor, Dean Rusk, or any, or William Rogers, or any of the other, you know, the much more waspish kind of...

I suppose that they're all kind of blur into one, don't they?

They do.

They do.

And Kissinger called it the media in a way they didn't.

I wouldn't say it's anti-Semitism in itself, but it, but he's such a distinctive figure with his gravelly German voice.

He is.

He just stands out.

Yes.

He's become an avatar for American foreign policy more, more generally.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

But I think they would say, look, we're, we're not in a, this is not a clean fight. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the late 1940s twisted and abused democracy. We can't just, you know, if you want, if we have our hands clean, we will lose. We have to, you know, use their methods. That's exactly what they would say. So I don't think they have any qualms about interfering with democracy in that sense. But I do think that by 1973, they are already, they have already established links with the Chilean army. They have identified officers who, you know, as we said last time, are sick of their low salaries and things. They're from, they're quite a closed sort of caste, the Chilean army, interestingly, because they're poorly paid. They can't kind of join in, they're too badly paid to kind of join in wider society very much. Just with themselves, they're in country clubs. Officers are often married to the daughters or sisters of other officers. So the Americans work very hard. It's a caste. Yeah, to penetrate this caste and to basically bring them over to their way of thinking. Now by the summer of 1973, quite a few people in the Chilean army think, okay, A&A just has to be stopped. He's gone too far. And there's a first attempt at a coup, which is called the Tanquetazo, which is at the end of June. Tanquetazo, because they use a lot of tanks, sort of an imaginative name. There's a guy called Roberto Supa, and he leads these tanks into Santiago to try and topple the government. And it's actually has nowhere near enough support. I think he has some 16 vehicles, he has about 80 soldiers. They open fire, actually, on the presidential palace, the Ministry of Defense and so on. But it doesn't go anywhere. A&A speaks to the nation. He rallies support. The commander-in-chief of the army, who rejoices in the name of Carlos Pratt, Carlos Pratt. Crazy name, crazy guy. He is the successor to General Schneider, who we talked about last time. And he similarly believes that the army should obey the constitution. So he persuades a lot of the mutineers to abandon the cause. And he gets his chief of staff, who is a man called Augusto Pinocchio, to lead... And that's how you pronounce it? Well, there are different pronunciations of Pinocchio's name. So the classic thing is that everybody in Britain calls him General Pinocchio. And then people who are sort of trying to be penant to say, oh, no, actually, I think

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

you'll find it's Pinocchio.

But having sort of dug into this a bit in the Bodleian Library, it turns out that the recordings of him saying his own name, Chileans often swallow the T at the end of the word. So actually, what he actually says is, Pinocchio.

Pinocchio.

Yeah.

That's what we call him then.

But when we slip into...

Because we're British, so we'll obviously slip into calling him General Pinochet, as people always do.

So listeners, we'll just...

Pinocchio.

Pinochet.

As in Che Guevara.

As in Che Guevara, yeah.

But in Britain, people often say Che Guevara, don't they?

We just...

We have our own distinct ways, don't we, in this island of us?

But we respect Chilean pronunciation, so it will be General Pinochet.

Well, anyway, listen.

He leads troops to help put down the mutiny.

The mutiny fizzles out within hours.

And I end a...

Addresses this massive demonstration from La Moneda, from the presidential palace.

And he gives this ringing speech at the end.

He says, trust your government, go home, kiss your wives and your children in the name of Chile.

And everybody, hurrah, hurrah, the coup has been defeated, isn't this great?

But actually, that coup is just the warm-up.

Because there are lots of people in the Chilean military who look at this, and they're like, well, you know what, actually, it's a bit like the Prigazhin thing in Russia.

They got quite a long way without being stopped.

There were only a few of them, and they came pretty close.

So actually, we could learn the lessons from this, and next time, it'll be different.

And the CIA, they are very optimistic.

So they are actually, by the mid to late summer of 1972, they are sending reports to Washington saying, loads of the Chilean officers are talking about coup, they're talking about dates, we reckon this could probably work.

The one problem they have is this bloke, General Pratz, because he is very loyal to the regime. Now, ideally, the CIA would love to have him kidnapped, but they tried that with the previous bloke in the last episode, and that was an absolute shambles.

And had that been rumbled, so did people know who it was they tried to kidnap him?

So I think people suspect American interference, but the Americans don't want to do it again,

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

because it was a shambles the first time, it would look very bad if it goes wrong. And it also might end up boosting support for A&A, you know, people will rally to the Constitution.

But fate plays into their hands in a very bizarre way.

In June 1973, General Pratz has been driven in his official car through the sort of professional upper middle class areas of Santiago, through an area called Las Condes.

And at the time, a lot of the sort of, you know, the people on the right, when they see him, they'll kind of jeer him, shout insults at him, because, you know, they blame him for bolstering A&A. And he gets to the crossroads, and this little Renault car pulls up next to him, and two people started making, start making him see gestures at him, shouting abuse and stuff.

General Pratz, he's a military man, so when he reacts as a military man, perhaps should, he gets his gun and starts shooting at the car.

That's how you think generals should respond to being insulted.

Exactly.

He starts shooting at the car.

The cars both stop, and the drivers get out, and General Pratz realizes to his horror that the driver of the other car, the crop-haired driver of the other car, who he thought was a man, is actually a housewife called Alejandrina Cox, and goodness, so he'd misgendered her. He'd misgendered her.

She starts shouting at him, you know, you've been firing bullets into my car.

Lots of passes by Gathron, they all take her side.

There's a terrible scene of like pushing and shoving and stuff.

He actually ends up being rescued by a taxi driver.

This is a very embarrassing and shambolic incident.

The Pratz and Mrs. Cox actually end up making public apologies to each other.

They agree to kind of bury the hatchet, but this really damages his reputation.

The wives of his officers start to have demonstrations against him outside his house.

We can be absolutely sure this isn't some American thing.

Well, I don't know.

I mean, who knows.

I suppose we can't, can we?

We can't.

The Americans could not have known that he would start shooting the car.

They couldn't have put him up to that.

Alejandrina Cox is clearly one of these people who is, you know, on the right, middle class, all of this sort of, you know, very anti-IA day, but I don't think she's necessarily a CIA asset.

Maybe the listeners, some of our listeners will know, and I would love to be corrected if I'm wrong.

Anyway, Pratz eventually resigns.

By the way, the key newspaper, Tom, in drumming up antipathy to him is, of course, El Mercurio, this newspaper funded by ITT and by the CIA.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

So the person who succeeds Pratz on the 22nd of August, 1973 is his chief of staff, a man who's not been in this story at all up to this point, except for that little outing at the mutiny, and that is General Augusto Jose Ramón Pinochet Ujate.

So this is Mrs. Thatcher's poster boy.

We haven't talked about him at all because he's not been an interesting character.

This is the extraordinary thing, actually.

He is the son, he's some of the customs official, Tom, like Adolf Hitler.

Oh, well, that tells you all you need to know.

If you are listening to this episode of The Rest is History and you are a customs official, do better with your son.

Yeah, exactly.

Actually, his father wanted Pinochet to be a doctor like Allende, but he wasn't.

He joined the army, which is a great way of sort of seeing a self-improvement in Chile, in Latin America, generally.

Also like Allende, he's a very keen freemason.

So I wonder if they'd met in the lodge.

I don't know.

Well, they've obviously met loads.

They've met loads because Allende thinks Pinochet is a fine fellow.

He thinks he's very loyal, very reliable.

He's a kind of dull dog.

He's a very dull dog.

He'd been the commander of the garrison in Santiago.

Then he was the commander of the whole Santiago province.

When there were protests against Allende, Pinochet would command the troops.

One of Allende's men said of Pinochet, he was the guy we would call if we needed a jeep.

So he's just, as you say, they think of him as just a boring, loyal, and nobody.

And actually, the CIA and the American State Department and all these people who are compiling reports on all the Chilean officers, they think exactly the same.

So this is a defense intelligence agency report, quiet, mild-mannered, very business-like, very honest, hard-working, dedicated, a devoted, tolerant husband and father, lives very modestly, drinks scotch and Pisco sours, smokes cigarettes, likes parties.

And this is the CIA.

He's a world-friendly, narrow-gauge, military man who is totally immersed in his new field of security, public order, and political events and who clearly enjoys the feeling of being important.

But all the reports say of him, he will not lead a coup.

He is not the man.

He is not the figurehead.

He's too dull.

He's like a staff officer.

He's like a number two or a number three.

And they would say, if the CIA recommend, if there is a coup, he will probably go along

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

with it because he was his part of that Prussian kind of ethos of the Chilean army. But he's not a man for thinking outside the box.

Not at all.

He's utterly, utterly conventional and boring.

The only interesting thing I discovered really about Pinochet is that he's a huge bibliophile.

So he had a private library of 55,000 books.

He would collect old books.

When he became president, he would send his military attaches around the world to buy antiquarian books.

But a very damning sign, Tom, like so many, as with so many middle-aged men, his library contains no fiction and absolutely no poetry.

So this is bad news for all the poets being funded by the A&A government.

Very, very bad news.

Now, just as we move towards the break, August 1973, the climate is definitely getting worse.

There is yet another trucker strike.

There is, as we discussed last time, this rumbling constitutional row between the Supreme Court and Congress on the one hand and the A&A government on the other.

The Americans have spent a lot of money basically pushing their friends in the Chilean Congress to be tougher on A&A.

The Congress actually passes a resolution to say that A&A is breaching the Constitution that he's using the power of decree too much, that he is undermining Chilean democracy.

Well, that is rubbish.

It's you who is undermining democracy.

It's actually that classic thing that you often get when you've got a kind of divided government between the executive and the legislature where they're kind of tearing strips off each other.

And there's a definite sense of rising tension.

And actually, within A&A's regime, there is talk of trying to resolve this by having a massive referendum.

And there are some people who say, actually, he was planning to give a speech on the 11th of September saying, look, this has gone on too long.

Let's have a huge referendum.

Are you with me or are you with the Christian Democrats in Congress?

Which side do you want?

Well, I don't know how true that is.

Of course, we'll never know.

What we do know is that a week before the 11th of September, there are massive demonstrations in Santiago by his supporters to say, we're with you.

You won't be toppled.

All of this stuff, they're chanting, A&A, A&A, el pueblo te defiende.

A&A, A&A, the people will defend you.

We're standing with you kind of thing.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

Ariel Dorfman, the playwright in his article about this in the New York Review of Books, he says he was working at the time as a kind of cultural hanger on with the A&A regime, cultural advisor.

And he says that in the presidential palace, people were saying, you know, the army are planning, possibly planning something, something could happen, but they don't really think it will come to anything because they know that there is this long tradition of non-intervention in politics and they're hopeful that people like Pinochet will stick to that.

And actually, Allende's chief of staff, Fernando Flores, tells Ariel Dorfman, he says, this guy Pinochet, we have him, I have him in this pocket, nicely tied up.

You know, he's our man.

We can absolutely rely on him.

And in a staggering irony, on Sunday, the 9th of September, Pinochet and one of his other officers, they meet Allende and have a discussion of what they would do if there was a coup.

And Pinochet says, Allende says to Pinochet, can you draw up basically a plan, what you would tell me what you would do?

And Pinochet says, I will do and I'll let you have it, you know, today or tomorrow.

Little does Allende know what is coming.

Goodness.

But you, dear listeners, you do know what's coming.

You know that after the break, we will be embarking on Dominic's brilliant account of the coup that overthrows Allende and brings General Pinochet to power.

So we'll see you in a few minutes.

Hello, welcome back to the Restless History.

Now, just before the break, I revealed what is going to happen in this passage.

I said that Allende is going to be toppled, Pinochet is going to come to power.

And Theo told me off for having given away the climax of this narrative.

But I think we've already given it away.

And the thing is, Dominic, everyone knows this, don't they?

Yes.

Even if you have, I really know very little about the details, but it is in a way the kind of the archetype of a Latin American tragedy.

It is.

It absolutely is.

I'm intrigued to find out whether it deserves that reputation and what it's done to get that reputation.

Well, two things that people get wrong about it, though.

First of all, they think of it as General Pinochet's coup.

He did not plan it.

There would be meetings from the beginning of September onwards, among the Chilean, probably August even, among the Chilean military, the Navy in particular, I think, the Air Force and so on.

There are groups of them.

Pinochet has only invited to these meetings.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

There only becomes a real participant in them at quite a late stage.
He goes along with it and nobody at that point thinks of him as the leader, not at all.
The second thing is that everybody thinks is that they think this is a coup planned, masterminded, orchestrated from Washington.
Again, that is actually not really right.
The CIA do not appear to have planned the coup.
They knew it was being planned.
They were delighted that it was being planned.
And they, of course, lots of listeners will say they have created the climate or they have helped to create the climate.
You see, I did not know that.
I'd always assumed that the Americans had sponsored it.
Well, they have kind of sponsored it, but it's not their thing.
They're not working hand in glove.
Not as hand, not probably as hand in glove as we think or rather, I think the tendency is certainly in Britain and probably in many of the countries where we have rested history listeners.
The tendency is to see the Americans as the puppet masters and the Chileans as the marionettes.
Do you think, Tom?
I mean, then we do this with all so much of the Cold War.
And actually, the marionettes have a life of their own, an agency of their own.
And even if the Americans had never existed, I mean, it's hard to imagine this scenario in which the Americans don't exist.
But there would have been people in Chile who would have wanted a coup and would probably have tried.
Right.
And so the key thing, you say, so the role of Pinochet and this becomes all the more intriguing that the Americans have dismissed him as a non-entity and he is not involved in the drawing up of the coup.
So Dominic, tell us how does, what happens?
How does he end up becoming the figurehead?
Well, there are different versions.
Some people say that a couple of days beforehand, people say to him, we're going to do the coup and you have to get involved with it.
Otherwise, we'll have to get rid of you as well.
So it's like Vitellius on the northern frontier in 869.
He's told by his troops, you've got to become emperor of a will, basically, you know, you're doomed.
That is the parallel, of course, that had occurred to me, Tom.
The coup begins, it was postponed by a day.
It was originally meant to be in the 10th of September, it actually begins on the 11th.
A dawn, the navy captured the port of Valparaiso, so a place where Allende had been as a young man, where he'd helped to found the Socialist Party and so on.
Immediately, the prefect of the province tells Allende what has happened.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

Allende goes to the presidential palace, La Moneda in the center of Santiago, with his bodyguards and with his key ministers, and they're trying to communicate with military leaders.

And actually, it's very important to them that they communicate with Pinochet, because he's the commander of the army.

They can't get through, the telephones are cut off, communications are down, there's news coming in from Chile that different places are being seized by military units, all looking very bad.

And Allende at that point, you know, he really wants to get in touch with Pinochet and he actually says to his aides, I wonder what they've done with poor old Pinochet.

That's awful.

It doesn't occur to him that Pinochet would have joined the plotters.

Very quickly, it is obvious that the coup leaders are going to win.

So by about 8.30 in the morning, they declare that they have Chile under control and they are officially deposing Allende because there's a national emergency and all this kind of thing.

And by about nine o'clock, so two hours after the news has come in from Valparaiso, they are in total control with the exception of a small part of the capital with the presidential palace at its core where Allende is holed up with his loyalists.

Now the army say, if you do not resign, if you do not surrender, we will attack the presidential palace, we will bomb it, we will hammer it with everything we have, you know, when I'm messing around here, some people in Allende's entourage say to him, you know, escape, get out, run, flee, maybe, who knows, flee to Cuba, do something.

Allende says, no, I'm the democratic elected president, I will stand by the constitution, I am not fleeing anywhere.

The military themselves contact the presidential palace and they say, we will fly you and your family out of the country.

Now again, Allende says, no way, but here is the first sign of Pinochet, the real Pinochet, the ruthlessness, because we now know from amateur recordings that people intercepted the military's own communications and recorded them, there's audio tape of Pinochet talking to his troops and he's laughing and he says to them, he says to his aid, that plane will never land, meaning Allende is playing if he accepts the offer and he also says, if you kill the bitch, you eliminate the letter.

So the kind of the ruthlessness, the very man he was having a meeting with two days earlier, Tom, he's already talking about killing him, about breaking the deal and killing him.

Anyway, Allende doesn't take the deal.

He reveals at this point something that nobody had previously suspected, which is this extraordinary cold-blooded ruthlessness.

He says, we're going to do it properly, kill our enemies, they're calling for helicopter gunships, they're calling for aircraft to strike the presidential palace, it takes a while to bring them up, so Allende's got a few more hours and it's during those few hours that he gives this extraordinary radio speech.

So that's the speech with which I began the first episode.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

Yes, actually very moving.

Incredibly moving and the thing is that, again, I didn't actually know what happened to him in the coup, but this, again, during on the classical parallels, this is very Roman behaviour. This is kind of Cato defying an overambitious general, destroying the Constitution, risking martyrdom.

It is exactly, he says to the people, the people must defend themselves, but they must not sacrifice themselves.

And then he says, that bit that you read, that you began with, 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.

I mean, you can see why a generation of kind of lefty people in Britain found this so moving that there's a little bit of resentment and recrimination there, but not much.

And actually, it's a, you know, this dream of, it's like something from Les Miserables or something.

Well, I mean, it's Latin America.

This is, this is Roman behaviour at its very best.

Yeah.

It's noblest.

No, actually, even in the audio that speech is, it's terrible, crackly audio, but you can hear hints of the kind of gunfire in the background and things as we approach sort of two o'clock in the afternoon.

Fighter jets are striking at the presidential palace.

There's tear gas everywhere.

There's smoke everywhere.

So what happens to Allende?

So he and some of his aides are trying to get out.

So he is trying to get out, is he?

Well, wait for it.

He says to them, let's all try to get out and surrender.

There's about 30 people.

They start to go out.

There's a guy called Dr. Patricio Aguijon, I think it is.

And he's one of Allende's doctors.

And he tells the story that the fires in the palace, they start to go out.

Allende says, I'll take up the rear.

And then as they start to go out, Allende slips away.

And this guy, the doctor, goes back to see what's happened to Allende.

And he sees him in Independence Hall in the palace with the AK-47 that Fidel Castro had given him.

And he puts it in his mouth, I think it is, and basically blows his own head off the two bullets.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

Now, that's not the story that was told, that was often told after Allende's death. Because Fidel Castro, just a couple of weeks after this, told a big crowd in Havana that Allende had died in battle, fight firing at Pinochet's troops. And of course, there are lots of people- You see that as a more heroic death. More heroic death. There are lots of people who wanted to believe that. And so it became a very popular idea, though. I think the whole bit, the echoes of Cato killing himself, rather than submit the Caesar, I think that it's just as heroic, if not more. I mean, it absolutely casts him as a martyr, and that's the role that he then plays. Isn't that Brutus and Cassius? Yes, they kill themselves as well. That idea of suicide, rather than submit to an autocrat, I mean, it is a very ancient tradition. Yeah. And I think it's generally agreed that's what happened. There was an autopsy by a Spanish pathologist or whatever they are, a forensic scientist in 2011. You can Google it, and they said, yes, this is pretty much no doubt that Allende took his own life. So we should just talk about how the coup is wrapped up. By the afternoon of September the 11th, it's pretty much all done and dusted. Allende's ministers are generally either killed immediately, or they're flown to concentration camps, particularly a concentration camp in Chile and Patagonia or on island. But I think what surprises people in America is that the Chilean military are so blood thirsty. I don't think they saw that coming, because there's no hint of it. So that's including the CIA? I mean, maybe they did, but I don't think the CIA prepare a paper for Henry Kissinger at the end of October, where they basically say, we haven't actually been able to add up to get a correct tally of the casualties because there have been so many. We think that the military have probably killed about 1,500 people. And would that include the ministers? What happens to the ministers in the concentration camp? So some of them are killed, some of them aren't. Some of them are tortured and then let out. They've probably rounded up at first about 13,000 to 14,000 people. Now very famously, a lot of those people are housed in the Chilean National Stadium. I mean, this is a detail that lots of people will remember from this story, the football stadium. At one point, there are 7,000 people in there. They use the field itself, the football field to hold the men, the women are held in the

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

changing rooms and the sort of offices and stuff like that.

And in the velodrome, the military carry out the interrogations and they torture people. When people are shot, as many of them are, they're thrown into the river or their bodies are dumped in the ocean or they're just dumped a night in the streets.

And there are some very, very well-known examples of people who are killed.

So the best known Chilean one at least outside Chile is a guy called Victor Jala, who was a poet and a sort of folk singer and stuff.

He had written Allende's election song in 1970.

He had performed at a ceremony to honor Pablo Neruda when Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Victor Jala is seen as the kind of great baladeer of the Chilean left and he is killed in a smaller stadium near Stadio Chile five days after the coup.

For our American listeners, they will undoubtedly know this story.

A lot of them.

Immortalized in the film Missing with Jack Lemon and Sissy Spacek.

There was a guy called Charlie Horman.

He was a Harvard graduate who had gone to Santiago to try and become a writer and a filmmaker.

He'd been really into the Chilean regime.

By hideous mischance, he was in the seaside town of Vina del Mar when the coup broke out and he's got into conversation in a bar or something like that or in a hotel with some Americans.

And the Americans said, oh, we work for the US Navy.

We're just down here doing a job and it's done.

We're going to go home now.

And he's like, oh, what's the job?

And the mood turns very kind of icy.

He goes back to Santiago.

He is eventually rounded up.

He is taken away.

He is taken to the national stadium and he is tortured and killed.

So I'm surprised about that because I would have thought that, I mean, doesn't that risk relations between the new Chilean regime and the United States if they're busy torturing and executing American citizens?

Well, it's not the only one.

There was also a guy called Frank Teruji who was working for a pro and a newspaper.

He was tortured with electrodes and killed in the national stadium too.

They knew each other, actually.

The Americans know almost immediately that Charlie Horman has been killed.

Whether it was a mistake, we don't know whether that actually he knew too much.

I mean, that's the implication of the film.

Because he's spoken to these Americans.

So this conversation plays a huge part in missing the idea that he's basically stumbled into something and has to be eliminated.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

The extraordinary thing is that his father, Ed and his wife, Joyce, launched this great hunt for him.

And Ed, played by Jack Lemon in the film, comes to Santiago and he goes to the embassy. He talks to people from the embassy in the CIA.

They lie to him.

They say, we've heard that he's escaped.

He's been smuggled to safety knowing that he's dead.

And then when he's finally, when they finally admit he's dead, he's been murdered, all this, the State Department, and this is an unbelievable detail.

They sent Ed Harman a telegram telling him that he needed to pay \$900 to have the body shipped back home to the United States.

So a pretty grim story and not the only grim story.

A month after the coup, Pinochet sets in motion something called the caravan of death.

That's not good, is it?

So one of his associates, a guy called General Ariano Stark, he goes off with a load of other officers and they tore the country, going to the provinces.

And in each province, they identify people and they tell them to hand themselves in.

They're trade unionists, poets, lefty people, all of that sort of stuff.

These people hand themselves in often.

They're put into cells and they're taken away and then they're tortured, bare-knitted and shot.

This anticipates what's going to happen with something called Dino, which is the director of national intelligence, which becomes this kind of great institution for kind of arresting people, torturing them, disappearing them, all of this kind of thing.

So that's one element of the post-coup regime.

The other element that nobody could possibly have anticipated before the 11th of September 1973 was that Pinochet himself would prove as ambitious and ruthless as he did.

The junta, the military regime, is meant to be a rotating regime.

The army will have a go, the air force will have a go, the navy will have a go.

And Pinochet goes first because he's the oldest, the army is the most senior.

He'll do it for six months or whatever, then hand it over.

He basically uses his power straight away to browbeat the other services and to accepting him as the supreme chief of the nation, that's what he calls himself.

And he sets up a personality cult.

So people start to say, Pinochet has been chosen by God.

He has the special approval of the Virgin Mary to destroy communism.

And the coup was necessary.

He is the savior of the nation.

Mrs. Thatcher explicitly picks up on this, and that speech at the beginning that you quoted Tom.

He saved us from communism, and he is the great Chilean national hero.

And so by 1974, he has supreme power in a way that nobody had possibly predicted.

Does he have sunglasses, a bigger uniform, bigger hat?

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

There's a very famous photograph of him sitting, you know, not long after he's been named as supreme chief, he's sitting there with all his officers.

And he is wearing the classic dark glasses.

And he mentioned his hat as the top man captain general.

That's the title has not been used in Chile since the days of Bernardo Higgins, the great liberation hero.

As captain general, he has a hat that is slightly bigger than everybody else's hat.

So what the Americans didn't pick up on in those intelligence reports was the vanity, you know, that would reveal itself once he became supreme leader.

And of course, his regime, Tom, I mean, it's not just controversial because of the coup.

It's controversial because under his leadership, probably 3,000 to 4,000 people were killed, and about maybe 30,000, 20,000 to 30,000 tortured.

So that understood.

I mean, he really does sound as bad as the myth makes him.

And yet Mrs. Thatcher, she's Baroness Thatcher, standing up in the House of Lords, saying he's tremendous.

I mean, I don't want to say there's another side to a guy who's toppled a democratically elected government and murdered and tortured left, right and center and given himself a bigger hat.

But for Mrs. Thatcher, there are two things he does, right?

So he supports Britain in the Falklands.

So she feels grateful gratitude for that.

But he is also a kind of, she sees him as a kind of fellow Thatcherite, someone who institutes an economic revolution that she sees him as a kind of, you know, fellow traveler like that.

A little bit, yeah.

So to what extent is there any justification for the case that she was making for him?

Do you think?

Oh, that's a very difficult, I mean, that's ultimately a political decision that you, the listener make.

Whether you think that, you know, there'll be some listeners, probably not a majority, but there'll be some listeners who say, listen, I ended was making a terrible mess of things.

This was a Cold War.

Chile was sliding towards Cuban-style socialism.

You know, if we had Chilean listeners, Tom, I don't really think we do.

But if we did, there would certainly be some of them who said, who would say that?

And they would say, Pinochet saved the country from this slide into the abyss of Marxism.

Despite the violence with which he did it, the brutality with which he did it, despite the rupturing of the Constitution.

They would say, listen, the Constitution,

neither here nor there, this was an emergency.

And they would say of the violence, you know, that was better than the violence that would have come if a revolutionary Marxist regime had seized power.

And, you know, that's what they would, they would, they would want to presumably,

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

I'm guessing, I mean, that's not necessarily what I think.

I'm kind of guessing what they would say.

I think for Mrs. Thatcher, for Ronald Reagan, for all the myriad actually Western governments that supported Pinochet or smiled upon his regime, they were operating in the Cold War context, where actually they quite often supported authoritarian regimes.

I mean, the Chilean regime is not unique in South America.

Argentina, whether it or Brazil or Uruguay, they all have very close links with the Americans.

What I had and appreciated was the depth of the democratic traditions within Chile.

And I suppose there's a kind of slight measure, again, going back to the Roman echoes of Sulla laying down his power, choosing to lay down his power.

With Pinochet.

With Pinochet.

No, I think that's, so Mrs. Thatcher is wrong about this, I think, when she gives that.

So she's got that wrong.

There was a referendum, absolutely right, at the end of the 1980s on whether he should continue, and he lost, and he basically had, but he didn't really want to call the referendum.

He was pressured into calling the referendum by younger officers, by people in politics.

Because it does seem a bit, I was thinking it does seem a bit out of character, this bloodless yet ruthless brute.

And he insists on retaining kind of titles and a kind of, it's like a kind of professor emeritus, yeah, the big hat and all that sort of stuff, absolutely.

So the idea that he said this kind of ultimately kindly man lays down his power and retires to grow cabbages is not quite correct.

I mean, that's not the case at all.

So, I mean, I do think it's probably to, you don't understand what happened with the coup, unless you understand the Cold War context, the immense fear on both sides of something worse.

And, you know, there will be people in Chile right to this day.

There are lots of people in Chile to this day who say, oh, Pinochet saved us from Marxism.

Well, so this guy who is ahead in the polls, we've got this episode talking about.

Yeah, cast, exactly.

There are lots of people who would, so I think it's perhaps too, it's a little bit like that thing about thinking about the Americans as the omnipotent puppet masters is a little, it's easy to think, oh, everybody in Chile was actually a folk music aficionado who loved nothing more than free milk.

But actually there are loads of people who are horrified by I.N. Dayan.

Of course, I mean, that's the fascination of history and how it can shade into politics.

I think, yes, exactly, that you're, to me, not to a lot of historians on Twitter,

I think it's fair to say, but to me, one of the central aspects of being a scholar of history is trying to put aside your own political prejudices rather than just blindly indulging them.

On Pinochet, I think that's only one thing that occurred to me, Tom, when I was preparing this podcast, which is you talked in the first episode about Costa Rica, comparing Costa Rica.

Individuals do have choices.

So Costa Rica, we talked about the Civil War of the 1940s and this guy, Don Pepe,

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

who won power and he abolished the military.
And then he actually turned out to be a tremendous fellow.
He was about two feet tall, wasn't he?
And he was foiling hijacks and just doing all kinds of good things.
Pinochet didn't have to electrocute all those people.
He'd taken power.
He didn't have to keep killing them.
He didn't have to have the caravan of death.
He didn't have to do all those things.
He had a choice.
And actually, you can have military coups and authoritarian regimes that are,
some that are better than others.
And the regime of General Pinochet himself is very corrupt.
He amassed an enormous fortune with it and his family, billions and billions of dollars.
And the continuation of the machinery of repression, I would argue, was totally unnecessary.
And so, I think an attempt to sort of rehabilitate him and to say,
I think that it found us on those facts.
I suppose, I mean, there's an element of Macbeth, isn't there?
I am in blood, stepped in so far that should I wade no more,
returning were as tedious as goer that once you've,
once you start removing your predecessor and murdering people,
the murdering just has to carry on.
Because otherwise, you're worried that you're going to be toppled.
I think there's a huge element to that.
I think the extraordinary thing is that he'd lived so long,
you know, to late middle age, and he hadn't killed anybody or executed anybody.
And then, when he has the chance, he turns out to be so savage.
I think that's the remarkable thing.
You know, he's not Stalin.
He hasn't been a gangster as a boy or hadn't been involved in revolutionary organisations.
He's just been a boring, institutionalised kind of officer.
And then he has this chance and he seizes it.
But maybe that makes him more chilling.
I mean, more kind of frightening.
The idea that a dull, functionary can suddenly start
throwing people out of airplanes and things.
Of course.
He reminds me of General Franco, another very boring man who turns out to be
just, you know, very bloodthirsty.
And again, a man about whom people have very, very strong and polarised opinions,
because there would be some people who say,
oh, dominate beating up on General Franco, shocking wokery.
General Franco actually saved Spain.

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

I don't think there are that many, though, now who would?

General Franco.

Maybe people at the spectator.

Because Franco is seen as a fascist.

And to be seen as a fascist puts you beyond the pale.

But Pinochet perhaps is seen as a, I don't know, a free marketeer.

I'm not saying that it's true.

I have no way of knowing it.

Pinochet is much closer to Franco than he is to Margaret Thatcher, I would say.

I mean, there's a point actually in the early 1980s, Tom,

just on the Margaret Thatcher thing.

I mean, it's unusual that we do a podcast where I haven't spoken up for Mrs. Thatcher in some way, because I do think sometimes she gets a bit of an unfair press.

But just on this, there's a point where she has a meeting actually,

not with a Chilean minister, but with an Argentine minister.

And they say, oh, our economic experiment, you know, works really well.

And when people complain about unemployment and stuff,

we just electrocute them and it's fine.

And she says, I don't approve of these methods at all.

And she actually writes to Friedrich Hayek,

the economist who's one of the kind of founding fathers of this revolution, says,

these are not methods that we would want to copy in Britain.

So there you go.

Okay. Well, on that pro-factorite note, I think we should say as to the way you go.

Thank you very much for listening.

Thank you for a brilliant account of this seismic episode in Latin American history.

And in fact, I mean, it's a seismic, it's globally, it's a seismic event.

It still continues to reverberate to this day.

So thank you very much for listening.

Adios.

Today's international system is like a ship adrift during a pandemic.

With the captain lost to the virus and the most capable and conscientious members of the crew, self-isolating in their cabins,

the deck is now teeming with contagious megalomaniacs.

Rather than collaborate, each thinks they know how to steer the ship better than the admirals.

Plato envisioned such a scenario in the Republic.

He warned that true democracy would lead to populism.

Contempt for experts would ensue,

resulting in short-sighted and reversal-prone approaches to policy formation.

He also warned that once this point was reached,

it would be nearly impossible to put the genie back in the bottle.

Precisely at the time when we need the most competent people in charge

to navigate our world through the storms swirling around us,

[Transcript] The Rest Is History / 371. The 1973 Chilean Coup: General Pinochet Seizes Power

we seem to be ending up with more and more leaders who actively thrive on chaos.

We have entered an era of global enduring disorder.

And this is the podcast which explains why.

I'm Jason Paak, author of *Libya and the Global Enduring Disorder*.

And let me tell you, I've witnessed some disorder in my day.

I had a Fulbright scholarship in Syria during the early 2000s.

You know, it was a good run. I only managed to get kidnapped twice.

And over the last two decades, I've seen firsthand how decisions made in Moscow,

London, and Washington have deliberately fostered what I termed the Global Enduring Disorder.

This is my concept that we're living through a unique era of self-perpetuating disorder.

Yeah, quite right.

And this is Alex Hall Hall, my illustrious co-host on this journey.

Hi, Jason.

Alex has steered a fair few vessels in her day,

for example, as British ambassador to Georgia,

all the way until the day when she finally jumped ship,

unwilling to peddle Boris Johnson's Brexit lies.

It's great to be here, and your metaphor of the ship is a perfect one,

because I have to say, I have been feeling increasingly seasick about where the world is headed.

And so this is the Disorder podcast, where we examine our new historic era,

one characterized by deliberate disorder and a lack of coherent international coordination.

Here, we'll look at issues like climate change, tax havens, or unregulated cyberspace.

Speaking to people at the forefront of Western policymaking, to figure out,

why are the major world powers no longer working effectively to solve global problems?

How did we get to here, and what can we do to foster order?

If you too would like to live in an orderly world,

search Disorder wherever you get your podcasts.

Launching now from Goalhanger.