Session 11: The Breakdown of Chilean Democracy

Handout: Expanded Chronology of the Fall of Salvador Allende

Campaign 1970
Christian Democrats nominate leftist, ensuring centrist support for Alessandri; Alessandri’s television debate appearance reinforces impression of age (74); Allende promises collegial government within UP

September 4, 1970
Allende wins election with 36.3% of vote; Alessandri gets 35%; Radomiro Tomic gets 27.8%

October 22, 1970
General René Schneider wounded in botched kidnapping; later dies

October 25, 1970
Congress confirms Allende, 153-35

November 2, 1970
Allende takes office

January 9, 1971
Statute of Guarantees added to Constitution

March 4, 1971
Municipal elections reveal countrywide split between UP and Opposition (49.7% vs. 48%)

May 10, 1971
CD’s announce policy of “constructive opposition”

May 21, 1971
Allende’s “Chilean Way” speech offers nationalization of large enterprises, maintenance of private small and medium-size businesses; respect for rule of law

June-July 1971
CD-UP relationship sour; “government by legerdemain”

June 8, 1971
Former Vice President Edmundo Pérez Zújovic murdered by leftist extremists of Vanguardia Organizada del Pueblo; suspects subsequently killed in shoot-out

July 11, 1971
Congress unanimously approves UP proposal for nationalization of copper companies

July 18, 1971
By-election in Valparaiso; CD and UP essentially tie; UP has about 50% of electorate

July 28, 1971
Chilean government declares that copper companies’ profits have been “excessive”; no compensation will be paid for their expropriation

September 10, 1971
Fidel Castro begins 10-day visit

September 22, 1971
Christian Democrats formally break with UP

November 1971
Chile suspends intergovernmental debt payments

December 1971
Congress impeaches Interior Minister Tohá for failing to investigate MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left)

December 1, 1971
March of Empty Pots; 5,000 women dispersed with tear gas; street skirmishes between leftist and rightist youth

December 2, 1971
Allende declares state of emergency in Santiago province

December 3, 1971
Regional military commander, General Augusto Pinochet, imposes curfew

1972-1973
Inflation begins; shortages become more pronounced; violence increases, especially in chaotic countryside where MIR was seizing land

Emergence of focos, campamentos, and cordones, where police did not go

1972
Investment falls, deficit balloons to 40% of government spending in

Use of the materials should be cited as follows: Chappell Lawson, MIT OpenCourseWare (http://ocw.mit.edu/index.html) course materials for 17.55J/21A.430J/21F.084J (Introduction to Latin American Studies, Fall 2006), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, downloaded on [Insert Date].
January 1972  
Allende tries to move toward center but is thwarted by leftists within his own coalition; state development company buys private companies’ shares; use of 1932 decree to requisition factories

January 6, 1972  
Tohá suspended; reappointed to Defense; MIR credibly linked to Presidential Guard

January 16, 1972  
Two UP defeats in by-elections

January 19, 1972  
Nixon administration links debt repayment and expropriation; U.S. opposes multilateral development loans

January 28, 1972  
Allende reshuffles cabinet

February 7, 1972  
Allende proposes single UP list; CDs join forces with Nationalists; At UP conference, Socialists advocate attacking material base of opposition; Communists advocate suppression of MIR and dialogue with Christian Democrats

March 1972  
Allende vetoes opposition legislation designed to regulate requisitions

May 1972  
Generals warn that inflation and production declines jeopardize national defense

May 27, 1972  
University Rector Edgardo Boeninger, a CD, is reelected after months of Marxist attempts to unseat him and continuous protests

May-June, 1972  
Leftists allegedly rig elections for leadership of the CUT (workers’ confederation)

June 2, 1972  
Military Minister of Mining forced out by arm because he had been required to co-sign decrees of insistence

June 1972  
Negotiations over nationalizations break down; polarization increases; constitutional solution seems increasingly unlikely

June 1972  
Another UP leadership conference at Lo Curro

Communist position on economic policy prevails; Vuskovic fired

Too little, too late; economy continues to tank

UP unwilling to impose austerity measures

July 15, 1972  
CUT election results announced; Communists declared winner; No agreement with CDs

July 27, 1972  
Congress impeaches Interior Minister del Canto after he supervises the illegal receipt of small arms from Cuba

August 21, 1972  
Nation-wide strike against government by small businessmen

Official attempts to open shops lead to street skirmishes

State of emergency declared in Santiago

August 30, 1972  
State of emergency in Concepción

September 2, 1972  
Allende denounces foiled coup attempt

Oct.-Nov. 1972  
Allende very sick for ten days; apparently suffers a heart attack

October 9, 1972  
Partial truckers’ strike begins

October 10, 1972  
Vilarín arrested

October 11, 1972  
Full-scale truckers’ strike; joined by other guilds

October 19, 1972  
Government requisitions last private wholesale distribution company

October 27, 1972  
Tanks called out in Santiago to maintain order

October 31, 1972  
Allende’s cabinet resigns to give him a free hand

Allende promulgates strict arms control law

November 2, 1972  
Allende brings senior military officers into cabinet

Prats is Minister of Interior; promises restoration of normality in four days

November 5, 1972  
Truckers’ strike ends; Prats promises no nationalization
Martial law lifted in 21 provinces; Normality returns; expropriations slow, Papalera allowed to raise prices

Nov.-Dec. 1972
Allende travels to UN, USSR, elsewhere

December 16, 1973
Naval cadets at graduation ceremony boo Allende

December 1972
MAPU begins training with arms

January 10, 1973
Minister of Economy announces rationing system for 30 basic food items

Opposition outraged; claims it will be used like Cuban rationing
Admiral Huerta resigns as Minister of Public Works in protest

January 30, 1973
Education Minister Jorge Tapia announces unified national curriculum
Catholic hierarchy and CDs go nuts
For the first time, a large number of officers express public disagreement

Minister agrees to “postpone” program

Jan-Feb 1973
Congressional campaign; limited violence; fairly clean
Opposition theme is to gain 2/3 in both houses, override vetoes, impeach,
and convict the president; essentially impossible
UP claims it will win more than in 1970

March 4, 1973
Congressional elections; illiterates vote for first time
Opposition wins 56%, but not enough to impeach Allende
UP gains 2 seats in Senate and 6 in House; Radicals disappear
Viewed as UP victory; in practice, offers no political solution
Male vote splits 50-50; women vote heavily for opposition
Eduardo Frei assumes presidency of Senate
Allende moves toward center, but does not fully break with Altamirano or Almeyda

CDs insist on definition of nationalization; threaten declaration of illegality; Military present Allende with fourteen conditions for continued participation

March 26, 1973
Supreme Court decries government illegalities

March 27, 1973
Military withdraws from cabinet

April-June 1973
Parties become less relevant
Congress impeaches four Cabinet officers
Gremios, unions, extremists, and military become key players
Leftist paramilitary activity registers “quantum jump”
Communists arm their militia; Eastern Bloc guns arrive
Gremios consolidate organization and cultivate ties to military
Leftist infiltration of armed services
Coup plotting begins in earnest among general officers of the army
Air Force last to go; becomes convinced in June
Military carries out repeated arms searches against leftists

May 6, 1973
Patría y Libertad leader calls for new government
Group active in arms running and links to armed forces
Most leaders arrested or exiled during summer

May 15, 1973
Allende promulgates decree implementing the portions of the nationalization agreement he accepts

May 19, 1973
Copper workers strike against government
Labor violence, street fights, bombings in Santiago, etc.
Communist position changes to anticipating armed confrontation
Allende speaks of “chess game” with military to buy time

June 1973
Arming of workers and encouragement of People’s Power provokes army

June 9, 1973  Communist Ramona Parra brigade clashes with Air Force unit
First open armed encounter between leftist extremists and military

June 27, 1973  Alejandra Cox incident; Prats weakened

June 29, 1973  Attempted coup (tancazo)
Allende makes ambiguous appeal to popular militias
Workers do not rally in center of Santiago
Main military leaders loyal
Prats literally suppresses the coup single-handedly
Workers seize factories; number taken over jumps from 282 to 526
Workers take full control of cordones and expel CDs and police

June 30, 1973  General officers representing heads of all services meet; agree to draft memorandum for Allende outlining objections and conditions for remaining in government

July 2, 1973  Copper miners return to work; Inter-service memo presented to Allende, Prats, and Tohá; Comptroller refuses to register Allende’s partial veto of nationalization law

July 3, 1973  Allende rejects military conditions; forms all-civilian cabinet

July 4, 1973  Pinochet changes contingency plans to more overt, aggressive strategy

July 10, 1973  Navy and Air Force heads begin coup planning
Prats replaces Tohá as Defense Minister
Allende vacillates on military issue

July 19, 1973  MIR and Patria y Libertad both call for armed conflict
July 25, 1973  Truckers launch new strike; government tries to break strike but fails after ten days

July 27, 1973  Allende’s naval aide-de-camp killed
CDs give Allende the same list the military does

July 30, 1973  Cuban vice prime minister and secret police chief arrive in capital

August 3, 1973  CD and UP talks break down again

August 7, 1973  Mutinous plot in Navy reveals institutional corrosion

August 9, 1973  New cabinet with substantial military representation fails to end truckers’ strike; successive ultimata

August 13, 1973  Patria y Libertad dynamites power line, blocking Allende’s speech

August 17, 1973  Institutional crisis in Air Force over resignation of General/Minister Ruiz;

Gustavo Leigh takes over as head of Air Force; Prats: a mediocre coup plotter replaced with a smart, highly ambitious one

August 21, 1973  Wives of officers protest in front of Prats’ house

August 22, 1973  General officers, including Pinochet, declare loyalty to Prats
Council of Generals convenes and votes Prats out of Chamber of Deputies declares the government outside the law; vote against Allende is 81 to 45 in Chamber

August 23, 1973  Prats resigns as Defense Minister; Letelier appointed as Defense Minister;
Pinochet takes over as head of armed forces; all officers deciding what to do -- act or be purged; Pinochet waits until all heads of services have lined up behind a coup

August 25, 1973  Patricio Alwyn calls for cabinet of 6+ military officers (“white coup”)
August 28, 1973  Allende’s eighth cabinet has 4 military officers
Officers indicate that agreement with CDs will forestall coup
Cardinal Silva also requests agreement
Almost total paralysis of economic activity in some parts of country
Council of Army Generals meets continuously; memos discuss coup
August 29, 1973  Army versus leftists; soldier killed; many arrests and daily arms searches
September 1973  Rightist sabotage
Crisis in Navy over who will be in command; Navy openly rebellious
Government devalues currency 40%
Executive Committee of UP declares itself in solidarity with naval mutineers CDs vow to impeach all ministers; Shopkeepers strike in solidarity with truckers and professionals; Melees in Santiago, many wounded; Lots of coup plotting; carabinero generals enter coup plotting; Prats recommends Allende fire 5-6 generals; Allende announces that there is only enough flour for 3-4 days; Allende plans to call plebiscite on his remaining in office; speech set for 10th
September 7, 1973  Army (except Pinochet) endorses coup on 10th or 11th
Six-hour disastrous meeting between President and Merino
September 8, 1973  Merino endorses coup
September 9, 1973  Altamirano makes inflammatory speech; junior carabinero generals favor coup; Merino, Leigh, & Pinochet sign pledge to launch coup on the 11th
September 10, 1973  Allende pushes speech back
September 11, 1973  Institutional coup d’état
Navy seizes Valparaíso rapidly; Concepción falls by 9 a.m.
Military has disrupted leftist communication
Air Force requests Allende’s resignation and offers safe passage
Allende refuses to resign, but also refuses to call for revolution
Allende requests workers stay at their posts and be ready
Junta proclaims only return of institutionality; no class bias
Troops advance on La Moneda; several killed by leftist snipers
Carabineros split, but most refuse to fight for Allende
Some resistance within military, but not chain of command mostly intact
Navy offers president safe passage
Junta gives 11 a.m. deadline
Allende signals willingness to resign, but insists officers come to him;
Junta suggests Allende come to them at Ministry of Defense
Continuing negotiations over surrender fail
La Moneda bombed; tanks surround palace and fire tear gas, then invade
Allende kills himself; others leave, surrender, or are killed
Fighting at factories, universities, etc, especially Valparaíso
UP supporters and others taken to National Stadium
Martial law and strict curfew imposed; only scattered resistance
3,000-10,000 die; many of them executed
Hundreds murdered in National Stadium, where 7,000 detained
Widespread repression but economic situation rapidly returns to normal 10,000 Chileans flee country claiming asylum