

**Fear, Ideology, and Propaganda: A Study of the Chilean Media
during the Summer of 1973**

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of History
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

Spring 2024

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Brendan Koebke for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of History to be taken in June 2024

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On September 11th, 1973, a coup d'état installed General Augusto Pinochet as leader of the South American nation of Chile. For the next seventeen years, he ruled the country under a brutal dictatorship. The coup marked the end of the presidency of Salvador Allende, the first democratically elected socialist in the Americas. This thesis aims to analyze print media coverage throughout the one hundred days before the coup d'état that installed Pinochet. By analyzing the themes, messaging, symbolism, and visual choices of these newspapers spanning the political spectrum, the goal is to discern the political implications of this largely polarized media ecosystem. Ultimately, I have determined through my analysis that if we accept the circumstantial evidence that the media molded public opinion, potent thematic elements, symbolism, and certain styles of messaging most likely cumulatively worked to exacerbate pre-existing inflamed tensions in Chile, destabilized the foundations of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government, and deepened political divides - all of which played a crucial role in the events of September 11th, 1973. Given the deep, lasting scar that Pinochet's regime has left on Chile and the Chilean people, it is all the more important to understand what led to this violent regime change.

Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank my primary thesis advisor, Dr. Reuben Zahler. His advice and assistance throughout the process of researching, drafting, and defending this thesis have been absolutely indispensable. Further, I thank Professor Carlos Aguirre, without whom the idea for this thesis would not have existed. Thanks are in store for my Clark Honors College advisor, Professor Lisa Wolverton. Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family for supporting me through this process - I love and appreciate you all.

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Introduction

September 11th, 1973. As bombs rained down upon La Moneda, the presidential palace in central Santiago, Salvador Allende delivered his last speech. Just moments later, he lay dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Upon his death, a military junta led by General Augusto Pinochet assumed power, kicking off a brutal seventeen-year dictatorship - one which would come to be characterized by violent repression, forced “disappearances,” and the elimination of dissidents. Among the many factors that led to the coup, there is significant circumstantial evidence that the Chilean mass media, mainly consisting of newspapers and radio transmissions, played an imperative role in instigating political unrest. This thesis aims to analyze the messaging, themes, and symbolism present in Chilean print media during the Summer of 1973 and explore what these cumulatively reveal about the goals of differing media outlets. Furthermore, this thesis will address the extent to which print media played a role in instigating the conditions necessary for a coup d’etat.

Significance

Salvador Allende was the first socialist ever democratically elected in Latin America. On September 11th, 1973, a democratically elected government, one which has been installed through established constitutional means, was overthrown with the explicit aid of foreign governments. In its place, Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship committed a litany of human rights abuses, torturing tens of thousands of people, unjustly detaining a similar number, and executing at the very least 1,200. The scar left on Chile by the overthrow of a popularly elected president makes it all the more important to understand what happened, and though a complex web of

factors each played a role in instigating the coup and fomenting the conditions necessary for it, there exists strong evidence that a critical slice of what went into the coup was negative media coverage of Allende and his government. Thus, understanding precisely the messages and thematic elements of prominent newspapers during the lead-up to the coup can help shed light on what led to this trying period of world history.

Media polarization is both a symptom and a causal factor in the decay of democracies. In Chile, this is particularly evident. A palpable dissonance exists between media outlets with distinct ideologies throughout the lead-up to Pinochet's coup. Though they often discuss similar events, the tone, words, and symbols frequently differ. One does not have to look far to recognize modern parallels. Throughout the global media infrastructure, it is clear that a distinct tension exists between what exactly reality is and what fake news is. Though the interconnected nature of social media has introduced an entirely new element to this, it is still wise to remember the words of George Santayana, noted philosopher and poet; *those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*. Understanding what occurred in the past is beneficial to help best prepare and understand the future. Therefore, the study of the Chilean media at this particular time is immensely valuable, as it helps to illustrate the dangers of media polarization and educates people on how to recognize it.

Methodology

Primary source material will guide the methodology of this thesis. Specifically, front-page stories, editorials, and opinion pieces published by Chilean newspapers throughout the Summer of 1973 played a crucial role. Given the available information, both front-page news

stories and selected editorials will be analyzed. In these, persistent themes, messages, and symbols will be discussed and analyzed, and their political implications will be addressed. Second-hand source materials, such as non-contemporaneous books and articles, will provide historical background, context, and some themes and concepts.

Scholarship

Generally, scholars situate the 1973 Coup in Chile within the broader context of the Cold War (emphasizing the United States' role in instigating the conditions for a coup). Both Chilean and non-Chilean scholarship alike tend to emphasize the factor of foreign involvement, and for good cause. All of this is essential to understanding the story of September 11th. It is undoubtedly clear the Cold War and the vehement anti-communist sentiment that emerged from it profoundly influenced the events in Chile in 1973. It is evident that the United States government, in particular the CIA, played an outsized role in supporting Pinochet and helped to create an environment favorable to a coup. However, what is lost in this scholarship is the issue of Chilean agency. Framing the story in the context of an enormous international battle between the Soviet Union and the United States tends to minimize the role of Chileans themselves, painting them as unwitting pawns in a broader conflict.

However, some scholarship, particularly work done by Chilean authors, has emphasized the Chilean media and its role in inflaming political tensions during the Allende administration. A few scholars are of particular note here. Claudia Mellado, a Chilean professor of journalism at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile, has written about the role of the press in shaping political and civil society. Manuel Antonio Garretón, a noted Chilean sociologist who

lived through the Allende administration and the coup, has also written on the role of the media in molding public opinion. Hernan Uribe, who, as of his last accessible publication, was a professor at Universidad de la República (University of the Republic) in neighboring Uruguay, has discussed at length the Chilean media ecosystem during the 1960s and '70s and the dysfunction surrounding it. Margaret Power, an American professor of Latin American history, is a scholar who deserves a notable mention. Though her work primarily focuses on the role of right-wing Chilean women in exacerbating tension in the 1960s and 1970s, her work nonetheless discusses in detail the role the media occupied in the lead-up to September 11th. Despite the valuable work done by scholars such as those mentioned above, the role of Chilean media remains an aspect of the 1973 Chilean Coup which receives relatively little attention. Therefore, one of the primary aims of my thesis will be to emphasize the role of Chileans in this event, focusing nearly exclusively on first-hand Chilean sources and helping shine a light on a relatively underrepresented story.

Historical Background: 1818-1973

Throughout its history, Chile has operated as an anomaly within the broader context of Latin America. Though Chile and the rest of Latin America indeed share cultural similarities, Chile differs markedly from its neighbors, most prominently through its history of political stability. But, to discuss this, Chile's geography must be analyzed - arguably one of the critical factors in the state's uniqueness. To the North lies the Atacama Desert, a barrier that divides Chile from Peru; to the West lies the Pacific Ocean; to the East lies the formidable Andes Mountain range; and to its South lies the Arctic. Essentially severed from its neighbors, the area now comprising Chile has remained largely centralized, dating back to colonization. This centralization has played a key role in its relative stability.

Before European colonization of the Americas, what was to become Chile was occupied by many native peoples; chief among these were the Mapuche people, a diverse group of indigenous peoples sharing a common cultural strand. Their stories tell of multiple attempts at encroachment on the part of the Incan Empire, which the Mapuche people were able to defend against, partly due to the harsh Geography towards the North. They remained the most prominent non-European people in Chile until 1520, when Ferdinand Magellan became the first European to set foot on the land. From here, as was the case throughout South America, European powers scrambled to colonize, with genuine efforts at colonization seriously picking up around 1540 under the Spanish. Though they faced fierce resistance from the Mapuche and other colonizing forces, namely the English, the Spanish consolidated influence in the area, as what was to become Chile became a part of the Spanish Empire. Colonization was a drawn-out process, as

the Spanish faced a myriad of Mapuche insurrections, but Chile eventually became a Spanish colony.

In the early 1800s, the Spanish king, Ferdinand VII, was dethroned by Napoleon's army as they swept across Europe, and Napoleon installed his brother in Ferdinand's place. In response to both this and a series of domestic crises, calls for independence proliferated throughout Chile.¹ On September 18th, 1810, a group of colonists declared a junta to create an independent Chilean government. Under the leadership of Bernardo O'Higgins - now considered the father of independent Chile - the independence movement ultimately proved successful by 1818. Eventually, international powers, including the Spanish, formally recognized Chile, and it had secured a good portion of its modern territory by the turn of the century. Furthermore, Chile would face many internal and international conflicts, multiple civil conflicts, and a war with Peru and Bolivia concerning territorial disputes. Though these conflicts seem to contradict Chile's reputation as a stable, established nation, it should be noted that the sheer amount of conflict was markedly less than that of its neighbors. The Chilean Civil War of 1891 is of tremendous importance, as it helped lay the foundation for the relatively stable democratic principles that would come to define Chile throughout the 20th century.²

After the Civil War of 1891, an era of Chilean history known as the parliamentary era began. In this era, the political divisions of modern Chile began to crystallize, though the electoral system was largely inefficient and needed drastic reform. In 1925, Arturo Alessandri, the President of Chile, who lost that position in a coup merely a year earlier, encouraged the signing of a new constitution. Despite a series of political crises, namely a quasi-dictatorship

¹ William F. Sater "History of Chile from the Conquest to Arturo Alessandri." *The History Teacher* 14, no. 3 (1981): 327-39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/493413>.

² *Ibid.*

established in 1927 under General Carlos Ibanez, the constitution enacted in 1925 remained strong.³ They proved to be relatively successful in the stabilization of Chilean society. That being said, the stability of Chile was relative to the rest of Latin America. In no way was Chilean society untainted by instability; for example, the period after the Great Depression was one of profound instability, in which power regularly switched hands, from the aforementioned dictatorship under Ibanez to a civilian-instigated socialist government in the early 1930s. This is not to mention the profound inequality in Chile at the time. Lower-class Chileans, primarily from indigenous backgrounds, occupied a social role far lower than the middle and upper classes, which descendants of Europeans dominated. Concurrently, many of the political divisions that would come to define Chilean political culture started to become ingrained. By the 1960s and 1970s, right-wing Chileans were defined by a laissez-faire approach to government and a heavy emphasis on business. On the other hand, left-wing Chileans would span a broad ideological spectrum, ranging from left-leaning liberals, who favored mild economic reform, all the way to hardened communists, who desired to see a Soviet-style revolution in Chile.⁴

During these events, a little-known Marxist physician named Salvador Allende won a congressional seat in Valparaíso. Allende slowly worked his way up the ladder, holding virtually every imaginable governmental office, including senator, member of the chamber of deputies, member of the cabinet, and president of the senate. Allende, a self-described socialist, ran for the presidency unsuccessfully in 1952, 1958, and 1964. However, his commitment to leading Chile never wavered, as he decided to run in his fourth straight election in 1970. Amidst turbulent sociopolitical change, most crucially the broader movement toward the left occurring throughout

³ Paul W. Drake “History of Chile, 1920-1980.” *The History Teacher* 14, no. 3 (1981): 341–47.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/493414>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

South America - best exemplified by the Cuban revolution - the stage was set for him to win potentially.

The 1970 Election has proven to be one of the most consequential in Chilean history, as it polarized the nation and set it on the path toward forceful regime change. This election was a three-way contest between Salvador Allende of the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) party, Radomiro Tomic of the Christian Democratic Party, and Jorge Alessandri, a former independent president and the son of Arturo Alessandri. This election ended up as an extraordinarily bitterly fought contest, as the tenor of the election took on the role of broader Cold War rhetoric. In large part, this is because of the optics of the election of Allende. The peaceful, democratic election of a Marxist in the Americas seemed to the United States in particular to be a significant danger, seeing as the so-called domino theory - which posits that as one country becomes communist, its neighboring countries do so too - was one of the dominant schools of thought in Cold War politics. This is particularly potent when considering that the aftershocks of the Cuban Revolution still reverberated throughout the Americas in the form of sporadic guerrilla movements.

Furthermore, the vitriolic tone of this election was due to the massive amount of international influence and money poured into the respective campaigns. The Central Intelligence Agency of the United States worked to funnel money towards anti-Allende propaganda, working with such organizations as El Mercurio to portray Allende as a violent radical. On the other hand, the KGB, the Soviet Union's intelligence agency, sent roughly 450,000 dollars total to Allende and his campaign at his personal behest.⁵ This information was known to foreign intelligence agencies, and served to amplify the desire on the part of the United

⁵Jack Devine. "What Really Happened in Chile: The CIA, the Coup Against Allende, and the Rise of Pinochet." *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 4 (2014): 26–35.

States to halt Allende's election. International observers predicted that the election would be tight, and it certainly was. Once people tallied the votes, no single candidate had gained a majority, and a mere 1% separated the two leading vote-getters, Allende and Alessandri - in that order. Per Chilean law, Congress needed to resolve the election, which now had become a globally watched election.

All the while, the effort to halt Allende's election held steadfast. Moving beyond mere propaganda campaigns, right-wing Chileans, along with the CIA, began to actively work to foment a coup. The first target of the coup plotters was the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army, Rene Schneider. Schneider was an avowed "constitutionalist" - insofar as he believed that political and military matters should be kept entirely distinct. This position made him the enemy of those who desired to see a military-led coup d'etat, and he thus became a target. In a botched kidnapping attempt just days before the congressional vote, a group of Chilean soldiers killed Schneider. The blowback from this incident had the opposite of its intended effect, consolidating support for Allende and eventually leading to his confirmation as the next president of Chile.⁶

Allende's primary goal as president was establishing a so-called "Chilean way to socialism." This goal included massive land redistribution programs, boosting literacy, altering the healthcare system, and nationalizing vital industries, most notably Chile's then-largest export - copper. Crucially, Allende believed in a gradual, moderate path toward a socialist society. He believed that working within the established constitutional system of Chile was more than feasible in achieving an actual socialist society. However, this method was opposed by many within Allende's party, who viewed his methods as too moderate, wanting a violent revolution to install a communist society, similar to what had occurred in the Soviet Union and Cuba. On the

⁶ Mark T. Hove. "The Arbenz Factor: Salvador Allende, U.S.-Chilean Relations, and the 1954 U.S. Intervention in Guatemala." *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 4 (2007): 623-63.

other hand, many moderate and right-wing Chileans viewed his policies as far too radical, thus effectively putting Allende between a rock and a hard place.

Despite this, Allende's policies proved somewhat successful, at least for the first year or so. Chile's inflation went down, unemployment went down, and GDP went up during the first year of the Allende administration. However, this would be short-lived, as severe hyperinflation hit Chile in earnest in 1972. In part due to a series of increases in wages by Allende and drastically increased government spending, inflation began to spiral out of control, with the rate in 1973 well exceeding 300%.

Though some scholars cite short-sighted policy initiatives as the reason behind some of his administration's failings, the impact of foreign involvement was crucial in denigrating Allende's government. Under Allende, the United States, which had previously been a significant financial supporter of Chile, virtually cut off all aid. According to Peter A. Goldberg, a prominent political scientist, "under previous Chilean administrations, the country had received an average of \$220 million in credits; by the middle of 1973, they had dropped to about \$30 million. In an already faltering economy strangled by hyperinflation, the lack of foreign investment was bound to be catastrophic. Curiously, the United States did not cut off all foreign aid, as the armed forces continued to receive substantial amounts of financial aid, with more money "covertly funneled some \$8 million into the hands of striking Chilean truckers and opponents of the government." Exacerbating this crisis, the Soviet Union proceeded to taper off their aid, in part due to their own economic woes. Regardless of how the myriad of interwoven economic crises in Chile came about, they nonetheless posed a significant threat to the security of Allende's administration.⁷ By June of 1973, Allende faced a pressure point in his tenure, with

⁷ Peter A Goldberg.. "The Politics of the Allende Overthrow in Chile." *Political Science Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (1975): 93–116.

growing encroachment from the Chilean military, right-wing paramilitary organizations, opponents to his left, and international foes. This makes for an interesting juxtaposition with the aforementioned reputation of Chile, that of a healthy, stable democracy. Regardless, though this aids in building a solid political context for the situation in Chile as of 1973, it is still necessary to understand the history of Chilean media.

History of the Media

Chilean Media has its roots in the inception of Chilean independence. Under the king, there was no free press allowed, but post-independence, the government began to explore the possibility of founding a paper.⁸ At this point, a series of newspapers popped up throughout Chile. In 1827, a man named Pedro Felix Vicuna founded a small newspaper in Valparaíso named El Mercurio. El Mercurio quickly expanded before being purchased by the Edwards family in 1880. The family-owned El Mercurio throughout the 20th century and continues to do so. Throughout the 19th century, Chile was embroiled in a series of bitter partisan conflicts, which led to civil wars. During this period, the press was crucial in providing information and molding opinions. However, due to technological limitations, the scope of the media was much narrower than what it would come to be in the 20th century. As technology developed and the press reached more areas of the country, the influence of the media grew. By the 20th century, the Chilean press began to reflect the relative political stability throughout Chile, and a diverse and relatively free press rapidly expanded.

Particularly in the period following World War II, amidst a broad wave of democratization and implementation of Western ideals, the Chilean media gained a great degree

⁸ Ramon Ponce and Ralph Casey (1946). The Chilean Press: Past and Present. *Journalism Quarterly*, 23(2), 221-223.

of latitude from the government to express themselves politically. Though this continued the tradition of a free press, which had been established beforehand, political polarization became a pertinent issue. Polarization gradually accelerated as specific outlets began to ally themselves with political factions and movements. By the 1970s, Chilean media had evolved into what has been termed a polarized pluralist system, defined by an extraordinarily polarized media ecosystem associated with partisan viewpoints.⁹ It was entirely normal for newspapers to be partisan in at least some capacity, whether overt or ambiguous. This helps to lay the stage for a thorough analysis of the impact of the Chilean media, but it remains crucial to understand which newspapers were most prominent during the Summer of 1973.

The Most Important Sources

As stated earlier, primary source analysis will form the backbone of this thesis, with six newspapers in particular being essential to this effort. Cumulatively, right-wing news outlets dominated the media ecosystem. During the Allende years, the total daily circulation of left-wing newspapers, primarily associated with Unidad Popular - the political party of Salvador Allende, numbered around 312,000. On the other hand, the cumulative circulation of right-wing newspapers - those opposed to Unidad Popular and Allende - numbered at around 541,000.¹⁰

Listed below are the key examples of prominent newspapers and publications under Allende.

- **El Mercurio** is the most widely circulated newspaper in Chile and certainly the most influential. As one of the oldest newspapers in the world, it is considered the national

⁹ Sallie Hughes & Claudia Mellado, (2016). Protest and Accountability without the Press: The Press, Politicians, and Civil Society in Chile.

¹⁰ Rosalind Bresnahan. (2003). The Media and the Neoliberal Transition in Chile: Democratic Promise Unfulfilled. *Latin American Perspectives*, 30(6), 39-68.

newspaper of Chile. Its historical association has been with the center-right, and during the Allende administration, it adopted a firm stance against his government.¹¹

- **La Tercera:** The second biggest newspaper in Chile by circulation and incredibly influential, though not to the same extent as El Mercurio. Similarly to El Mercurio, La Tercera existed firmly on the right wing of the Chilean media and, as such, adopted an anti-Allende stance.¹²
- **La Segunda** is another notable newspaper, but less widely distributed than El Mercurio or La Tercera. La Segunda adopted an extreme anti-Allende stance and was more outwardly against his policies and him personally than the prior two.
- **El Siglo:** The Communist Party of Chile published El Siglo, which scholars generally consider the most influential and widely distributed Chilean newspaper with left-wing associations. However, its circulation pales in comparison to El Mercurio and La Tercera. Following Pinochet's coup, Chilean authorities shuttered El Siglo.¹³
- **Clarín:** Clarín was a tabloid-esque newspaper with strong left-wing associations. Its coverage was less formal than the prior newspapers, dealing with matters beyond politics and news, such as gossip and scandalous stories. It was not as influential or widely published as its fellow left-wing outlet, El Siglo.¹⁴
- **Puro Chile:** Puro Chile was a magazine published solely during the years of the Allende government. It had a youthful, pro-Allende stance, adopted an informal style, and was not widely notable within the political sphere.

¹¹ Peter Kornbluh (2003). *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*. New York: The New Press.

¹² Bresanahan. *The Media and the Neoliberal Transition in Chile: Democratic Promise Unfulfilled*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

These six sources will constitute the majority of the primary sources in this thesis. These come from an online resource entitled “100 días antes del golpe” (The 100 days before the coup), run by the Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez in Santiago. This project consists of front pages, editorials, and cartoons taken from primary Chilean media sources from June 3rd to September 10th, 1973, the 100 days before the September 11th Coup.

Why is this Notable?

The Chilean print media exerted tremendous influence during the early 1970s; for many, newspapers were their sole source of national political news. El Mercurio, for example, had a Sunday circulation of around 340,000.¹⁵ On the left, newspapers such as El Siglo played a crucial role in distributing news, providing a vital lifeline for left-wing Chileans otherwise trapped in a market dominated by center-right to far-right sources after the coup, El Siglo continued discreet circulation.¹⁶ As print media touched the lives of virtually every Chilean, it proved to be crucial in helping to mold public opinion surrounding a myriad of issues. Whether these be specific policies enacted by Salvador Allende, economic crises, or political happenings, how the media presented these stories certainly had influence and was recognized as such.

It is important to note that there is no *direct* evidence that media coverage increased polarization. Addressing the mindset of a society as a whole is an inherently difficult task, as it is impossible to know what exactly was occurring in people’s minds. Opinion polls, which would arguably be the chief way of determining the attitudes of the Chilean public at large, are unavailable at this time. However, despite this, there exists strong circumstantial evidence that

¹⁵ Rex A. Hudson, ed. Chile: A Country Study. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994.

¹⁶ “Freedom of Expression and the Press,” Freedom of Expression and the Public Debate in Chile, accessed March 10, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/chile/Chilerpt-03.htm>.

the media played a role in instigating a coup, and was recognized at the time as an influential means of doing so. Firstly, El Mercurio, a prominent right-wing news outlet, was given direct financial support from the Central Intelligence Agency, with proven knowledge of this in multiple other sectors of the American government. In fact, President Richard Nixon himself personally approved roughly 700,000 dollars of funding towards El Mercurio.¹⁷ The purpose of these funds was to denigrate the government and personal image of Salvador Allende. Therefore, it is clear the United States government believed that to some extent, the Chilean media was influential in molding public opinion. Furthermore, Salvador Allende himself was certainly cognizant of the influence of negative media coverage of his administration. According to CIA documents, Allende was well aware of the negative impact El Mercurio's coverage of him had, and played a role in financially stifling El Mercurio.¹⁸ This does not in and of itself prove that disparate media coverage actively molded opinions, but it certainly lends a strong degree of credence to the notion that it did. Politically active Chileans were similarly aware of the impact of disparate media coverage, again choosing to target El Mercurio, the largest and most visible Chilean newspaper. In 1967, student activists at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile unfurled a banner at the main building of their campus, reading "El Mercurio Miente" (El Mercurio Lies). Though this occurred before Allende's administration, usage of this phrase served as a rallying cry to those on the left, who were aware of the impact El Mercurio's framing of events had on public sentiment.¹⁹ Given these factors, this thesis will assume that these actors were correct, and that the media played a notable role in molding political opinions and the

¹⁷Jack Devine. "What Really Happened in Chile: The CIA, the Coup Against Allende, and the Rise of Pinochet." *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 4 (2014): 26–35.

¹⁸ Kornbluh, (2003). *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*.

¹⁹ Pedro Araya, (2008). *El Mercurio Miente (1967): Siete Notas Sobre Escrituras Expuestas*. *Revista Austral de Ciencias Sociales*.

broader climate. Given this assumption, it is evident that the media played a role in fomenting the conditions necessary for a coup by inflaming political tension and delegitimizing governmental institutions.

Coverage of Domestic Events

Radio Agricultura de Santiago y la Corte Suprema

Radio Agricultura de Santiago (Agriculture Radio of Santiago) was an influential radio station in rural Chile that was explicitly anti-Allende and later supported the armed forces during and after the September coup. Throughout the presidency of Salvador Allende, the station played a consistent role in denigrating both him and his policies, which played into his decision to shutter the station in early June of 1973. Under the leadership of Anibal Palma, then Secretary General of the Government, Radio Agricultura was forcibly closed amidst severe blowback from the right wing of broader Chilean society. However, in response to this move, Hernán Cereceda, a minister on the Court of Appeals of Santiago - and later appointed minister of the Supreme Court by Augusto Pinochet - ordered that the station reopen. The government countered with a succinct message stating that their electrical workers “did not work on weekends.”²⁰

Despite this response, the government eventually reopened Radio Agricultura completely. Cereceda proceeded to prosecute the Secretary General of the Government, Aníbal Palmá, for a myriad of crimes related to the closure of Radio Agricultural, including contempt and “disturbance of possessions.”²¹ Furthermore, the Supreme Court of Chile decided to weigh in on the issue, with the president of the court, Enrique Urrutia, stating that Chile was at a point

²⁰ Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos (2009) Proyecto 100 Entrevistas: Sergio Campos Ulloa. Chile.. (2018), 6.

²¹ El Mercurio, June 7th

of “judicial breakdown.”²² Given the turbulent media ecosystem in Chile during the months preceding Pinochet’s coup, coverage of the incident concerning Radio Agricultura dropped out of coverage in July and August, and the details surrounding the prosecution of Anibal Palma became murkier. What is clear, however, is that Anibal Palma was subsequently imprisoned under Pinochet - though he eventually made it out of Chile, returning in 1984 and eventually dying in 2023.²³

In a June 5th issue, *La Tercera*, a right-wing news outlet that vehemently opposed Allende’s government, discussed Cereceda's decision to reopen Radio Agricultura. They state that the reaction of Cereceda was very much “respectable” and in “accordance with the law.” *La Tercera* proceeded to criticize the executive at large, imploring Allende’s government to recognize that “Chile no es una monarquía” (Chile is not a monarchy). On the front page of *El Mercurio*’s June 6th issue, the words “Reo, Aníbal Palmá” (Criminal, Anibal Palma) are displayed in bold lettering and a message announcing the recommencing of Radio Agricultura transmissions. *El Mercurio* adopted a similar tone to *La Tercera* in its June 7th editorial, explicitly referring to the closure of Radio Agricultura as illegal. Further, *El Mercurio* directly criticized the Popular Unity government, stating that under their rule, a constant “distancing” has occurred between the Chilean state and the law and constitution.

El Siglo, arguably *the* most influential left-wing newspaper in Chile at the time, covers the events surrounding Radio Agricultural in a markedly different manner. In an editorial from June 6th, 1973, titled “Insólitas actitudes del Poder Judicial” (Unusual attitudes of the Judiciary), *El Siglo* excoriated the judicial branch, expressing abject astonishment at the decision by the

²² *La Tercera*, June 5th

²³ José Comas, “Anibal Palma Ex Ministro de Allende, Anuncia Su Regreso a Chile,” *El País*, August 22, 1984, https://elpais.com/diario/1984/08/23/internacional/462060009_850215.html.

Supreme Court to rule against the decision to shutter Radio Agricultura, accusing the station of spreading “false and slanderous information.” On the topic of Aníbal Palmá, El Siglo maintained that he was nothing more than a scapegoat and that his activities in halting Radio Agricultura’s broadcast were entirely within the law, as the station had become a hotbed for lies and sedition. In this piece, El Siglo discussed an incident in which the Court of Appeals for Rancagua released a group of terrorists, which El Siglo viewed as representative of the fascist characteristics of not just the Supreme Court but the entire judiciary system. In no uncertain terms, El Siglo ends the editorial with an accusation against the Supreme Court for spreading fake news and the “propaganda of chaos.”²⁴ The same day, the front page of El Siglo published a statement originating from the Popular Unity party referring to the Supreme Court as “another bastion of the opposition.” To further drive the point home, a June 14th article was published in El Siglo declaring that the Supreme Court “protects fascists.” Throughout the next month, attacks against the Supreme Court are strewn about in El Siglo and Clarin’s coverage. On June 25th, El Siglo covered a “confession” by the President of the Supreme Court stating that they are receiving their salaries along with retirement benefits, which exceeds what is permitted by law.

Though the closure of Radio Agricultura began as a matter distinctly related to the actions of Allende’s government, as the courts became involved, the issue quickly warped into a broader case regarding the judiciary branch. In this case, both left and right-wing media sought to pit the existing branches of the Chilean government against one another. In the case of right-wing media, outlets such as La Tercera and El Mercurio both work to convey the same notion, that the judiciary branch of the Chilean government is a vestige of sanity in a government otherwise held hostage by radicals seeking absolute domination of all branches of governance

²⁴ El Siglo, June 6th

and society. Left-wing media, on the other hand, view the Judiciary Branch as a whole as an enemy, a right-wing agent to denigrate the Allende administration. Given *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera*'s established connection to American-funded propaganda efforts, it is clear that their coverage of the Supreme Court was not solely rooted in an attempt to raise rational concerns, but instead in an effort to denigrate Allende. On one level, the coverage disparity surrounding *Radio Agricultura* reflects the stark chasm between the different sides of Chilean media, illustrating the extent to which the two sides had drifted apart. However, the differing coverage here could have also played a role in exacerbating tensions among the government itself. The media did not just play a role in informing and educating the masses, as they were also influential in politics. As such, the strong denouncements of the judiciary branch in left-wing media and the parallel denouncement of Allende and the executive in right-wing media would have only served to further the political divide in Chile at the time, potentially helping to soften the stance of members of the judiciary towards a potential coup.

Marcha de los Mineros: El Teniente

As has been established, Chile is one of the world's foremost producers of Copper. According to economist John Fleming, as of 1973, "Income from the international sale of (copper) accounts for nearly 51 percent of Chile's foreign exchange earnings and in recent years has financed approximately 16-18 percent of its national budget."²⁵ Salvador Allende made copper production the centerpiece of his various presidential campaigns, with one famous statement of his being that "copper is the wages of Chile."²⁶ Allende was always quick to

²⁵ John Fleming. *The Nationalization of Chile's Large Copper Companies in Contemporary Interstate Relations*, 18 *Vill. L. Rev.* 593 (1973).

²⁶ Johnathan Kandell. "Confronting the Copper Strikers, Allende." *The New York Times*, June 24, 1973.

criticize the Chilean copper industry, which at that point was primarily foreign-dominated. In his estimation, copper production and benefits should have been in the hands of Chileans rather than under the control of multinational corporations. Upon being elected in 1970, Allende quickly transformed the Chilean copper industry, most prominently choosing to nationalize all Chilean copper in 1971. This move resulted in the seizure of foreign-owned and operated copper mines, which sent economic ripples worldwide. This upset both middle-to-upper-class Chileans - many of whom had investments in or ties to the copper industry - and international actors, notably the United States, which had several corporations involved in manufacturing and selling Chilean copper. Beyond these more prominent actors, the ramifications of this move would impact copper workers.

Historically, the workers of Chilean copper mines have been more than adequately compensated for their work, considered by many to be the elites of the blue-collar sector. In fact, copper workers often earned “three to six times the wages of the average industrial workers.”²⁷ Due to a host of conflicting factors, including the stifling of foreign aid by powers such as the United States and Britain, economic decisions made by Minister of Economic Affairs Pedro Vuskovic, and diminishing support from the Soviet Union, inflation in Chile had reached a staggering level.²⁸ In fact, between July 1972 and July 1973, the Consumer Price Index rose by 320%.²⁹ In response to this, Chilean Copper Miners, known as *Mineros*, went on strike in April of 1973, demanding a 41% increase in wages to keep up with the pace of inflation.³⁰ These miners primarily centered around El Teniente (The Lieutenant), a sprawling copper mine in

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Pío García. “LA INFLACION Y EL GOBIERNO DEL PRESIDENTE ALLENDE.” *Problemas Del Desarrollo*, vol. 5, no. 17, 1974, pp. 14–23.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Kandell. “Confronting the Copper Strikers, Allende.”

Central Chile, considered one of the world's largest. From the beginning of the strike, President Allende and his administration dismissed the miners' demands, labeling them as “fascists,” thus implying that their rationale for striking was not valid and that political desires may be the root of their movement - namely to see him removed from office.

Though objective accounts of the events that transpired in June 1973 are difficult to ascertain, it is nonetheless possible to paint a rough narrative of the events concerning the *Marcha de los Mineros*, which is essential to understanding media coverage of the incidents involved. As mentioned, the miners began their strike in early April of 1973, beginning with their demand for a wage increase. Their strike continued for the next two months, contributing to a massive economic crisis that had crippled Chile. By June 14th, the miners decided to orchestrate a march on Santiago, with plans to take the protest outside La Moneda. In response to the strike moving towards Santiago, the government forcibly stopped the protests from entering the city, citing the desire to maintain public order.³¹ In response to this, the miners managed to make their way into the city, at which point left-wing elements associated with *Unidad Popular* and the Communist Party met them. It is unclear as to the extent of this interaction, but given the coverage of the incident, it was at least somewhat confrontational. The conflict had simmered by June 20th, after which there appeared to be minimal physical conflict between the miners and left-wing groups. However, coverage in the media did not simmer to the same extent, as vitriolic coverage of the incident remained prominent in the coming weeks. The strike officially ended on July 2nd, 1973, at a meeting of union leaders conducted in Rancagua, Chile. Despite the dissolution of the official strike, the tension between left-wing Chileans and the miners was palpable and is well-reflected in media coverage of the ordeal.³² Throughout virtually all media

³¹ El Mercurio. Editorial, June 16th

³² “Workers at Giant Chilean Mine End Their 10-week Walkout.” The New York Times, July 2, 1973.

coverage of the miner's strike, one can quite plainly see the differing agendas of certain outlets in Chile, as right-wing media sought to promote the miner's agenda - highlighting their story - while left-wing media essentially sought to denigrate the miners.

The first mention of the miner's strike in the one hundred days before September 11th occurred on June 14th, when both La Tercera and El Mercurio published articles concerning the strike. El Mercurio notes that the miners will march that day in Santiago, while La Tercera elaborated, saying that the miners have been “impeded” on their way into the city. The following day, the two prominent right-wing media outlets both feature prominently stories regarding repression against the miners. El Mercurio's story stated that “with violent police repression, they (the government) stop the miners' march.” Similarly, La Tercera stated that the government attacked the miners with both tanks and bombs. The coverage of the violent repression of the miners' march continues the next day, as El Mercurio's front page reads the following: “Confrontations in Santiago: “Marxist brigades attack the miners.”³³ La Tercera refers to the event as “Terror in Santiago!”³⁴ Throughout the next two days, the incident with the miners is featured quite prominently in both El Mercurio and La Tercera, with the June 18th piece in the former being particularly illustrative of the broad sentiment among right-wing Chileans, noting that the “strike is indefinite, impressive solidarity with miners.” Throughout the weeks, El Mercurio, in particular, would call attention back to the miner's strike, with one article from July 7th calling attention to the situation of “147 fired miners.”

Though left-wing sources remained largely silent on the miner's strike throughout early June, and by June 16th, El Siglo made the first mention of their activities. On their front page, El Siglo referred to the “Miners” - with an emphasis on the quotation marks - as snobs and thugs. A

³³ El Mercurio, June 16th.

³⁴ La Tercera de la Hora, June 16th.

consistent strand existed here regarding left-wing coverage of the miners' strike, which was a depreciation of the strike itself and a belief that broader right-wing forces were orchestrating the miners' activities. On June 19th, El Siglo released an article headlined "Right launches wave of terror, Criminal sabotage at "El Teniente." Here, El Siglo argues that the strike is not the product of a wage dispute but rather the result of right-wing sabotage. Drawing a contrast between the miners at El Teniente and those whom El Siglo perceives to be patriotic, a June 21st issue highlights the relationship between Allende and other miners, saying that Allende is "hand in hand with miners who work for the fatherland." The contrast between the El Teniente strike and other workers movements is further alluded to in the June 24th issue of El Siglo, where the banner on the front page read "The dance of millions: Workers Strike provokes tremors in the judiciary." Furthermore, on June 25th, El Siglo promoted on their front page a "Miners Tragedy" in which three workers die at "La Disputada," a copper mine. Both Clarin and La Tercera also cover this on their front page.

The strike mentioned above is again illustrative of the profound divide between left and right-wing media, as both sides cover the strike, but in notably different ways. The left exalted the strike, with El Siglo mentioning on June 21st that there will be a "Full stop of work and rally," where the workers will come out "to sweep away the savage fascists." The following day, the same outlet revels in the rally's success, with the headline reading "Largest rally in history! Fascism has been sentenced!" El Mercurio took a wholly different approach to covering this strike. While noting its magnitude, El Mercurio highlighted most prominently how the strike would "paralyze the country" while including a comprehensive list of the essential services the strike and its ramifications would impact.

One of the consistent themes in practically all sectors of the Chilean media ecosystem is a tendency to use inherently polarizing terminology. In right-wing outlets such as El Mercurio and La Tercera, these often come in the form of the terms communist and Marxist, which are descriptors assigned by them to left-wing forces, whether that be Unidad Popular, Salvador Allende, or the communist party themselves. While these terms may be accurate and appropriate in some cases, their use plays into broader anti-communist sentiments that the Cold War exacerbated. During the 1970s, the Cold War was raging, particularly in South America, as the repercussions of the Cuban Revolution were still being felt, mainly through the presence of guerrilla movements. Frightened by the presence of a communist country so close to its homeland, the United States went about a concerted propaganda effort to suppress left-wing movements and governments throughout Latin America under the Mann Doctrine - which essentially promoted regime change in the best interest of America, regardless of humanitarian consequences in Latin America.³⁵ One of the practical effects of these efforts was the creation of a climate of fear surrounding the use of terms associated with left-wing elements. Thus, when outlets such as El Mercurio referred to the “Marxist brigades” attacking the miners in Santiago, it contributed to a climate of distrust and fear surrounding the activities of left-wing Chileans.

Similarly, in coverage of right-wing activities by left-wing media outlets, terms such as “fascists” were regularly used to stoke fear regarding the activities of right-wing Chilean people and groups. Moreover, the description of right-wing groups tended to stray into the intensely personal, referring to those involved as snobs, thugs, and traitors. Naturally, the term fascism conjures up images of authoritarian dictatorships, such as those of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy - an image bound to incite fear in many left-leaning Chileans, the primary readers of news

³⁵ “What Is the Mann Doctrine?,” The New York Times, March 21, 1964, <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/03/21/archives/what-is-the-mann-doctrine.html>.

outlets such as El Siglo and Clarin. Cumulatively, the polarized terminology used by media outlets to describe the Marcha de los Mineros promotes a climate of fear and intolerance. Given the influence and circulation of these newspapers, coverage of these incidents was extraordinarily impactful in fomenting conditions hospitable for violent regime change.

Simple choices in what to cover and what not to cover further play a crucial role in the political implications of media coverage surrounding the Marcha de los Mineros. The march in Santiago began on June 14th. El Mercurio and La Tercera immediately picked up the story, and both actively promoted the miners' story on their front pages. On the other hand, the story was absent from left-wing media until June 16th, at which point the miners were promptly attacked and vilified. The choice to not cover the march in its principal stages by left-wing media reveals that these outlets may have believed that covering the news may be detrimental to their cause.

Furthermore, it helps foster distinct media echo chambers, in which those who solely stick to outlets of a particular political leaning aren't exposed to news that may challenge their viewpoints very well. Though not directly related to the miners at El Teniente, El Siglo and Clarin discussed the plight of other miners throughout Chile, with one story covering miners' deaths at La Disputada, another massive copper mine. El Siglo chose to portray these miners as workers who died in providing for their country, seemingly contrasting these miners with the strikers at El Teniente, who - as mentioned, they referred to as fascists. Conversely, El Mercurio and La Tercera do not mention this incident. Much like the use of polarizing terminology, Chilean media outlets' simple choices in what to cover versus what not to cover in the lead-up to the coup worked, along with other prominent factors, to further polarize and isolate the right and left wings of broader Chilean society.

The Alejandrina Cox Incident

In October of 1970, then Commander-in-chief of the Chilean Armed Forces, Rene Schneider, was assassinated in a botched kidnapping attempt - one which occurred with explicit funding from the CIA.³⁶ His successor, General Carlos Prats, vowed to adopt similar stances to Schneider, namely in keeping to the so-called Schneider Doctrine, which posits that the military and the political arenas should be kept entirely exclusive. Similarly to Schneider, Prats became the target of right-wing forces, who sought to have the military interfere in the democratic process.³⁷ In late June of 1973, Prats became involved in an incident covered extensively by all sectors of the Chilean media - one which further helps to illustrate the political implications of media coverage.

On June 27th, 1973, General Carlos Prats was being driven in his car through Santiago when another car pulled up beside him. The occupant of the vehicle next to Prats began making obscene gestures at him, at which point Prats decided to pull out his handgun. Eventually, the situation escalated, and General Prats shot at the front of the car. The occupant, a woman named Alejandrina Cox - whom Prats had mistaken for a man due to her short hair - exited the vehicle, and an angry crowd began to amass, at which point General Prats's driver whisked him away.³⁸ This constitutes the official version of the event, but in the days succeeding the Cox incident, a host of versions of the incident popped up in media coverage. At this point, Prats went to resign as commander in chief. Still, President Allende blocked him from doing so, who envisioned the

³⁶ John Dinges, *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (New York: The New Press, 2005).

³⁷ "Chile: Indictments in Prats Case." Human Rights Watch, 25 February 2003, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2003/02/25/chile-indictments-prats-case>

³⁸ Jonathan Kandell. "Chile Declares Emergency in Capital Region After Disorders." *The New York Times*, 28 June 1973, <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/06/28/archives/chile-declares-emergency-in-capital-region-after-disorders.html>

general as a bulwark against forces that sought to use the Chilean military to overthrow him. Prats maintained his position as commander-in-chief in the coming months, though his reputation was tarnished in the eyes of the public. Amidst consistent protests, particularly among soldiers' wives, Prats resigned from his position on August 22nd, 1973. In his place, President Allende named Augusto Pinochet commander-in-chief of the Chilean armed forces, paving the way for the September coup. As for Prats - he fled to Argentina in the aftermath of the coup, where Pinochet's secret police, DINA, assassinated him in a car bombing.

Initial right-wing coverage of the incident is somewhat ambiguous. In *La Tercera*, the first mention is on June 28th, when an article discussed how a zone of emergency was declared in Santiago over an "incident" between Prats and a woman. *El Mercurio* uses similar language, describing Prats as mixed up in a "grave incident." However, *El Siglo* and *Clarín* reach a rash conclusion in their coverage. The headline in *El Siglo*'s June 28th issue read: "Fascist Assassins! An attempt against the life of the army general in charge." Further down the front page, a declaration appears in which the "P.C." (Communist Party) calls for mobilization. *Clarín* condemns "los momios" - a slang term used for right-wingers - stating that they intended to assassinate General Prats. Though the facts would later show that the life of General Prats was not in danger, it should be noted that given the context - with the prior assassination of General Schneider - an attempt on Prats' life would have been considered more than feasible. In a move that speaks volumes regarding their agendas, *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera* amped up their coverage of the Prats incident, highlighting it as front-page news for the next week. On June 29th, *La Tercera* plastered a photo of Prats, head buried in his hands, along with the caption: "It was a lamentable incident." After this point, coverage of the incident began to wane; as the truth regarding the Cox incident became more evident, its coverage in left-wing media came to a near

complete halt, though El Siglo would refer to him on August 25th - after his resignation - as an “exemplary soldier,” and on August 17th implored its readers to repudiate the “hysterical attacks” against Prats.

Arguably, the most key implication of the coverage of the Alejandrina Cox incident is its role in placing Augusto Pinochet in power. Though Prats’ tenure as commander-in-chief didn’t immediately come to an end, the Cox incident was arguably the key factor in his ultimate resignation, given that Prats attempted to resign in the immediate aftermath. Thus, it is clear that Prats himself viewed it as wholly damaging to his career. The spate of coverage concerning this incident in the week or so following its occurrence certainly played a role in tarnishing the reputation of General Prats, as the media as a whole simply plays a crucial role in molding public opinion. It is not just the facts of this incident that led to the Prats’ resignation; it is also how the media covered it that plays a further role. In the image to the right, dating from a June 29th issue of La Tercera, the visual of General Prats, head in hands, works to project a sense of defeat and resignation. This image, thus, conveys to the readers of La Tercera an image of weakness and perhaps embarrassment. Naturally, this type of imagery damages the career of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This position has historically been associated with traits of strength, fortitude, and power. Therefore, the decisions made by media outlets to portray General Prats in

a negative light played a notable role in tarnishing his career and helped to pave the path towards power for a then relatively unknown Chilean general, Augusto Pinochet.

Furthermore, the left-wing coverage of the incident revolving around Prats and Alejandrina Cox illustrates how the media contributed to polarization. In the immediate aftermath of the incident, a conflict-prepared left-wing media ecosystem jumped to the conclusion that there had been an attempt on Prats' life, encouraging their readers to blame "fascist assassins." Additionally, the degrading term "momios" is used to refer to the supposed assassin of General Prats. The effect of the use of such terms is a contribution to a form of "othering," explicitly painting a divide between the fascists and non-fascists, the "momios" and "non-momios." To the likely left-wing readers of El Siglo and Clarin, this would only serve to polarize them from the Chilean right further.

Polarization, the act of stark, widening division between two or more conflicting sets of beliefs, ideals, and opinions, has been proven time and time again to

denigrate the very concept of democratic society.³⁹ Though the media does not represent all facets of society, it is an instrumental player. As stated, in 1973, in Chile, newspapers were the primary means by which most people obtained their news. Thus, Media certainly played a crucial role in exacerbating polarization, as seen in the initial left-wing coverage of the Alejandrina Cox incident.



³⁹ Jennifer McCoy. et al., (2018). Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Politics. American Behavioral Scientist, 62(1), 16-42.

Tanquetazo

September 11th was not the only coup attempt in Chile throughout 1973. On June 29th, Lieutenant Colonel Roberto Souper, in an effort to seize on the profound instability of the Allende government, launched what would come to be known as the *Tanquetazo*, or Tank Putsch. Early in the morning, Souper, with the backing of the powerful fascist group Patria y Libertad (Fatherland and Liberty), began to lay siege to La Moneda, the Presidential Palace.⁴⁰ In the chaos, 22 people died, including journalists, bystanders, and combatants. Under the supervision of General Carlos Prats, the commander of the Chilean Armed Forces, reinforcements were called in and the coup attempt was suppressed. Notably, among these reinforcements included a unit led by General Augusto Pinochet. In the aftermath of the Tanquetazo, the coup plotters fled to a myriad of locations, including the Ecuadorian embassy in Santiago - due to a sympathetic Ecuadorian government. In the aftermath of the September coup, the leaders of the Tanquetazo got off scot-free, with Colonel Souper returning to the Chilean army. Though the Tanquetazo failed, it remains emblematic of the deep divisions present in Chilean society at the time. The coverage of the Tanquetazo in the coming days and weeks would further reveal and amplify the pre-existing tensions.

In left-wing print media, the reaction is immediate and visceral to the attempt. On June 30th, Clarin issued a call to arms, telling its readers that united, the army and the people of Chile are invincible and that their strength led to the “fascist assassins fleeing like rats.” El Siglo ran an article entitled “Crushed! The Reactionary Insurrection.” Throughout the coming days, the coverage of the Tanquetazo does not falter, with discussion of the casualties and the activities of

⁴⁰Matthijs de Olde,. "El Tanquetazo: The Coup Attempt That Paved the Road for Pinochet's Military Takeover." Chile Today, <https://chiletoday.cl/el-tanquetazo-the-coup-attempt-that-paved-the-road-for-pinochets-military-take-over/>

those responsible. In early July, left-wing media began their consistent coverage of the matter. El Siglo's July 2nd issue starts with a supposed confirmation that Pablo Rodriguez, the founder of Patria y Libertad, has fled the country and has found safety in the Ecuadorian embassy in Santiago. On July 7th, El Siglo made sure its readers were still aware of this, stating on its front page that the "fascist rats have fled the country today." The coverage did not vary all that much the next day, with a headline announcing that the "fascist rats' had flown to Ecuador. By July 10th, the turbulent political climate had resulted in a relatively new slate of news, but El Siglo, in particular, would continue to allude to the attacks and further investigations. On that same day, El Siglo issued an article discussing how the government declared seven officers and one civilian prisoners for the "crime of military uprising."

El Mercurio and La Tercera, the two most prominent right-wing media sources at the time, differ quite notably in their coverage of the aftermath of the Tanquetazo. El Mercurio discussed the coup attempt, but its coverage of the aftermath was bare. On June 30th, the day after the Coup, La Tercera, Clarin, and El Siglo all devoted the entire front page of that day's issue to discussion of the coup attempt, with varying degrees of intensity. El Mercurio devotes roughly half of their front page to the incident, proclaiming that an attack of two hours occurred against La Moneda and that an "armored unit dominated the government." On the other side of the front page, the General Prats affair is further discussed. The following day, El Mercurio stated on its front page that the military had confirmed seven deaths. By July 3rd, the news had dropped out of coverage, with the most prominent headline regarding the continuation of a left-wing "occupation" of factories and industries.

On the other hand, La Tercera acknowledges the severity of the coup attempt, displaying on their July 1st issue in bold lettering a notice that there were seven military casualties in the

incident. However, they seem to diminish the role of Patria y Libertad in the incident, stating that “all implicated have been detained.” When presumably referring to the members of the fascist organization, La Tercera states that “five politicians are in asylum in foreign embassies.” The Tanquetazo would not be discussed at length in El Mercurio or La Tercera in the coming months.

One of the more notable aspects concerning the coverage of the Tanquetazo is the relative lack of coverage in right-wing media. Though political instability had become somewhat of the norm in Chile, an attempted coup, particularly one orchestrated with involvement from parts of the armed forces, would have been colossal news. However, coverage of the incident is sparse on the right. Even when El Mercurio and La Tercera discuss the attempted coup, the severity is vastly diminished. Further, the identities of those responsible are only alluded to or outright hidden. Seeing as these outlets were the two largest in Chile at the time, they thus denied the opportunity for broad swaths of the Chilean populace to fully understand the events that had transpired in Santiago. To highlight just one key example of the implications of disparate coverage, the image to the right shows the front page of El Mercurio on July 3rd. Merely four days prior, an attempted coup had occurred in the center of the nation’s capital. Despite this, there is not even an allusion to the incident on El Mercurio’s front page. Instead, the focus is devoted to the aforementioned left-wing “occupation” of factories. To El Mercurio’s readers, this would have served to minimize the incident as a whole, working to paint it as a mere scuffle rather than a severe and armed attempt at overthrowing the nation’s government. This works to

the benefit of the right-wing forces behind the coup attempt, who were shielded from massive backlash by a lack of concerted media coverage.

Voter Fraud

In March of 1973, parliamentary elections were held throughout Chile, resulting in a victory for the so-called “Confederation of Democracy,” a coalition composed of the Christian Democratic Party and the National Party. However, they did not gain enough votes to constitute a two-thirds supermajority; the vote total needed to remove President Allende from office.

Immediately following the election, there were credible and patently false allegations of fraud.

According to a memorandum sent to the 40 Committee

concerning the polls - a covert, CIA-led committee dedicated to toppling the Allende government - it was noted “that some internal discrepancies in the official tally are evident”⁴¹. However, a recount would likely have not changed the outcome. Further, this same

memorandum discusses how “on 26 October 1972, the Committee approved \$1,427,666 to support four political

parties,”⁴² later identified as the Christian Democratic

Party, the National Party, the Democratic Radical Party,

and Radical Party of the Left, four parties cumulatively comprising the opposition to Allende’s

Popular Unity. Despite the lack of absolute clarity concerning the potential impact of fraud,



⁴¹Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E-16, Documents on Chile, 1969–1973, eds. Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 130.

⁴² Ibid.

throughout the summer of 1973, particularly in mid-to-late July, a series of articles were published in *El Mercurio* and *La Tercera* concerning the effect of fraud in this election.

The first discussion of potential voter fraud within the 100 days before the coup occurred on July 18th, in an article published by *La Tercera*. The headline reads, “200 thousand magic votes in the last election.” Curiously, *El Mercurio* printed a story with an extraordinarily similar accusation concerning “massive fraud in March’s election,” with law professors denouncing said fraud. In a response issued on July 19th, *El Siglo* categorically denies that fraud occurred. From their perspective, the right invented claims of fraud to impede the dialogue between Allende and his opposition. Explicitly, they state that attempts to claim fraud constituted a “new reactionary attempt to justify a coup.” *El Mercurio* responded with a July 22nd article delving into the supposed fraud entitled “The Ghost Votes.” Though the story was relatively minimally covered, particularly concerning the economic woes Chile was immersed in at the time, it still works to reveal the political discord present in Chile during 1973.

Most importantly, the disparity in voter fraud coverage reflects the increasing divide between the right and left in broader Chilean society. Regardless of the veracity of the accusations of voter fraud, left-wing media outright denies it exists, and right-wing media cover the issue at length, devoting whole stories to the supposed fraud. The essential meaning of such a chasm between media outlets with different political perspectives is the creation of distinct media ecosystems, in which the standard set of facts differ markedly depending on which particular outlet is printing the story. Generally, in relatively stable societies, there naturally exist differences in how certain media outlets choose to present an issue, though crucially, the facts remain the same. Increasingly throughout the Summer of 1973, Chilean media began to stray towards a complete disagreement as to what was true and what was not. This fosters a further

polarized society in which Chileans with different political views may base those views on completely distinct facts and information. The consequences of such a stark difference for the health of a democratic society are dire, as it incentivizes individuals to remain within that media ecosystem, inciting feelings of distrust, fear, and anger, which themselves certainly contribute to political violence.⁴³

El Edecán

Arturo Araya Peeters was a Chilean naval officer best known as the aide-de-camp, or personal military assistant, to Salvador Allende. There is not much information publicly available concerning the life or death of Peeters. Still, nonetheless, on July 27th, 1973, Peeters was assassinated by Patria y Libertad, dealing a massive personal blow to Allende. Beginning on July 28th, the assassination of Peeters would become one of, if not the most covered stories in the Chilean media ecosystem.

The coverage of the Peeters' assassination began in a somewhat unclear way, as the coverage of the incident varied markedly from source to source, most prominently in the language used. A July 28th El Mercurio article uses the word "dismay" to describe the reaction to the crime of his murder while further stating that there are different "versions" regarding the homicide. Crucially, the word "assassination" is not used, leaving open the possibility to the readers of El Mercurio that it could have been a random incident. That same day, Clarin covered his assassination, discussing, among other things, the "national pain" his assassination has caused. About Peeters, Clarin dubs him a "Marino Martir" - a Martyred Sailor. El Siglo took this type of rhetoric a level up, referring explicitly to the incident as an assassination and as a

⁴³ Amy Mitchell, "Political Polarization & Media Habits," Pew Research Center, October 21, 2014, <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>.

“treacherous crime of those seeking civil war as indignation shakes all of Chile.” The difference in how right-wing media discusses the assassination on the first day of coverage is quite evident. In the case of El Mercurio and La Tercera, they keep their reporting relatively objective, with the bare facts of the case and little to nothing else. A July 29th article in El Mercurio is illustrative of this dynamic, as a section of their front page is devoted to the story, solely covering his funeral, as he was “laid to rest in Valparaiso.” Throughout the next month, El Mercurio and La Tercera only briefly covered the story. Left-wing media, on the other hand, was very vocal in their coverage of the assassination, covering the incident at length in headlines and editorials - El Siglo, in particular, was not shy about who they blamed the attack on.

On July 29th, El Siglo ran an issue with the entire front page devoted to Peeters, with the headline “The country gave a moving farewell to the martyred sailor.” In Clarin, the banner reads as follows: “Goodbye my comrade! The People of Chile mourn you and will avenge you!” As of July 30th, there was a potential suspect in the crime, and the coverage of this reveals further the potent divide between right and left-wing media sources. Both El Mercurio and La Tercera proclaimed in a July 30th paper that authorities were holding a potential assassin in “solitary confinement.” Left-wing sources, in response to this development, maintain a healthy skepticism regarding the capture of the supposed assassin. Clarin makes this perfectly clear on July 30th, directly stating that the right had “invented” the assassin of Peeters. In fact, within the coming week, El Siglo and Clarin both make rather direct accusations against right-wing forces for the murder of Peeters. On August 2nd, El Siglo implies that “tabloid” - used here in a derogatory manner - officials had anticipated the assassination of Peeters. Clarin simply stated that the right murdered him and proceeded to place the blame on Patria y Libertad, saying that

seven of the murderers are now on the loose.⁴⁴ El Mercurio seems to deny that any of the culprits are on the loose, running a headline on August 5th stating that someone “of suspicion” has been confined in the “crime” of Araya Peeters. In what comes off as a rebuttal to this claim, the front page of the August 5th edition of El Siglo stated that a “fascist” had assassinated Peeters. On August 11th, El Siglo made the declaration that authorities had captured four of those who were responsible for the assassination. There is no mention of this incident in any right-wing media, as the coverage at this point in El Mercurio and La Tercera essentially involves the coverage of economic woes.

Arguably, the key symbol that routinely manifests throughout the coverage of the assassination is that of Peeters as a martyr. In some respects, the case of Arturo Peeters is emblematic of martyrdom, which is often associated with turbulent political periods. In El Siglo and Clarin, the assassination of Peeters is framed in the context of a sacrifice, in particular, a sacrifice for the betterment of the nation, playing off of intense nationalistic notions. The act of martyrdom has historically proven to be politically potent, and this was certainly not lost on outlets such as El Siglo and Clarin.⁴⁵ Cumulatively, the portrayal of Peeters as a martyr serves as a sort of rallying cry for the Chilean left. This can be effectively seen as El Siglo - speaking on behalf of the People of Chile - stated that they would “avenge” his murder. Presumably, this would take the form of a violent response to the assassination, working to fan the flames of fear and anger on both sides of the political spectrum.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the profound disagreement with which right and left-wing media approached the assassination, mainly just after it occurred, is reflective of the

⁴⁴ Clarin, August 5th.

⁴⁵ Andrew R Murphy. “Theorizing Political Martyrdom: Politics, Religion, Death, and Memory.” *Political Theology* 24, no. 5 (2023): 465–85. doi:10.1080/1462317X.2022.2125118.

profoundly disparate information sources right and left-wing Chileans were privy to. Given the financial backing given to outlets such as El Mercurio by foreign elements - namely the CIA - in return for publishing stories detrimental to Allende, it is evident that right-wing media, in this case, were to some extent intentional in choosing to frame the incident vaguely. Notably, the lack of the term “assassination” is telling. Despite the objective evidence that Patria y Libertad assassinated Peeters, El Mercurio chose to frame the matter in a vague manner, emphasizing that there were different “versions” of the homicide. The choice to frame the assassination in this light effectively serves to diminish the importance of an event detrimental to the Chilean right. The optics of a fascist organization with ties to broader right-wing forces murdering the President’s personal assistant are objectively negative for the agenda of such outlets as El Mercurio and La Tercera. Thus, the simple choice of framing an issue had tangible implications for fostering hospitable conditions for a coup.

Roberto Thieme

Roberto Thieme was the secretary general of Patria y Libertad (Fatherland and Liberty), a paramilitary organization vehemently opposed to the government of Salvador Allende. A far-right, fascist organization, Patria y Libertad played a crucial role in many far-right plots and attacks carried out throughout the Allende presidency, including but not limited to the Tanquetazo coup attempt and the murder of Arturo Araya Peeters - Allende’s assistant. Thieme himself was actively involved in a myriad of anti-Allende activities as the active leader of Patria y Libertad, thus making him a constant target of left-leaning newspapers. After participating in the failed Tanquetazo, Thieme fled Chile, eventually taking refuge in Argentina. He remained missing for roughly two months, until August 27th, when Argentinian authorities arrested him in

Argentina and then extradited Thieme to Chile.⁴⁶ At this point, Chilean authorities promptly incarcerated Thieme, keeping him in jail until shortly after Pinochet installed a military junta, at which point he was released.

During the 100 days before the coup, the first mention of Thieme himself occurred on July 18th in *El Siglo*, which mentions an impending announcement regarding Thieme's status as a criminal. Before this announcement, *El Siglo* announced that the right has maintained a "complicit silence" in the matter. The same day, *El Mercurio* ran a story concerning Thieme hidden near the bottom of their front page, noting that "all police are looking for Roberto Thieme." Notably - the story is hidden underneath a much more prominent headline concerning supposed fraud in the earlier March parliamentary elections, during which the opposition coalition failed to muster enough seats to expel Allende from office. As Thieme was still on the run at this point, there occurred no mention of him throughout the next month or so, as coverage focused more on the dual economic and political crises ravaging Chile. However, on August 27th, left-wing media began to cover the arrest of Thieme in Argentina. *Clarín* ran the story prominently on their front page, as seen in the image on the right, noting that the "fascist who destroyed Chile was found scared to death in a luxurious restaurant." *El Siglo* similarly adopted a celebratory tone in announcing the capture of Thieme, boldly proclaiming on that day's issue that police had captured Thieme. Left-wing newspapers were the sole media outlets covering Thieme during the coming days. On August 28th, *El Siglo* ran a piece regarding the confessions of Thieme, stating that *Patria y Libertad* had "assassinated Araya and that the truckers strike (which they allege *Patria y Libertad* instigated) was solely constructed in search of a coup." *Clarín* adopted a similar brand of messaging, announcing that "Thieme, the vermin, has been

⁴⁶*Clarín*, August 27th.

caught dead to rights.” Right-wing wing-outlets, particularly El Mercurio, did not mention the story of Thieme at all. Their coverage on August 28th consisted of further discussion of the transportation pause, which had been actively devastating the Chilean economy.

Attacks against Thieme continued for approximately the next week, as both El Siglo and Clarin prominently discussed the various plots and incidents in which Thieme had been implicated. On August 29th, El Siglo accused Thieme of having a list of individuals whom Patria y Libertad had intended to assassinate. Two days later, El Siglo discusses an incident in which Thieme “clarified the assassination of the aide-de-camp (Araya).” Though there are little details given - the implication is quite clear - that Thieme himself was responsible in some capacity for the assassination. As this story unfolds, the silence of right-wing outlets remains steadfast. On the 29th, as left-leaning media continued discussing Thieme’s story, La Segunda chose to cover a vastly distinct topic: the assassination of an army official by a leftist terrorist group. The last mention of Thieme in the media before September 11th occurred on September 7th, as the front page of El



Siglo advertised that they had found “Thieme’s documents, the posh anti-patriot.”

The capture of Roberto Thieme was a story that could have proven to be incredibly damning for the right-wing forces seeking to expel Allende from office had Pinochet’s coup not occurred. Patria y Libertad was an organization with documented ties to the Central Intelligence

Agency, along with figures and organizations throughout the Chilean right wing.⁴⁷ The choice of right-wing outlets, particularly El Mercurio, to not cover the arrest and capture of Thieme speaks volumes about their agenda and intentions. Both El Mercurio and Thieme's Patria y Libertad received funds from the American government, and both held positions firmly opposed to that of Salvador Allende. In deciding not to cover Thieme, El Mercurio denied the opportunity to its thousands of readers to be aware of a person with a direct link to such events as the assassination of Salvador Allende's assistant. For those obtaining their news from left-wing sources, the bold headlines heralding the arrest of Thieme and the aggressive language used to define him - vermin, for one - could have served as a rallying cry, helping to boost political opposition against organizations like Patria y Libertad, who at this point were very actively instigating anti-Allende activities. As with much of the media coverage at this point, articles and stories are both reflective of and contribute to a caustic, divisive environment. The right and left wings of Chilean society had already been suffering from a profound divide, but at this point, partisan media seemed to exist in different realities - which is well reflected in the case of Roberto Thieme. The political ramifications of such distinct media ecosystems are the agitation of further division and chaos and, thus, the gradual movement towards acceptance of a coup.

Furthermore, there exists a consistent theme in left-wing coverage of the arrest of Roberto Thieme. Throughout the period after the arrest of Thieme, a particular conflation between Thieme himself and bourgeois symbols and words is evident. In an August 27th story, Clarin emphasized that Argentinian authorities found Thieme dining in a "luxurious" restaurant when arrested. Later, on September 7th, in one of El Siglo's final stories before being shuttered on September 12th, they refer to Thieme as the "posh anti-patriot." For left-wing Chileans, word

⁴⁷ Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez (1984). "The State as Terrorist: The Dynamics of Governmental Violence and Repression." Bloomsbury Academic.

choices such as these are all but certain to have either subconsciously or consciously correlated Thieme with the bourgeoisie, the upper class, which directly exploits the lower classes - the proletariat - in Marxist theory. This works to frame domestic issues under the broader umbrella of working-class struggle, connecting Chile with other left-wing movements and states, such as the guerrilla groups popping up throughout Latin America and even the Soviet Union and Cuba. The political effect of this is the exacerbation of a mindset of conflict in left-wing Chileans. This attitude would have also permeated broader society, further contributing to the severe partisan divide in Chile.

Los Camioneros

Arguably, one of the chief issues facing the Chilean economy was a series of work strikes and pauses, most notably a truckers strike, which lasted from around October of 1972 till the eventual coup. As mentioned, one of the critical ventures Allende undertook involved massive expropriation efforts, most notably seen in the nationalization of the copper industry. Broad swaths of Chilean society initially benefited from these efforts, including truckers. However, according to historian Paul Rosenstein, by 1972, the economy had soured to a considerable degree, and the collective bargaining process between the truckers and the government had broken down.⁴⁸ Under the leadership of Leon Vilarin, the trucker's strike began to take on a political tone, evolving into a crusade against Allende and his government.⁴⁹ Though intermittent coverage of the strike certainly existed throughout June and July, by August, right-wing media,

⁴⁸Paul N. Rosenstein-Roden. "Why Allende Failed." *Challenge*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1974, pp. 7–13. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40719194>. Accessed 8 Mar. 2024.

⁴⁹John Enders. "Dissent in Chile Triggers Harsh Junta Clampdown." *The Washington Post*, 25 May 1980, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/05/25/dissent-in-chile-triggers-harsh-junta-clampdown/427a7a6d-2cdd-4229-a473-60eb895c922a/>

in particular, was beginning to cover the trucker's strike and other labor-related movements virtually daily.

Though La Tercera would also cover the trucker's strike and other labor movements, El Mercurio was the outlet most willing and likely to cover the aforementioned. On July 27th, El Mercurio released an article titled: "Truckers...the stop is total." This is the first explicit mention of the trucker's strike in El Mercurio during the 100 days before the September coup. In an article with an overt nationalist tone published the same day, El Siglo contrasts the trucker's strike discussed in El Mercurio and La Tercera by noting the work of "patriot truckers" who were "assuring supplies for the population." In response to an incident in which an unknown part bombed a gas pipe, Clarin, on August 2nd, blamed the "criminal truckers." To ensure their position is clear, on August 4th, El Siglo conflates the truckers with Patria and Libertad, stating that they are working in concert in a "murderous wave." From the fourth through the 6th, El Mercurio covers the trucker's strike on their front page, ensuring that the public knows there is no movement in the strike.

At this point, it can be reasonably assumed that the government had grown frustrated by the seemingly never-ending strike, and El Siglo seems to confirm this in a statement attributed to the government - "not one more spare part for truckers in the country."⁵⁰ In a stark article published on August 8th, La Tercera lays out the future for Santiago, saying that the city will become a "desert" by the next day, with a total pause on commerce, doctors striking, dentists striking, and other strikes. In an article that is highly revelatory of their perspective on the strike, El Siglo, on August 11th, highlights the fact that due to the activities of the truckers, nine thousand tons of vegetables were lost. Throughout the next month, coverage of the trucker's

⁵⁰ El Siglo, August 7th.

strike continues along similar lines. Left-wing outlets sought to degrade the truckers in any capacity. At one point, El Siglo discussed a story concerning minibus drivers, who have supposedly ended their affiliation with the strike. In this story, they state that they have “ripped themselves from the mafia of Vilarin.”⁵¹ Right-wing outlets, on the other hand, adopted a less overtly critical tone. However, their coverage consisted of a near-constant stream of economic strife. Almost every day from August 11th to September 10th in El Mercurio, there is some mention of the strikes and their ramifications.

Furthermore, headlines and articles concerning the truckers exhibit a palpable sense of sympathy. Details are scarce, but to give one key example, there was an incident that occurred on or around September 5th, in which a “carabinero” - the national police of Chile, killed a trucker. On the front page of that day's issue of El Mercurio, that story was featured prominently, along with a somewhat graphic photo of the aftermath of the incident. Naturally, this is a newsworthy item. However, the fact that this story is included as front-page material in both El Mercurio and La Tercera that day - with no mention of it in left-wing outlets - speaks volumes about the perception of the trucker's strike.

Nationalism is a potent force. In the past and present, it has served as the impetus of broad conflicts. When political ideology becomes conflated with nationalistic principles, such as the belief in “patria” (fatherland) in Chile, it can lead to the deepening of political conflict. In Chile, a nation that had been molded by its independence struggle roughly 150 years before the events of September 11th, 1973, the notion of the fatherland takes on that much more weight. Therefore, in the context of the trucker's strike, when El Siglo divided the truckers into “patriots” and “anti-patriots,” it had a profound impact - rallying the readers of El Siglo to support the

⁵¹ El Siglo, August 26th.

patriot truckers providing for the fatherland while inciting anger and disgust towards the anti-patriot truckers who were paralyzing the nation.

Gender

Chile has historically been a country rooted in patriarchal ideals. Since the inception of Chile, women have occupied a subservient role, bound to a life of domesticity. In 1877, Miguel Luis Amunátegui, Chile's Minister of Education, noted that “while the Chinese bound their daughters' feet, his countrymen bound their daughters' minds.”⁵² Much of this is rooted in the socially conservative nature of Chile, especially in the 19th to early 20th century. As a country dominated by Catholicism, Chilean women tended to stray towards a more traditional understanding of a woman's place in society, with their primary role being to tend to the house and the kids while men worked. Though feminism certainly existed and at times made notable gains towards the expansion of women's rights, with strides made by figures such as Amanda Labarca, the first woman to pursue a position as a professor in Latin America actively, women failed to gain tangible political rights until the 1930s.⁵³ In 1934, the government afforded women a hint of political representation, allowing them to vote in municipal elections.⁵⁴ In 1949, full suffrage was established for Women, who were now allowed to vote in nationwide elections. The 1952 Election, the first in which Salvador Allende ran, was the first in which women were allowed to vote, and they quickly proved themselves to be a formidable constituency.

Pursuing women as a constituency by playing upon gendered themes is not isolated solely to the summer of 1973. In fact, during the crucial 1964 election, in which Salvador Allende - running for the third time - faced Eduardo Frei, women played an absolutely vital role

⁵² Gertrude Yeager, “Women's Roles in Nineteenth-Century Chile: Public Education Records, 1843-1883.” p. 149

⁵³ Jose Ramos-Vera, “Amanda Labarca and the first feminist institutions in Chile (1910-1922)”.

⁵⁴ Power, Margaret (2002). Right-wing women in Chile: feminine power and the struggle against Allende, 1964-1973

in defeating Allende and elevating Frei to the presidency. In what noted historian Margaret Powers has deemed “The Scare Campaign,” media outlets such as El Mercurio, with murky ties to the American Central Intelligence Agency, orchestrated a concerted campaign to play off of gendered fears in order to denigrate the Allende campaign. An article in El Mercurio dating from July 5th, 1964, is particularly illustrative of these efforts. The article featured a story regarding a boy living in the Soviet Union named Pavlik Morozov, who had turned his father in for stealing grain. Subsequently, the boy was lauded as a hero, and a statue was erected in his honor. El Mercurio chose to frame this as what would happen in Chile if Allende were elected - directly asking their readers: “Isn’t this glorification of [Pavlik’s] betrayal of his father and the stripping of the most basic sentiments of a family strange?”⁵⁵ Here, El Mercurio makes an implicit overture to women, operating under the assumption that conservative women were likely to care about the traditional understanding of a Chilean family, thus imploring women to envision a future with Allende at the helm, a future which would signal the death knell of the Chilean family. Much as it was in 1964, the patriarchal history of Chile is directly relevant and crucial to understanding the gendered politics present in media spanning the ideological spectrum during the Summer of 1973.

In 1964, a majority of women voted to keep Salvador Allende out of office. By this point, most rational observers understood that women constituted one of, if not the most crucial electoral groups. Such events as the March of Empty Pots and Pans further reinforced this. In December of 1971, a group of right-wing women who would come to be known as “El Poder Femenino” - The Feminine Power - would help to orchestrate the March, with its primary purpose being to protest the policies of Salvador Allende and his government. Their criticisms

⁵⁵ Margaret Power, “The Engendering of Anticommunism and Fear in Chile’s 1964 Presidential Election.”

were many, but among these included the supposed denigration of Chilean family values by the left, Allende's economic policies, which had quite explicitly put him in conflict with middle to upper-class Chileans, and a recent state visit paid by Cuba's leader, Fidel Castro. The pots and pans took on a literal meaning as well, as they were intended to symbolize the food shortages that the country had been facing, a prospect that the largely upper-class women who comprised the majority of protesters had never faced. This protest would prove to be politically potent, and as such, throughout the Summer of 1973, segments of the Chilean media associated with political ideologies and parties actively courted women.



Night of the Empty Pots and Pans

This is not to say that women were monolithic in their voting preferences. Though most women opposed Salvador Allende in the 1964 and 1970 presidential elections, Unidad Popular and left-wing media attempted to appeal to women. On June 9th, El Siglo ran a story concerning

an upcoming Women's March, proclaiming in bold lettering, "Women march against the 'chacales' (slang term for accomplices) of the Civil War." El Siglo covered this march in subsequent days, proclaiming on June 11th: "Tomorrow = Women Patriots Say No to Civil War," and on June 12th: "Today the Women March." There is no mention of any sort of demonstration in either La Segunda or El Mercurio. Messages of this sort geared towards women remain commonplace throughout June, July, and August. On August 18th, El Siglo stated on its front page that there will be a women's march that day at ten against "cowardly rightist aggression against Mireya Baltra (a communist legislator who had recently been the target of right-wing attacks)." An issue of El Siglo, dated August 22nd, again notes the importance of women in the Popular Unity movement, discussing "a vibrant and combative women's rally in support of the government." From these headlines alone, it can be readily determined that left-wing Chileans viewed women as imperative to their movement.

Much of the representation of women in media hearkens back to the patriarchal history of Chilean society. On June 26th, El Mercurio and La Tercera covered a march put on by the wives of miners who had been striking against the Allende government for higher wages at El Teniente, one of the largest copper mines in Chile. In El Siglo and Clarin, there is no mention of this incident. That very same day, the coverage in El Siglo concerned a right-wing terrorist whom the police had detained. Furthermore, on June 27th, El Mercurio proclaimed in their headline: "Enthusiastic Support from Wives of Miners!" An additional piece ran in El Mercurio regarding the wives of officials practicing their shooting, presumably in response to impending political strife. The practical effect of this is the encouragement of other women who may be reading to prepare in a similar manner, a move which can undoubtedly be envisioned as heightening political tension. On August 16th, El Mercurio carried on its near-perpetual coverage of Chilean

economic strife by discussing the ongoing Truckers Strike, stating that the truckers have not accepted the ultimatum given to them by the Allende government to end the strike. Crucially, along with this article, a photo of the wives of the truckers, who are weeping, is included.

Left-wing media was certainly complicit in the use of gendered themes to foment support for Allende and his government among women. One such piece concerns Leon Vilarin, the head of the Chilean Truck Owner's Federation and one of the key architects behind the ongoing Chilean truckers strike. An El Siglo article from August 3rd is headlined: "Mothers ask for jail for miserable people like Vilarin! "They have us without paraffin to cook for the children." On August 14th, Clarin ran a story about a right-wing attack in Curico, a city in Central Chile. "Cruel epilogue to the right-wing attack in Curicó: The six little ones were burned by the criminal explosion of the oil pipeline: the father died the same day: yesterday the mother died." This does not imply that it was solely women who cared about matters pertaining to families. However, in 1973, though Chilean women had gained political representation, they were still virtually excluded from professional and political life. The societal expectation for women was that they would tend to the family at home - and it is this premise that drives gendered appeals to women in the media. Through the lens of El Siglo, Clarin, and the broader left-wing movement, the activities of right-wing figures do not only affect those on the left but ordinary families who no longer have fuel to cook with and are suffering due to right-wing attacks.

Beyond attempts to play to the notion of family in order to appeal to women, right-wing media outlets covered quite frequently the activities of women engaged in anti-Allende activities. On August 13th, El Mercurio highlighted a women's march that had occurred the day prior in support of a Truckers Strike. Though the specific details are hazy, El Mercurio stated that some sort of "violent repression" on the part of police had occurred to these women. El Siglo, on the

other hand, included a picture of the striking women on their August 13th issue adorned with the caption “activists of violence.” A mere four days afterward, an incident occurred in which a group of women associated with the trucker's strike managed to take control of four radio stations. El Mercurio was sure to cover this in its coming issues, with front page space devoted to both their story and a picture of the women in the broadcasting process. La Tercera maintained its similar coverage, noting the story of the women as well. In September, as Pinochet’s coup approached, El Mercurio began to cover a series of potent women’s marches that had been occurring in Santiago. On September 5th, the story on the front page concerns a gathering of women in Santiago asking for Allende’s resignation. The next day, the prominent headline in El Mercurio’s issue features a photo of a seemingly massive female-led protest with the caption “Feminine Repudiation of the Government.” In the corner of the same front page is a photo of a near-empty square, with the caption “minimal attendance: gathering in support of the government.” As is characteristic of the news cycle around this period, left and right-wing media had strayed from one another to such an extent that they may as well have operated in different universes. Accordingly, the September 6th issue of El Siglo has a massive photo of another female-led protest, but with the headline: “massive feminine rally in support of the President - the women are firmly in support of Allende.”

Given the sheer amount of coverage devoted to gendered messaging in the 100 days before September 11th, it is evident that media outlets recognized the crucial role of women in the political sphere. According to Jack Devine, a former CIA officer, the United States government was aware of the importance of women-led movements and, as such, authorized and provided financial support to The March of the Pots and Pans.⁵⁶ This is all not to imply that

⁵⁶ Jack Devine. “What Really Happened in Chile: The CIA, the Coup Against Allende, and the Rise of Pinochet.” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 4 (2014): 26–35.

women were irrational observers, operating directly on the whim of biased media outlets and foreign governments. As is the case with all history, it is complicated and nuanced. It can be argued that in their opposition to Allende, right-wing women were making a rational choice, given their lack of representation in his government. Despite Allende's rhetoric being geared towards the importance of women in civic and political life, he only appointed one woman to his cabinet. Two years into his tenure, he appointed a woman to the position of head of the Social Development Agency, which had historically been envisioned as a typical position for women.⁵⁷ Irrespective of this, it is inarguable that right-wing women played an essential role in the degradation of Allende's government, and were instrumental in instigating the conditions which allowed Pinochet to come to power. The March of the Empty Pots and Pans and the associated women-driven movements it inspired served to amplify the exacerbated crises that Chile was undergoing at the time.

Furthermore, women played a crucial role in the aftermath of the Alejandrina Cox incident, in which the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army, Carlos Prats, shot at a woman whom he had mistaken for a man. Women-led protests occurred in response to this, driven by the wives of Prats' soldiers. This played a part in his decision to resign, ultimately leading to Augusto Pinochet becoming commander-in-chief.⁵⁸ Thus, given the importance of women in placing Augusto Pinochet in power and fostering the conditions hospitable for a coup, it is essential to analyze the media's role.

⁵⁷ BETILDE V. MUNOZ, "WHERE ARE THE WOMEN? The Case of Chilean Women: 1973-1989." *International Social Science Review* 74, no. 1/2 (1999): 3-19. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41882290>.

⁵⁸ Cristobal Kay. "Chile: The Making of a Coup d'Etat." *Science & Society* 39, no. 1 (1975): 3-25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40401828>.

Conclusion

A myriad of prominent news events throughout the Summer of 1973 revealed that the media suffered from severe polarization. Just to rehash one example, the coverage of voter fraud revealed that often, these partisan media outlets were not even operating with the same facts. The media coverage of a litany of domestic occurrences very likely enhanced and revealed the broad dysfunction permeating Chilean political life and society at the time. However, as mentioned throughout this thesis, media coverage is not solely reflective of the world; in Chile, there is evidence it can actively form and mold public opinion. The themes, messaging, and symbolism present in Chilean media coverage throughout the one hundred days before Pinochet's coup quite likely played a key role in exacerbating the harsh political divide in Chile at the time. Whether this takes the form of playing off patriotism in headlines concerning truckers, inciting nationalistic anger; using inflammatory language such as fascists and Marxists, fomenting sentiments of distrust; framing domestic issues within a global context - taking advantage of Cold War era fears for political purposes; or playing upon gendered notions to denigrate Allende's government; it is evident that the media played a notable role in the September Coup which installed Pinochet. Ultimately, the true aim of this thesis is to inform. In a world struggling with the distinction between reality and fake, it becomes all the more important to recognize the tactics used in media coverage to subtly distort reality to incite palpable sentiments of fear and anger. Further, it is important to understand how media coverage has a tangible impact on the broader world. Though it may seem at times that media coverage simply mirrors reality, media coverage has a crucial effect on the future, as was evidenced in Chile in 1973.

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As mentioned, the backbone of my thesis is based on the online collection available through the Universidad Adolfo Ibanez in Chile. I found every front-page story, editorial, and image from the main media outlets highlighted throughout this thesis through this source.

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Beyond this, I used some contemporaneous journals and articles to flesh out my knowledge. Additionally, I used Peter Kornbluh's "The Pinochet File," which contains excerpts from classified documents. Furthermore, I utilized classified files from the U.S. State Department to help understand American policy toward Chile.

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