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The Other 9/11



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Fifty years ago, in July 1973, Charles Horman and I planned to meet up at the World Trade Center.

I had returned from Santiago, Chile after the March 4 legislative elections in which the popular unity government headed by President Salvador Allende gained two seats in the Senate and six in the Chamber of Deputies.[1] Charlie was back in New York to visit his parents, Ed and Elizabeth Horman.

Both of us had traveled to Santiago out of interest in and enthusiasm for the UP's promise to move Chile along a democratic and peaceful road to socialism. I had a degree in journalism from American University and was serving as a correspondent for

Metromedia. Charlie had a degree in journalism from Harvard and was working on a documentary about the murder of Rene Schneider, the commander-in-chief of the Chilean armed forces.

Schneider was shot on October 22, 1970, by reactionary forces supported by the C.I.A. seeking to prevent Allende from taking office. But this initial coup attempt failed and two days later, on October 24, 1970, the Chilean congress confirmed Allende as President. Schneider died the next day.

Fast forward to 1973. Charlie returned to Chile in August before we had a chance to get together. Then, on September 11, Allende was overthrown in the bloodiest coup d'état in Latin American history. And, because in the short time he was back, Charlie had gathered a wealth of information about our government's direct involvement in the coup, he was arrested and shot. Nevertheless, the information he obtained later surfaced in the 1975 staff report of the U.S. senate's select committee to study governmental operations with respect to intelligence titled *Covert Action in Chile 1963 – 1973*, [2] the book *Missing* by Thomas Hauser, Costa-Gavras' academy award winning film based on the book, and many other sources.

Hence, today the sordid story of our government's involvement in the effort to prevent Allende from being elected President of Chile and then provoking the coup d'état that led to the murderous dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, is well known. But though less than a month from when this was written September 11 will mark 50 years since the coup in Chile took place few politicians and journalists will draw attention to that fact. Rather, as they have been doing since 9/11/2002 they will focus on recalling the terrorist attack on our country that brought down the World Trade Center, destroyed a section of the Pentagon and led to the death of nearly 3000 people (about the same number that died at the hands of the Pinochet regime after the coup d'état).

What unfortunately they won't be pointing out however is that though in the first 9/11 the U.S. was the protagonist and in the second the victim, in the aftermath of both our government condoned or resorted to torture and other crimes on the grounds that by doing so it was defending democracy. Indeed it was in defense of democracy that President Richard Nixon and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger claimed we helped overthrow Allende and then supported Augusto Pinochet military dictatorship as it detained, tortured, and killed more than 3000 people including Charlie and another American friend of mine, Frank Terrugi[3]. And it was in defense of democracy that President George Bush

maintained that we resorted to waterboarding prisoners in Guantanamo and invading Iraq after the terrorist attacks in 2001.

Hence, it is not surprising that many in the third world and elsewhere today are skeptical when in the realpolitik world in which we are living President Biden and others claim by supporting Ukraine in its war with Russia our government's overriding motivation is to defend democracy and promote a just and peaceful world order.

Notes.

[1] <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/03/06/archives/allende-shows-strength-in-election-but-stalemate-in-chile-remains.html>

[2] <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94chile.pdf>

[3] <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/29/world/americas/2-sentenced-in-murders-in-chile-coup.html?searchResultPosition=1>

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