



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 11, 2013

The 40th Anniversary of Pinochet's Rise to Power in Chile

Chileans observe their own anniversary on September 11, as today marks the 40th anniversary of the military coup that removed the revolutionary Marxist President Salvador Allende from office and replaced him with General Augusto Pinochet (shown).



At the time of the coup, the Allende government had completely nationalized the Chilean economy and was in the process of consolidating power to form a Cuban-style communist regime.

On the anniversary of this momentous event in Chile's history, [BBC News](#) and other sources report that some demonstrations remembering the coup have turned violent as those opposed to — or supportive of — the change in power 40 years ago have clashed in the streets. BBC cited a police statement that they had arrested dozens of people for erecting barricades and throwing stones and Molotov cocktails.

The government deployed 8,000 police officers in the capital city of Santiago to deter violence.

Chile's Interior Minister Andres Chadwick said on Wednesday that "up to this moment the reports have been very positive compared to what we were expecting."

Chadwick said that "major troublemakers were trying to take advantage of the occasion," but he assured Santiago residents that the city was functioning normally.

BBC reported that the official ceremony marking the anniversary was held on Monday, September 9 at the presidential palace. During the ceremony, President Sebastián Piñera (described by BBC as "center-right") criticized the "violent coup that started a 17-year period of military rule."

However, Piñera conceded, the coup was "the predictable outcome" after "repeated violations of the rule of law" under Allende.

One prominent Chilean who boycotted the official ceremony was former president [Michelle Bachelet](#), who will again seek the presidency in Chile's November 17 election. (Chile's constitution bars Piñera from seeking uninterrupted reelection.) A former member of the Socialist Youth, Bachelet is running on the New Majority coalition ticket, which consists of the Socialist Party of Chile (PS), the Christian Democratic Party of Chile (PDC), the Party for Democracy (PPD), the Social Democrat Radical Party (PRSD), the Communist Party of Chile (PCCh), the Citizen Left (IC), the Broad Social Movement (MAS), and various leftist independents.

Speaking at a rival event at Villa Grimaldi, a former detention center in Santiago where both she and her mother had been held and tortured because of anti-government activities, Bachelet said it was important to "build a country which is capable of going forward in a more just egalitarian and peaceful way."

Bachelet called for an investigation into the alleged crimes committed under the 17 years of Chile's military rule, stating that "a dirty wound cannot heal."

Dispute concerning the relative harm and benefit to Chile under the Allende (1970-1973) and Pinochet



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(1973-1990) governments continues both in Chile, and throughout the world. As might be expected, most of the world's mass media condemns the forcible removal of the Marxist Allende by the military coup and his replacement with the authoritarian, yet free-market Pinochet. To gain a better understanding of the dynamics in this transition, it is worth revisiting past reports, many of which were published by *The New American's* predecessor, *American Opinion* magazine.

While many reports in the mainstream media hailed Allende as a "democratically elected" president, [Allende was not elected with an absolute majority](#), receiving less than 35 percent of the votes in a three-way contest. And there have been credible reports that even this plurality was achieved only through massive electoral fraud and with financial backing from the Soviet Union.

Upon taking office, Allende rapidly instituted socialist programs and nationalized much of the nation's banking and mineral industries, including the country's important copper mines.

With the economy faltering, the government greatly inflated the money supply, producing out-of-control inflation. On May 26, 1973, Chile's supreme court unanimously denounced the Allende government for what it called the "disruption of the legality of the nation."

With whatever popular support Allende once enjoyed declining, his regime prepared to consolidate power by force, if necessary. It imported experienced terrorists from Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Guatemala, and other countries. A report in the July-August issue of *American Opinion* noted that "the methods he used to set up his Marxist dictatorship bore no relationship to lawful processes."

Susan Huck, in her article in *American Opinion* for November 1974, described the methodology the Allende regime was employing to consolidate power before being deposed:

Actual military moves against the Chilean Armed Forces were made from, and within, the industrial cordones and scattered campamientos established by the Marxists within Santiago itself. Whenever the Reds planted the flag and seized an industry, the workers, the equipment, and the productive capacity of the plant could be turned to guerrilla use. Hardhats were routinely issued to the radical goon-squads used to break up any attempt to demonstrate against the Allende Government....

The plans for a civil war are shocking enough. To have them approved by the Government, itself, is the ultimate treachery. It was this which triggered the anti-Communist revolution.

The steps leading up to (and justifying) the coup were summarized by *The New American's* William F. Jasper in his article, "Patriot Enchained," for September 13, 1999:

- With an army of some 14,000 foreign communists, Allende began to transform Chile into a totalitarian dictatorship.
- Allende's administration was thoroughly packed with Cubans, Soviets, and other international communists.
- In short order, the Allende forces had looted the treasury, destroyed the economy, illegally expropriated thousands of private farms, homes, and businesses, and unleashed a wave of terror.
- Chile's judiciary and legislature, as well as prominent leaders of all sectors of Chilean society, repeatedly condemned Allende's actions and called upon the military to intervene.
- The Pinochet-led coup was supported overwhelmingly by the Chilean people, who also voted to approve the new constitution offered by the junta.
- Documents and arms captured when Allende was overthrown on September 11, 1973, proved that



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Allende was planning to stage his own coup on September 19, and to slaughter his opposition.

Upon seizing control, the Pinochet government quickly set about transforming the Chilean nation from a socialist state into a nation with a free-market economy. The charges against the Pinochet regime that it used excessive force against its political enemies may be justified, in many cases, but during the turmoil following the coup, it would have been difficult for the new government to distinguish between peaceful citizens and dangerous revolutionaries. U.S. troops serving overseas in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan often faced similar dilemmas.

The government faced an uncertain future, at first, as legions of Allende supporters backed by those imported communist militants threatened to bring down the new government, before it could complete its work, and cause the nation to revert to a state-controlled, socialist economy.

That the new Pinochet government encouraged freedom of the press was indicated in an exceptional way when it extended an invitation to Dr. Susan Huck, the contributing writer for *American Opinion* (who wrote the aforementioned article) accompanied by several prominent conservative business leaders, to visit Chile on the first anniversary of the coup and see things for themselves. Huck noted: "All that was asked of us was that we return with an honest report of the reasons why the so-called 'democratically elected' Marxist Government of Salvador Allende was thrown out by the Armed Forces and Carabineros of Chile." In summarizing Pinochet's record during his first year in office, Huck wrote:

There was much to do, but Augusto Pinochet was determined to restore the economic health of his country. In the twelve months before December 1973 the Chilean wholesale price index rose 1,147.1 percent. The Chilean Government's prime objective over the next eight years was to encourage production and reduce inflation by dismantling the Welfare State and balancing the Budget. President Pinochet has turned Social Security over to the private sector, freed the economy from the stranglehold of the unions, and made it unconstitutional for the government to borrow from the central bank. In the first half of 1981, Chile's inflation as measured by the wholesale price index was 0.4 percent — the lowest in the world.

All of this was possible in Chile because of the strength and wisdom of its popular military-backed Government. Pinochet simply freed the marketplace and refused to inflate the money supply.

It may have been that Pinochet's success in creating a model free-market economy embarrassed other nations, fueling the resentment of those on the liberal Left. The liberal media and much of the world's leaders continued to hound him until his death of heart failure on December 10, 2006.

One of the few world leaders to stand by Pinochet was Britain's former Prime Minister [Margaret Thatcher](#), who visited him in London in 1999 when he was under house arrest while fighting extradition to Spain, where charges of human rights violations had been brought against him. The House of Lords later threw out almost all of the charges made against Pinochet.

Thatcher remained always appreciative of Pinochet's support for Britain during its 1992 Falkland's War against Argentina. During that visit, Thatcher told Pinochet: I'm ... very much aware that it is you who brought democracy to Chile, you set up a constitution suitable for democracy, you put it into effect, elections were held, and then, in accordance with the result, you stepped down."



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