

21-09-70

Chile: The Making of a Precedent

DESPITE the dire prophecies of violence, Chile remained calm last week in the wake of precedent-shattering elections. In a three-way race for the presidency, the Marxist candidate, Dr. Salvador Allende, had received the highest vote, polling 36% v. 35% for his rightist opponent, former President Jorge Alessandri, and 28% for the candidate of President Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic Party, Radomiro Tomić. Since no candidate won a popular majority, the Chilean Congress must decide between Allende and Alessandri on Oct. 24. In the meantime, just about everyone in Chile was acting as if Allende had already become the first Marxist head of state ever to be elected freely in the Western Hemisphere.

In celebration, half a dozen women frolicked nude in the plaza fountain behind Government House. In Santiago's Constitution Square, a man paid off an election bet by carrying an open umbrella on a sunny afternoon and wearing a donkey tail. But other Chileans panicked at the news. Fearful of a stampede of scared investors, the Santiago stock market closed for a day for the first time since 1938, and depositors withdrew massive funds from Chilean banks. The black-market rate for the escudo soared to as high as 50 to the U.S. dollar—as compared with 14.5 at the official rate and 21 at the unofficial pre-election level. The U.S. consulate was swamped with calls for information about visas.

Castro's Congratulations. Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, who had reportedly contributed several suitcases-full of hard currency to the Allende campaign,

sent his congratulations. In a journalistic pre-emptive strike, the Soviet party paper *Pravda* accused the U.S. of having "an intention to interfere in the internal affairs of Chile." In point of fact, Washington was reluctant to take any position at all on Allende's emergence, although it knew full well that his nationalization program would eventually affect virtually all of the \$700 million U.S. investment in Chile.

Most alarmed of all were the military regimes bordering on Chile. The Bolivian government feared that Allende would allow leftist guerrillas to operate from sanctuaries in Chile. An adviser to Argentine President Roberto Marcelo Levingston, predicting that Allende's victory would cause Argentina's military budget to be doubled, declared: "It's a disaster. It means we have two Cubas in Latin America instead of one."

The stocky Allende, 62, has been engaged in politics all his life. He was expelled from medical school, imprisoned and later exiled for his political activities. When he was finally allowed to return and earn a medical degree, he was unable to get any post except an assistant coroner's job that nobody else wanted.

But his political fortunes quickly changed. Having helped to found Chile's Socialist Party after his graduation from medical school, Allende ran for office as a federal Deputy in 1937 and won. The next year he played an important role in the presidential election of Pedro Aguirre Cerda and was rewarded by being appointed Minister of Health at the age of 31. He has run for the presidency

EDERICO OHRINGER—NANCY PALMER



ALLENDE CAMPAIGN SIGN READING "HOMAGE TO THE YANKEE CULTURE"
CENTR *Fidel* sent suitcases and congratulations.

DE HISTORIA CONTEMPORANEA
DE CHILE

TIME, SEPTEMBER 21, 1970