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Survey

The venture wrong, 60% of U.S. believes

By Louis Harris

BY A 60 TO 18 per cent majority, Americans feel it was "wrong for the United States to intervene in the internal affairs of Chile and to try to destabilize its government."

President Ford acknowledged that U. S. intervention did take place, altho Secretary of State Henry Kissinger argued it was to insure the rights of Chilean forces out of power and not to overthrow the Marxist regime of the late president, Salvador Allende. Allende died in a violent military coup, which overthrew his government a year ago.

In a cross-section of 1,500 people participating last month in the Harris Survey, a substantial majority, 83 to 7 per cent, agrees that "every country should have the right to determine its own government by itself, without outside interference from other countries."

TRADITIONALLY, the right of self-determination has been a ground rule of international law, protecting the rights of smaller, weaker countries against the encroachment and invasion of larger powers.

But it is well known that in a world

of superpowers, all with substantial intelligence networks, each major nation maintains extensive intelligence activities in nearly every country of the world. President Ford sought to defend U. S. intelligence activities by citing the sums spent by Communist nations for intelligence.

By a narrow 43 to 39 per cent response, Americans are willing to accept the CIA's role as "working inside other countries to try to strengthen those elements friendly to the U. S. and to weaken anti-U. S. forces."

The heart of the controversy over American intervention in Chile is how to reconcile CIA operations designed to aid pro-U. S. elements with the universally accepted rule of self-determination. Cloaked in top secrecy, CIA operations normally remain unknown except to the highest officials of the agency, the Pentagon, the White House, and select congressional committees.

There were widespread reports of CIA activity in the overthrow of the Allende government at the time and charges by pro-Allende elements that the coup was engineered by the CIA. The CIA is particularly vulnerable to criticism these days because of unresolved charges of possible involvement in Watergate-related activities.

When asked to rate the job the CIA is doing "as the chief foreign intelligence agency of the U. S. government," the public gives it only a 42 to 31 per cent vote.

Secretary of State Kissinger's alleged role in U. S. operations in Chile has reportedly stemmed from orders originating with him as head of the 40 Committee, a supersecret group responsible for America's covert intelligence matters.

When asked if Kissinger's usefulness would be impaired if allegations of his involvement in CIA activity in Chile were true, 18 per cent of the respondents said it would "seriously damage" his usefulness as secretary of State, and another 31 per cent said it would "only partly damage" him. One in three people said that even if a Kissinger role in Chile were proven, it would not "damage his influence at all."

THE CHARGES of American intervention in the overthrow of the Allende regime obviously have raised questions by Americans about our foreign intelligence operations in general and the CIA in particular. And it could potentially cause a decline in confidence in Kissinger here at home.

But at the present, Kissinger is still highly regarded.

Participants in the nationwide survey were asked: "How would you rate the job Henry Kissinger is doing as secretary of State—excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"

	Sept.	July	May
	%	%	%
Positive (good-excellent)	73	79	85
Negative (only fair-poor)	22	15	10
Not sure	5	6	5

Even tho Kissinger has slipped in public favor since May, he still commands far more respect than most public figures in this year of dashed confidence in government.

But regardless of Kissinger's achievements and policy at large, the policy of U. S. intervention in Chile stands condemned by Americans. The survey asked:

"Do you think it was right or wrong for the U. S. to intervene in the internal affairs of Chile and to try to destabilize its government?"

	Total public
	%
Right	18
Wrong	60
Not sure	22

Among those Americans who want their public officials to level with them and keep covert government activities to a minimum, there is likely to be a growing demand for full disclosure of the role of the CIA, particularly where its activities might conflict with the right of other nations to self-determination.

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