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Chile: Legacy of the Allende years

No Peaceful Way: Chile's Struggle for Dignity, by Gary MacEoin. New York: Sheed and Ward. \$8.95.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Chile, edited by Paul M. Sweezy and Harry Magdoff. New York: Monthly Review Press. \$7.50.

By James Nelson Goodsell

Verdicts on Salvador Allende Gossens' three year of Marxist-leaning rule in Chile are coming in. Like the government itself when it was in power (1970-1973), opinions are divided.

But the authors of "No Peaceful Way" and "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Chile" leave no doubt that they consider Allende's overthrow as a tragedy. The thwarted hopes of the workers and peasants will make it extremely difficult for the present military leaders to govern, they believe.

In fact, Mr. MacEoin, from his long experience with both Latin America and his native Ireland, worries that Chile might become "another North-ern Ireland."

MacEoin's book, with its wise scholarship, able marshaling of facts, and clear writing, is easily the better book. It chronicles the years of Allende rule and his efforts to nudge Chile toward socialism, providing a solid look at his successes and failures (there were plenty of both), and the obstacles he encountered.

Chile was a heady place under Allende. "As a politician pursuing unconventional objectives by conventional means, he had few peers," MacEoin writes.

"Even when his overwhelmingly powerful enemies in Congress abandoned the role of a loyal opposition, without which representational democracy cannot function, and when the judiciary dropped its mask of objectivity to become an integral part with Congress of the openly disloyal opposition, he refused consistently to play by their rules."

There are readers who may quarrel with this view, but MacEoin documents the evidence and makes a fairly strong case. Some of his most telling analysis concerns what happened immediately before the military coup upset Allende's constitutional government just a year ago.

Role of the CIA

In some prescient passages, he takes a hard look at the United States' role in the ouster. Writing before the Central Intelligence Agency's attempts to "destabilize" the Allende government were disclosed this month, MacEoin documents the agency's penetration of Chilean political parties, its support of anti-Allende demonstrations, and its financing of opposition newspapers. It is a grim tale.

The Sweezy-Magdoff book is a compilation of articles which have appeared in *Monthly Review* and other publications. All have a partisan Marxist tone and should be read with this in mind. But precisely because of their bias they have some value.

In the opening essay, Mr. Sweezy analyzes Allende's overthrow, arguing that "The Chilean tragedy confirms what should have been, and to many was, obvious all along, that there is no such thing as a peaceful road to socialism."

Editor Sweezy contends that Allende's Unidad Popular (UP) government — which was composed of the President's own Socialists, the Communists, and other left-leaning parties — made a series of mistakes once it had achieved power.

Toward socialism

For instance, he says that the UP should have followed up the successful municipal elections by wresting "complete control of the state apparatus from the bourgeoisie" which was then in disarray. Failure to attempt at least to consolidate its

power was, in Mr. Sweezy's opinion, the fatal error of the Allende government.

Both the MacEoin and the Sweezy-Magdoff books suggest some of the forces which will be at work in Chile during the years ahead. Mr. MacEoin is correct in observing that "the meaning of UP's attempt to lead Chile toward socialism by constitutional methods must be sought less in the president than in the social movements on which he depended and within which he had to maneuver.

"As a corollary, his death did not alter radically the fundamental equations. The circumstances in which it occurred will undoubtedly influence future strategy, but the forces through which he worked are the same today as yesterday."

The Allende years in Chile are ended, but not the desire of millions of Chileans for some of the things Allende seemed to promise them. In a sense, the forces he unleashed are as real today as when he headed the government.

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