

Keeping the US Hand Well Hidden:

The Role of the Church Committee in Rethinking US Covert

Intervention in the 1970s

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Timeline

October 22, 1970	General Schneider Shot
October 25, 1970	Death of General Schneider
March 20-22, 1973	Senate Foreign Relations Sub-committee on Multinational Corporations (ITT-CIA Hearings)
September 11, 1973	President Salvador Allende Overthrown by Military Coup
September 17, 1973	Senate Foreign Relations Sub-committee Nomination Hearings for Henry Kissinger
August 9, 1974	President Nixon Resigns and President Ford Sworn into Office
August to October, 1974	Détente hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations
January 4, 1975	Rockefeller Commission Formed
January 27, 1975	Church Committee Formed
February 19, 1975	Pike Committee Formed
June 6, 1975	Rockefeller Commission Releases Final Report
November 20, 1975	Church Committee Releases Interim Report
December 18, 1975	Church Committee Releases Staff Report
January 31, 1976	Pike Committee Releases Final Report
February 18, 1976	Executive Order 11905 Issued
April 26, 1976	Church Committee Releases Final Report
May 19, 1976	Establishment of Senate Permanent Select Intelligence Committee
July 14, 1977	Establishment of House Permanent Select Intelligence Committee

Introduction

Three shots rang out in the early morning of October 22, 1970, in the middle of Santiago, Chile.¹ General René Schneider was the intended target of a kidnapping attempt, but the operation quickly went sour when General Schneider took out his own gun to protect himself. The intended kidnappers reacted by shooting at him as he sat in the backseat of his car, and two shots pierced his hand while the third lodged in his chest. Although rushed to the hospital, he died three days later from his wounds. Chileans were in shock at the death of the commander-in-chief of the military, and United States President Richard Nixon quickly sent his condolences to Chilean President Eduardo Frei. Yet President Frei was completely unaware that officials within the Nixon White House were the ones who encouraged and provided financial and strategic support to the kidnappers.²

Chilean General René Schneider was the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army, a respected military official, and staunch constitutionalist who, despite political differences, supported the Congressional ratification of socialist Salvador Allende as president of Chile after his election in 1970.³ Yet support of Allende was not unanimous throughout the military, and in an attempt to thwart his assumption of the presidency various military officials began plotting to stop his electoral ratification. The US, acting through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), provided financial and strategic aid to various groups who it identified as potentially successful coup plotters. On October 22,

¹ Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: New Press, 2013), 28; the title quote “Keeping the US hand well hidden” from: From United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Directorate of Plans. Western Hemisphere Division to unknown, “[Policy to Overthrow Salvador Allende by Coup],” cable, 16 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00258.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

³ *Ibid.*

1970, a group led by Chilean General Roberto Viaux attempted to kidnap General Schneider, but his unexpected resistance led to his assailants assassinating him instead.

The impact of General Schneider's death in the US did not end with his assassination in 1970. In subsequent years, the death of General Schneider was on the minds of the executive and legislative branches. Beginning with congressional inquiries in 1975, President Gerald Ford faced questions from Congress and the US press about covert intelligence activities in Chile surrounding the election and presidency of Salvador Allende. One example of these covert intelligence activities in Chile was US involvement in the plot to kidnap General Schneider. This became part of a greater moment of public and congressional demands for accountability by the White House and the intelligence agencies.

In 1975, Congress addressed questions surrounding covert activities that the CIA conducted in the US and around the world from the 1960s until the 1970s with the formation of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities.⁴ Chaired by Senator Frank Church, an Idaho Democrat, the committee became known as the Church Committee. The Church Committee focused its investigations on the actions and misconduct of the intelligence agencies and the White House from the 1960s to 1975.⁵ One aspect of the Church Committee's wide-reaching investigation into the intelligence agencies was alleged US involvement in assassination plots involving foreign leaders.

⁴ Loch K. Johnson, *A Season of Inquiry Revisited: The Church Committee Confronts America's Spy Agencies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 2.

⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders Interim Report*. 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, S. Rep. 94-465, 2.

The plot to kidnap General Schneider and his subsequent assassination was not the only assassination plot involving a foreign leader in Latin America that the US government participated in. In fact, plots to kidnap or assassinate foreign leaders with alleged US covert involvement occurred around the world from the 1960s to 1970. Between 1961 and 1970, the CIA considered the possibility of kidnapping or assassinating at least five foreign leaders: Patrice Lumumba of Congo, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, and General René Schneider of Chile. All but Fidel Castro were victims of plots and assassinations that the US played at least a minimal role in. The Church Committee's investigation of the US' role in the deaths of these five foreign leaders formed its report *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, released in 1975.⁶

A literature review of the existing works in the areas of US covert involvement in Chile and congressional investigation into covert activities by the US intelligence agencies demonstrates the lack of connective works between these two areas. The first set of works examines the role that the US played in Chile from the 1960s to 1973 and is the focus of many scholarly works that lay out the purpose and nature of the US' involvement. The focal point of many of these works is the overthrow and death of President Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973 by a military coup. In an effort to understand how the military coup successfully overthrew President Allende, previous works traced the US' involvement in inciting unrest in Chile in the hopes of encouraging a military coup. The first set of works that examine the death of General Schneider situate his death within the broader framework of US intervention in Chile during the 1970s. *The Pinochet File* by

⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, 7.

Peter Kornbluh uses a variety of documents from the Nixon White House, CIA, and State Department obtained by the National Security Archive to give a comprehensive overview of US covert involvement in Chile during the second half of the 20th century.⁷ *The Pinochet File* has the most extensive discussion of the US involvement in the plot to kidnap General Schneider, yet only briefly mentions his inclusion in the Church Committee's report. *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* by Tanya Harmer includes the death of General Schneider within a larger discussion of the US' role in Latin America during the height of the Cold War.⁸ His death serves as an example of how the US used Chile as a battleground in its Cold War fight against communism. These works view the botched kidnapping and subsequent assassination of General René Schneider as the event that serves as the first concrete example of covert intervention by the US into Chilean politics.⁹

Driven by the fear that socialist president Salvador Allende would facilitate a communist intrusion into the US' traditional sphere of influence in Latin America, the US administration felt forced to take action in Chile to stop the electoral ratification of presidential victory. To ensure the downfall of Allende, they planned to kidnap General Schneider and blame his disappearance on left-wing radicals. In the examination of the role of US covert involvement in Chile, the death of General Schneider is included as an early example of the role that the US' covert involvement played in shaping Chile between 1970 and 1973. Overall there is sparse information about his death in scholarly works, with only

⁷ Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: New Press, 2013).

⁸ Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁹ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 22.

these two works providing details about his death beyond the quick summary found in other works on US covert involvement in Chile. This set of works categorizes the US' covert involvement in Chilean affairs as an example of the neo-imperialism of the US throughout Chile and Latin America in the twentieth century, without looking at the long-term effects of his death outside of Chile.

The second set of works that examine the death of General Schneider are those that detail the 1975 Church Committee's investigation of the CIA's covert involvement in foreign countries. Both written by staff members of the Church Committee, *A Season of Inquiry Revisited* by Loch K. Johnson and *Democracy in the Dark* by Frederick A.O. Schwarz address the death of General Schneider in their discussion of *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*.¹⁰ *US National Security, Intelligence, and Democracy*, edited by Russell A. Miller, includes chapters from a historian, political scientist, and members of the Church Committee's staff.¹¹ *Congress Oversees the Intelligence Community*, by political scientist Frank Smist, covers the history of congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies from 1947 to 1990.¹² In the chapter "Investigative and Institutional Oversight Combined: The Church Senate Committee," he discusses the Church Committee's impact on strengthening congressional oversight of the CIA and White House with only a brief mention of General Schneider.

¹⁰ Loch K. Johnson was special assistant to Senator Church, and Frederick A.O. Schwarz was the Church Committee's Chief Counsel; Loch K. Johnson, *A Season of Inquiry Revisited: The Church Committee Confronts America's Spy Agencies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015); Frederick A.O. Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark: The Seduction of Government Secrecy* (New York, New York: The New Press, 2015).

¹¹ Russell A. Miller, ed., *US National Security, Intelligence, and Democracy: From the Church Committee to the War on Terror* (London: Routledge, 2008).

¹² Frank John Smist, *Congress Oversees the Intelligence Community, 1947-1994* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1994).

These works only include the death of General Schneider within their discussion of *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. Although his death took place in Chile, these works examine its continued relevance in the US. These works discuss the death of General Schneider because the Church Committee chose to investigate his death and the kidnapping plot that led up to his assassination. The Church Committee included his death in its wider investigation because documents supplied by the White House and interviews given by CIA employees before the Committee included indications that CIA officials and officials in the Nixon White House spoke, and perhaps even provided supplies, to the Chileans who plotted to kidnap General Schneider.¹³

The Church Committee included his death in its investigation and report because the plot to kidnap General Schneider that led to his assassination aligned with other instances of assassination plots involving foreign leaders. These works view his death as just one of a multitude of examples of the US' covert involvement in kidnapping and assassination plots around the world. In its assessment of the attempted kidnapping and assassination of General Schneider, his death serves as a building block in the Church Committee's case that congressional oversight of intelligence activities was necessary to curb the abuses of the intelligence agencies and White House. By looking at General Schneider's death from the perspective of the Church Committee's investigation these works seek to understand the role that the plot to kidnap him, along with plots involving four other foreign leaders, played in accounting for and subsequently curtailing the actions of the intelligence agencies and White House. It is important to note that participants in the Church Committee wrote all the works except for *Congress Oversees the Intelligence*

¹³ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 47.

Community, which was written by a political scientist. No major scholarly works on the Church Committee have been written by a historian.

As detailed above, the examination of General Schneider's death takes two different roles in the existing literature. In both cases, his death serves as an example to illustrate a larger phenomenon occurring in two very different locations. In the first instance, his death serves as the first concrete example of US covert involvement in Chile. Over the next three years, US covert involvement in encouraging a military coup continued to grow, culminating with the overthrow of Salvador Allende in 1973. In the second instance, his death is one of five examples of alleged US covert involvement in kidnapping and assassination plots around the world. As a result of the Church Committee's investigations into these plots, Congress and the White House instituted new laws and oversight mechanisms to make sure that the CIA and the White House would never engage in plots to assassinate foreign leaders again.

How General Schneider went from being the victim of a kidnapping plot turned assassination to a fundamental piece of the Church Committee's investigation has previously been told in two separate narratives. Instead of simply looking at each of these narratives separately, I am seeking to connect and use them to inform each other and gain insights into the US' approach to intelligence activities both in 1970 and 1975. There is already a large body of work from historians looking at US covert involvement in Chile and from political scientists and first-hand observers looking at the Church Committee investigation into assassination plots involving foreign leaders. What is missing is a comprehensive historical overview of the ways in which US covert involvement in Chile directly affected the creation and investigation of the Church Committee. The death of

General Schneider had continued implications for the US even when the Nixon White House thought it was a skeleton that would remain in the White House's closet. The declassification and release of additional White House documents since the 1990s revealed, for the first time, the White House's perspective on the Church Committee. Unexplored in previous works, I will use these White House documents to show the Ford White House's reaction to the Church Committee investigation as it occurred. By looking at the Committee's investigation from the perspective of both the legislative and executive branches, I will show how General Schneider's death had continued implications for both groups.

Just as it is too narrow a scope to only view the impact of General Schneider's death within the context of US efforts to stop Allende's election and ratification, it is also too narrow to view the story of the Church Committee investigations as starting in 1975 when the Committee's members began to investigate possible US covert involvement in assassination plots involving foreign leaders. Using the death of General Schneider as an example of a potential assassination plot involving a foreign leader conducted by the US required the Committee to investigate his death with the goal of finding out whether there was US covert involvement in the kidnapping plot that led to his assassination. The Committee recognized the context of the Cold War, but a narrow time frame and obstruction by the Ford White House did not allow them to consider the full narrative of his death. The American public and Congress demanded changes, and the Committee's goal was to uncover and rectify the abuse of the intelligence agencies by the White House and increase congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies. The assassination plots involving foreign leaders were a key element that generated public outrage. That an

example of US involvement in a kidnapping plot turned assassination took place in Chile, a country with a history of stable democracy, only made US intervention more shocking.¹⁴ His death was not simply the result of an attempted kidnapping plot orchestrated by the US that occurred in 1970. Informed by the US' policy towards Chile, and indeed Latin America, it occurred at a time when Cold War concerns trumped the rules of covert involvement in another country's affairs. Instead of being immediately pinned to the US in 1970, the death of General Schneider remained a skeleton in the Nixon White House's closet until 1975.

As a building block of the Church Committee's report on assassination plots involving foreign leaders, the death of General Schneider played a role in the consequences that the Committee's report had for the CIA and the White House. After decades of minimal congressional oversight, the Church Committee introduced oversight mechanisms to control the intelligence agencies and correct the presidential abuse of power that it saw throughout its investigation. The Church Committee's investigation and report made President Ford acknowledge the White House's past wrongdoings and compelled him to prohibit any future misuse of intelligence activities by the White House. Executive Order 11905 banned the US from carrying out assassinations on foreign soil for the first time in US history.¹⁵ Additionally, the creation of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees strengthened congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies. The actions of the Church Committee and its investigation of assassination plots involving foreign leaders

¹⁴ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 31.

¹⁵ Gerald R. Ford: "Executive Order 11905—United States Foreign Intelligence Activities," February 18, 1976. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=59348>.

demonstrate one way that a moment of national concern over governmental abuse of power, stemming from the Watergate scandal, manifested and led to real change.

Ultimately, it does not matter that the Church Committee found no solid evidence that President Nixon and White House officials knew or approved of the final plot to kidnap General Schneider that led to his assassination. Although there is evidence that President Nixon wished to encourage a military coup in Chile through the kidnapping of General Schneider, the Committee found no evidence that President Nixon, or any of his staff, explicitly permitted the plotters to carry out an assassination if General Schneider resisted. When news of General Schneider's death reached the US, internal White House documents show that the US had no prior knowledge of the his assassins' actions or intentions.¹⁶ The evidence uncovered by the Church Committee did not allow them to make a definitive claim that the US was either involved or not involved in General Schneider's assassination. It only confirmed that there was US involvement in the planning stages of the plot to kidnap him. The true extent of the US' involvement may never be revealed.

What is significant about General Schneider's death is that in the US, the Church Committee examined it and saw it as a clear example of illicit US covert involvement in the affairs of a foreign country. The fact that the committee chose to include it in the Church Committee's report shows the extraordinary nature of an investigation into the US' most secretive intelligence activities in foreign countries. After years of the White House denying its involvement in covert intelligence activities in foreign countries, the Church Committee decided to investigate alleged assassination plots and concluded that the White

¹⁶ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, VOLUME XXI, CHILE, 1969–1973*, eds. James McElveen and James Siekmeier, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2014), Document 169.

House plotted to kidnap or assassinate foreign leaders while having no authority to do so. The death of General Schneider occurred because the US made an overt attempt to initiate a coup to intervene in the ratification of a democratically elected president's electoral victory. The Church Committee's willingness to include General Schneider's death in its investigation shows that 1975 marked an extraordinary moment of concerted effort to bring an end to the White House using the CIA as a tool to carry out covert operations in foreign countries and, in the case of General Schneider, to bring about the President's desired outcome of a military coup regardless of its legality.

As the Church Committee conducted its investigation, the Ford White House knew that the investigation threatened to reveal some of the presidency's most damning secrets. One such secret was US covert involvement in Chile, a topic that threatened many in the Ford White House who served in the Nixon White House, such as Henry Kissinger, when this involvement took place. The same documents showing Henry Kissinger's involvement in planning US covert activities in Chile would later be evidence in the Church Committee's investigation. The Ford White House pushed back against the Committee including Chile and the death of General Schneider in its investigation, because it was afraid of what it revealed about how recently the US participated in covert activities abroad. The days of the imperial presidency ended in the wake of Nixon's presidency, and the White House now realized that the days of unbridled executive power were over. The continued implications of General Schneider's death for the White House threatened to reveal, to the Church Committee and the US public, the true extent of the Nixon White House's foreign covert involvement.

General Schneider's death was not the only example of an alleged plot involving a foreign leader used in the Church Committee's report. However, his death does stand out in that it connects two different, and important, threads of congressional inquiry during the "season of inquiry" of the 1970s.¹⁷ The uncovering of US covert involvement in both Chile and assassination plots involving foreign leaders is tied together by the death of General Schneider. By following these two threads separately at first, and then tying them together with the death of General Schneider, I will explore more deeply the role that the investigation of the death of General Schneider played in propelling the Committee towards uncovering the truth about covert involvement in Chile and assassination plots involving foreign leaders. While the season of inquiry the investigation occurred in enabled it, the lengths that the Church Committee went to in order to investigate the death of General Schneider demonstrates the determination of the Committee to uncover the whole truth about US involvement in kidnapping and assassination plots, no matter how shocking the truth of US involvement was.

I argue that following the death of General Schneider from a secret CIA plot gone wrong to a matter of congressional inquiry shows the long, convoluted process of uncovering and correcting the White House's use of the CIA to conduct President Nixon's desired covert foreign involvement. The larger story of General Schneider's death and US covert involvement in Chile shows that the investigation and creation of the Church Committee's report on assassination plots involving foreign leaders was not an isolated incident. Other congressional committees' investigations into US covert involvement in Chile preceded and influenced the Church Committee's investigation and interim report.

¹⁷ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 7.

These previous investigations also played a pivotal role in spurring Senator Church to form a committee dedicated in part to this and other incidents of abuse perpetrated by the intelligence agencies. No investigation occurred in isolation, and in fact each was a vital building block that gained evidence and awareness for the Committee members, like Senator Church, investigating them.

I will look at the events leading up to the death of General Schneider in 1970, and then examine the continued implications of his death in the US with the Church Committee in 1975 in order to investigate the ways that his death was part of a greater moment of government accountability in the post-Watergate, Cold War climate that impacted the US executive branch, legislative branch, and intelligence agencies. The first chapter will detail the Nixon White House's attitude toward Chile, and how US involvement in covert activities in Chile led to the death of General Schneider in 1970. The second chapter will pick up in 1973 with investigations by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations into US involvement in Chile that led to the formation of the Church Committee in 1975. The third chapter will discuss the process of investigating the Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders, the White House's attitude toward the investigation, and the findings of the interim report. In the conclusion I will address the effects of the Church Committee's investigations into assassination plots involving foreign leaders and the long-term implications of the Committee's investigation and report for the White House, intelligence agencies, and the congressional oversight of both organizations.

Chapter 1: US Covert Involvement and the Death of General Schneider

Latin America has been a sphere of US influence since the US introduced the Monroe Doctrine in 1823.¹ Since then the US' imperial ambitions have played out in Central and South America, often to disastrous effects in the region. Chile is one of many Latin American countries that were targets of US intervention into their economy, politics, and society during the twentieth century. From the Dominican Republic to Chile, the US' influence is seen in the collapse of governments considered to be working against US interests. The US then worked to usher in new governments friendlier to the US, regardless of their actions towards their own citizens.² In the 1970s, the US reacted to the political success of Marxist presidential candidate Salvador Allende in Chile by instituting widespread covert involvement in Chile aimed at stopping him from becoming president through military, economic, and political intervention.

The Cuban Revolution marked a critical change in the US' policy towards Latin America. After Fidel Castro ushered in the first viable communist government in the Western hemisphere in 1959, the far-off influence of the Soviet Union grew to become a tangible threat ninety miles away from American soil.³ The Soviet Union had its sphere of influence stretching from Europe to Asia, but the US did not plan on allowing them to encroach on the US' sphere in Latin America. Communism posed an existential danger to democracy that could be mobilized and exploited by the US, and became a central theme of US national politics during the Cold War.⁴ Although the US "lost" Cuba to communism,

¹ Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945-1993* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 21-22.

² Greg Grandin, *Kissinger's Shadow: The Long Reach of America's Most Controversial Statesman* (New York, New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 146.

³ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 21.

⁴ Joseph Masco, *The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect From the Cold War to the War On Terror* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 6.

the US would be sure not to allow any other Latin American country to follow the same path.⁵ After the Cuban Revolution, the US began zealously guarding the western hemisphere from potential Marxist intrusions into the governments of Latin America. Chile was historically a bastion of democracy in Latin America, and the US feared that if Chile “fell” to communism, the rest of Latin America would follow.⁶ The Cold War continued to escalate during Nixon’s presidency, which began in 1969, and he feared that a socialist Chile would create a “red sandwich” in Latin America.⁷ With Cuba to the north and Chile to the south, the democratic nations in the interior of Central and South America would be crushed beneath two slices of Soviet influence.

In the 1970s, Cold War tensions were still running high in Latin America and the rest of the world, and the US wanted to preserve its influence in Chile from the threat of communist intrusion. Cold War tensions put traditional US claims of promoting peace, liberty, and democracy in its foreign affairs up against the more pressing issues of a feared world-wide communist takeover. US actions abroad, and particularly in Latin America, no longer reflected the US’ claims of promoting peace, liberty, and democracy. Instead, the US’ actions transformed into a concerted effort to stop the electoral ratification of the democratically elected president of Chile, Salvador Allende, through covert activities. In its attempt to stop Allende from assuming office, the CIA used a multitude of covert activities: economic, political, and psychological manipulation. These activities eventually culminated in October 1970 with an overt attempt to intervene in the Chilean democratic

⁵ Greg Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Owl Books: Henry Holt, 2007), 58.

⁶ From United States Embassy, Chile to United States. Department of State, “Frei: Transacting the Future,” cable, 22 September 1970, Chile and the United States, Digital National Security Archive accession number CL00178; hereafter DNSA.

⁷ Smith, *Last Years*, 132.

system with the attempted kidnapping of General René Schneider. The US' involvement in the plot that ended with the assassination of General Schneider demonstrates the abuse of the intelligence agencies by the Nixon White House during the Cold War that subverted the US' promotion of democracy around the world.

The Election of 1970 and Escalation of US Involvement

For over a decade, the US watched with increasing wariness the rise of Chilean politician Salvador Allende. Even before the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Allende caught the attention of the US when he lost the 1958 presidential election by a small margin.⁸ As a leader of the Chilean socialist coalition, his near-upset of right-wing candidate Jorge Alessandri concerned President John F. Kennedy in the wake of Fidel Castro's revolution. This marked the beginning of concerted US efforts to stop "leftist revolutionary movements" led by Allende. The Alliance for Progress showered Chile with \$1.2 billion in economic aid and encouraged US investors to increase their investments in Chile.⁹ The Alliance for Progress was only the public half of what the US provided to Chile in aid. The US government, covertly working through the CIA, also supported the Christian Democratic party and its reformist and centrist policies. Beyond supporting the party financially, the CIA also initiated a massive campaign of "press, radio, films, pamphlets, posters, leaflets, direct mailings, paper streamers, and wall paintings" attacking Cuban communism and encouraging support of the Christian Democratic party.¹⁰ Twelve years before the pivotal election year of 1970, the US had already demonstrated a willingness to

⁸ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

interrupt Chile's democratic process. Although the Cuban Revolution played a key role in heightening US fears of communism in Latin America, the election of 1958 shows that there were preexisting concerns about the potential for Allende's electoral success before 1959.

The US' success in supporting candidates through financial contributions and propaganda did not last for another election. For a time, the US' actions to bolster centrist candidates appeared to work and in both the 1958 and 1964 elections Allende lost. However, in the lead-up to the 1970 Chilean presidential election the strength of US-backed candidates began to wane. Allende's coalition of left-wing parties, *Unidad Popular* (UP), faced off against the Christian Democratic Party's candidate Radomiro Tomic and former president Jorge Alessandri. The Chilean presidential race of 1970 threatened to fulfill the US' longstanding fears of Marxist ideology invading Latin America. Socialist candidate Salvador Allende's rising popularity and unprecedented success in the polls in the months before the election forced the US to consider the possibility of his election. From the Kennedy administration on, the US quietly helped the Christian Democratic party in the hopes that it would appeal to the middle-class base the US believed was necessary to prevent a leftist candidate's election. Yet the election of 1970 showed that Allende's leftist politics could also attract the Chilean middle class. Now, quiet economic aid to the Christian Democratic Party would not be sufficient to stop Allende and the *Unidad Popular* coalition. The US increased its covert activities to combat the appeal of Allende and his socialist policies.

President Nixon faced the dilemma of how to approach the rising popularity of success of Allende as a candidate in the 1970 election. Previous presidential

administrations dedicated millions in dollars and the efforts of the CIA to prevent Allende's election, but President Nixon now faced the possibility that Allende would be elected against the US' best efforts. To President Nixon, a man without any faith in the ability of "poor, undeveloped countries to govern themselves democratically," the de-escalation of US involvement in Chile was not an option.¹¹ President Nixon's contempt of Allende extended to a personal level; to Edward Korry, US ambassador to Chile, he once said that the cause of trouble in Chile was "that son of a bitch Allende. We're going to smash him."¹² National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger shared President Nixon's concerns about the threat posed by Allende and general disdain for Chile, remarking that he did not see "why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people."¹³ With no faith in the Chilean people and the belief that Allende would bring another Cuban communist dictatorship to Chile, the threat of a Marxist president in Chile left President Nixon with no choice. He chose to escalate US involvement in the election, and the Allende campaign became the target of increased propaganda, financial aid, and covert activities. President Nixon, not the Director of the CIA, decreed that Allende would be stopped through covert involvement. An indicator of how far he was willing to go in the fight against communism, President Nixon and other White House officials took direct action in dictating the course of covert involvement in Chile.

¹¹ Grandin, *Empire's Workshop*, 53.

¹² Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 25.

¹³ Memorandum, Minutes of the Meeting of the 40 Committee, 27 June 1970, folder: Buchen, Phillip W.: Files, 1974-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, Gerald R. Ford Library; hereafter GRFL.

The attitude of the Nixon White House in the months leading up to the 1970 Chilean presidential election was one of relentless hostility towards Salvador Allende. Funneled through International Telephone & Telegraph (ITT) accounts in Chile, US dollars continued to support the other presidential candidates, Radomiro Tomic and Jorge Alessandri.¹⁴ For months during the presidential campaign the US sent millions of dollars, personally authorized by President Nixon, to fund propaganda campaigns across Chile to fight back against Allende's rising poll numbers.¹⁵ The CIA hoped that using the same propaganda tactics that stopped Allende's previous attempts to win the presidency would work again.¹⁶ To aid in spreading its anti-Allende message, the CIA enlisted conservative and widely-read Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* to run editorials advocating against Allende's election.¹⁷ Even with funding of millions of dollars, the polls continued to show Salvador Allende on top as election day grew nearer.

On September 4, 1970, the Chilean people chose Salvador Allende as their next president. To the US, an "avowed Marxist" was now president-elect of Chile.¹⁸ To Allende and his supporters, a "socialist parliamentarian" overcame international opposition to become president-elect.¹⁹ Yet this was not an immediate victory; Allende obtained the plurality of the votes with 36.4 percent of the vote but not an absolute majority.²⁰ It was rare for a single candidate to receive over fifty percent of the vote with three major candidates running for president. The winning presidential candidate receiving a plurality, and not a majority, of the vote was normal in Chile. In the 1964 election, Allende faced

¹⁴ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 48.

¹⁵ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 50.

Eduardo Frei, who was a coalition candidate. With Allende and Frei as the front-runners in the election, the Chilean vote split between the two candidates. In the 1970 election, Allende was now a coalition candidate, while the center and right failed to form a coalition and put forth a single candidate.²¹ Instead of two candidates splitting the vote, as in the 1964 election, three candidates now divided the vote. The other two candidates split the center and right-wing vote, while a coalition of left-wing parties backed Allende. With three candidates in the 1970 election and as a coalition candidate, Allende was able to obtain the plurality of the vote.

Under Chilean law, Allende's election results had to be ratified in Congress before he could be sworn in as president. After Allende's election on September 4, 1970, his election was set to be ratified in Congress on October 24, 1970. In the intervening period between his election and congressional ratification, the US saw its chance to stop Allende's presidency.²² Due to the White House's knowledge of international and domestic attention on Chile, it decided that covert activities to be undertaken before his ratification by Congress was the only way to assure that Allende would not become president.

Although Salvador Allende's politics were decidedly on the left, the reforms he advocated for could not simply be labeled as communism as the US called them. Although a vocal critic of capitalism and friend to Fidel Castro, he had no close ties to the Soviet Union and was "not an invention of Moscow."²³ Salvador Allende's particular form of socialism gained popularity in Chile due to his idea of "La Vía Chilena" or "The Chilean

²¹ Arturo Valenzuela, "Chile," in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, ed. Juan L. Linz and Alfred Stepan, vol. 1 (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 41.

²² Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 22.

²³ Smith, *Last Years*, 132.

Way” to socialism. Instead of a swift transition to economic socialist policies, Allende promised that Chile would go through the democratic process and each socialist policy he hoped to enact would be put up to a vote in Congress. His base of support primarily consisted of workers and middle class university students, and his *Unidad Popular* coalition united radicals, communists, socialists, and traditional left-wing supporters. He promised a revolution “of red wine and empanadas,” and the Chilean people responded with their support in the 1970 election.²⁴

Allende’s Chilean-focused policies also urged “liberation” from economic dependency on the US, especially in the copper industry.²⁵ The US’ economic interest was firmly rooted in Chile’s economy, especially the copper industry, throughout the twentieth century. Copper was a major Chilean export and the copper mining industry was a key component of Chile’s economy. Two American mining companies, Anaconda and Kennecott, heavily invested in Chilean copper mines and had holdings of hundreds of millions of dollars in Chile.²⁶ Outside of the copper mining industry, ITT was the third largest investor in Chile, with holdings ranging from the Chilean Telephone Company (CTC) to hotels and communications.²⁷ Committed to supporting these American interests in Chile, the US government promoted US investment there by working with the Chilean government to create favorable conditions for US companies. One of Allende’s campaign promises was to nationalize the Chilean copper industry; an important issue to many Chileans. Even US-supported candidate Eduardo Frei advocated for the partial

²⁴ Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 129.

²⁵ Harmer, *Allende’s Chile*, 34.

²⁶ “ITT in Chile,” *NACLA*, accessed December 16, 2017, <https://nacla.org/article/itt-chile>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

nationalization of copper mines.²⁸ Allende's socialist campaign promises put him squarely against US businesses heavily invested in the Chilean copper industry and Chileans who profited from US business ventures in Chile.²⁹ The economic threat to US companies of Chilean nationalization of US-owned mining companies fed into the growing US government and corporate discontent with his ideology and policies. As a charismatic leader with the popular masses behind him, his warm relationship with Fidel Castro, and his avowed socialist ideology, Salvador Allende was exactly the type of leader the US was afraid of as it fought the Cold War in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.³⁰

As news of his election arrived in the White House, officials contacted the CIA to inform them that covert activities would be taking place in Chile to impede Allende's assumption of the presidency. The US "suffered a most grievous defeat," and needed to act quickly to stop Allende before he gained any more power.³¹ The State Department, CIA, and White House devised two plans for covert involvement to stop Allende's inauguration. The first plan, known as Track I, was to pay Chilean congress members to vote against the ratification of Allende's election. The second plan, known as Track II, was to foment a coup to stop the congressional ratification of Allende's electoral victory so he could not take or hold office.³² Although action on both tracks ran simultaneously, President Nixon and his closest advisors focused on the implementation of Track II. They feared that the bribed Chilean Congress members of Track I would not follow through on their promise to vote against ratifying Allende's victory. Although Track II would not be a coup in the

²⁸ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 5.

²⁹ See also: Gregory Palast, "A Marxist Threat to Cola Sales? Pepsi Demands a US Coup. Goodbye Allende. Hello Pinochet," *The Guardian*, November 8, 1998.

³⁰ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 2.

³¹ From United States Embassy. Chile to United States. Department of State, "Allende Wins," cable, 5 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00105.

³² Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 1.

strictest sense of the word, since Allende would not have yet held governmental power before his presidential inauguration, this plan would be conducted with the intention of stopping him from assuming governmental power. Additionally, coup is the nomenclature used in White House documents to talk about impeding the ratification of Allende's electoral victory. President Nixon's orders on September 15th to CIA director Richard Helms to "prevent Allende from coming to power or to unseat him" kicked off nearly two months of Track II activity that escalated US covert involvement in Chile.³³

Following Allende's election, the pressure mounted within the White House to find a way to prevent the ratification of Allende's electoral victory. Two of President Nixon's closest advisors, Secretary of State William Rogers and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, discussed how "if the first time a Communist wins the US tries to prevent the constitutional process from coming into play we will look very bad."³⁴ Kissinger responded that "the President's view is to do the maximum possible to prevent an Aliente [*sic*] takeover, but through Chilean sources and with a low posture."³⁵ The Nixon White House was already aware that any US involvement in stopping Allende's ratification would have to be discreet and limited to aiding anti-Allende Chileans. It was also aware of the international attention on the presidential race, as Allende would be the first democratically-elected socialist president in the Western Hemisphere. The election of Allende forced the US to face the political, economic, and ideological fears that Allende

³³ United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Directorate of Plans. Western Hemisphere Division, "Genesis of Project Fubelt," memorandum for record, 16 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00155; United States. Director of Central Intelligence, "Meeting with President on Chile at 1525 Sept. 15, '70," notes, 15 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00150.

³⁴ United States. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, "[Strategy toward Chile]," memorandum of telephone conversation, 14 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00142.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

generated. On the most basic level he was a political threat that, the US feared, would turn Chile from democracy to socialism. The US also faced economic pressure from US companies in Chile, who recognized that Allende's election meant the nationalization of the industries US companies controlled. Finally, the ideological threat posed by Allende made the Nixon White House see his every action through the lens of the Cold War. As the reality of Allende's election grew threateningly closer, President Nixon's White House advisors faced the possibility that financial efforts and the spread of propaganda would not be enough to stop an Allende victory. Yet even if elected, there would still be a narrow window of opportunity to stop Allende's inauguration as president.

The delicate balance between its differing public and private attitudes towards Allende forced the US to design and coordinate the coup to stop Allende's electoral ratification without taking direct action in any coup activities. Internally, the White House stressed that "the US cannot operate this plan: it must be Chilean and Frei's. Our support and stimulus may be crucial, and resources may become important. But in essence we would be backstopping a Chilean effort."³⁶ This cable signals the White House's concern that its involvement in the plot remain on a strictly material and strategic level. It had no desire to get agents on the ground in Chile involved with any plot beyond playing a supportive role in it. Any coup attempt would have to come from inside the Chilean government, and current president Eduardo Frei was singled out to propel these efforts. Yet Frei was unwilling to take an active stance against the ratification of Allende's

³⁶ United States. National Security Council. Staff, "Chile--40 Committee Meeting, Monday--September 14," action memorandum, 14 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00145.

election. He was concerned about protecting his own popularity, decided by the same public that chose Allende as their next president.³⁷

Voicing little hope that Frei could spur a coup, Ambassador Korry provided the White House with his prognosis on other Chileans' ability to attempt a coup. If Frei would not risk his popularity to oppose Allende, Korry identified Chilean military generals as potential leaders of a coup.³⁸ It would be up to Chilean military officials to carry out the actual coup activities, but their actions would be planned and funded by the White House acting through CIA officials stationed in Santiago. On October 10, a CIA official stationed in Santiago received a cable from CIA headquarters offering guidance on coup plotting that reaffirmed the US' "firm and continuing policy that Allende be overthrown by a coup... It is imperative that these actions be implemented clandestinely and securely so that USG [United States Government] and American hand be well hidden."³⁹ The cable lays out the importance to the CIA and White House of keeping US covert involvement a secret from both the Chilean and American public. Although concerned about keeping these activities covert, the US was still willing to go to great lengths to ensure that Allende was not inaugurated. While privately plotting to overthrow the democratically elected president of another nation-state, publicly the US planned to give no sign of its true attitude towards Chile.

³⁷ From United States Embassy. Chile to United States. Department of State, "Frei: Transacting the Future," cable, 22 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00178.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ From United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Directorate of Plans. Western Hemisphere Division to unknown, "[Policy to Overthrow Salvador Allende by Coup]," cable, 16 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00258.

Creating an Atmosphere of Intervention

The White House shifted its focus to members of the Chilean military who could impede the ratification of Allende's election in Congress. The first military official it considered as a possible ally in stopping Allende's electoral ratification in the legislature was General René Schneider, the commander-in-chief of the army and a staunch constitutionalist. What CIA officers stationed in Chile soon learned was that General Schneider would not rescind his support of Allende's valid and legal electoral results. In fact, US officials in the CIA and White House soon learned that General Schneider created what Ambassador Korry dubbed the "Schneider Doctrine of Nonintervention."⁴⁰ General Schneider firmly believed that the military should not have a political role in the Chilean government. The military ought to be an apolitical organization that answered only to the Chilean constitution, and not to political parties and government officials.⁴¹ Instead of being a potential ally of the US who could help inspire a coup to stop the congressional ratification of Allende's victory, General Schneider was now the "stumbling block" to making a coup attempt into a reality.⁴²

With the knowledge that General Schneider would resist any attempts to stop Allende's presidency, the Nixon White House changed its focus on him from one of the potential coup leaders to the target of a plot to inspire a coup. If a coup were to take place, General Schneider would have to be neutralized first.⁴³ White House officials, the US military attaché in Chile, State Department officials, and CIA officers planned how

⁴⁰ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 8.

⁴¹ From United States Embassy. Chile to United States. Department of State, "Frei: Transacting the Future," cable, 22 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00178.

⁴² Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 22.

General Schneider and his command of the armed forces could be neutralized.⁴⁴ Under the direction of other Chilean military officials, General Schneider would be kidnapped and taken to Argentina. Yet it remains unclear what would happen to General Schneider when he arrived in Argentina. The White House makes no mentions or inquiries into this stage of the plot, only concerning themselves with how events would transpire in Chile after General Schneider's removal. Even the language to describe what would happen to General Schneider was not consistent; various plotters in contact with the White House referred to its actions as kidnapping, abducting, neutralizing, and removing him. It remains unclear what the White House or the Chilean plotters planned to do with General Schneider once he was in Argentina. Later events showed that the plotters did not plan on what they would do in the event that he was mortally wounded during the kidnapping attempt.

The US' focus was on the events in Chile that it hoped the removal of General Schneider would trigger. With General Schneider out of the picture, a coup climate could be created and the military would play a key, and decidedly political, role. A high-ranking military official who was anti-Allende and sympathetic to a coup would be named as the new commander-in-chief of the army.⁴⁵ News of General Schneider's kidnapping would soon reach the Chilean public and the army would be under the authority of a new anti-Allende commander-in-chief.⁴⁶ The military's blame for his kidnapping would fall on left-wing radical supporters of Salvador Allende, leading to a national uprising to demand that Congress not ratify Allende's election results.⁴⁷ The outrage amongst the Chilean public at

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 14.

the kidnapping would create the coup climate that the US and anti-Allende Chilean military officials desired. This plot reveals another oversight by the US in its plot to stop Allende's ratification. The US planned on blaming a group of Allende's leftist supporters for the kidnapping, yet there was no reason why they would do this. General Schneider in no way threatened Allende supporters or leftists, and they would have no reason to kidnap him. His unwillingness to allow the military to intervene in Allende's election would be good for leftists, and not a reason to remove him from Chile. The only group that stood to lose from his unwillingness to allow military intervention in politics were right-wing supporters who wanted to stop Allende from assuming office. There was no guarantee that the plot would work, and in fact it would have taken an extraordinary amount of luck on the plotters' side to successfully kidnap General Schneider, remove him to Argentina, and stop Allende's electoral ratification. Although it is not clear whether the US actually thought that Chileans would not question placing the blame on leftists or it was unaware that this made no sense, it raises questions about how well the US thought out the plot to kidnap General Schneider.

The Nixon White House now faced a new problem in its efforts to impede Allende's presidency; it needed to find the appropriate military official to plan and conduct the kidnapping plot with the guidance of the US. This forced the US, acting through CIA agents on the ground in Santiago, to look for a right-leaning general willing to kidnap General Schneider and lead the ensuing coup. Any military official considered to carry out the kidnapping plot would have to be an opponent of the Schneider Doctrine, and it did not take long to find possible plotters amongst the Chilean military. The two Chilean military officials in contact with the US to conduct the kidnapping were General Roberto Viaux

and General Camilo Valenzuela. Both generals opposed the Schneider Doctrine and viewed the military as a reactionary force which should be engaged in Chilean politics.⁴⁸

First, the CIA officers in Chile communicated extensively with General Viaux, who planned to kidnap General Schneider and blame it on Allende supporters to stop the congressional ratification of Allende. The US shared his opposition to General Schneider but believed that General Viaux should not work alone, so the CIA sent a cable to “continue to encourage him to amplify his planning; (C) encourage him to join forces with other coup planners so that they may act in concert either before or after 24 October. (N.B. six gas masks and six CS canisters are being carried to Santiago by special courier.)”⁴⁹ Sent six days before the botched kidnapping and assassination of General Schneider, and one day after Kissinger claimed to cut off US contact with the plotters, this cable sheds light on the exact nature of the material support provided by the US to the plotters. Although not willing to be directly responsible for the kidnapping plot, this fear of discovery did not stop the US from providing armaments and strategic leadership guidance to the plotters through CIA officers in Santiago.

The US was also willing to revoke support of any plotter who it believed might fail. This led the CIA to turn off active coup plotting with General Viaux due to doubt surrounding his ability to lead a coup. On October 15th administration officials, including Henry Kissinger, decided to warn General Viaux not to attempt the kidnapping plot and to wait for further instructions. The CIA now shifted its attentions to General Valenzuela, the

⁴⁸ From United States Embassy. Chile to United States. Department of State, “Frei: Transacting the Future,” cable, 22 September 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00178.

⁴⁹ From United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Directorate of Plans. Western Hemisphere Division to unknown, “[Policy to Overthrow Salvador Allende by Coup],” cable, 16 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00258.

second potential coup plotter, and provided him with machine guns to aid in the kidnapping of General Schneider.⁵⁰ Yet General Valenzuela never got to use the machine guns handed over by a CIA officer, nor did he have the chance to kidnap General Schneider and carry out the coup plot.⁵¹

The CIA had not followed Kissinger's order to defuse Viaux's plot on October 15th. Documents show that CIA officers continued to meet with Chilean military officials at least once after Kissinger ordered the CIA to terminate direct US involvement with the plotters under the leadership of General Viaux. A cable sent to CIA headquarters on October 18th reports a CIA officer "met clandestinely evening 17 Oct. with two Chilean Armed Forces officers who told him their plans were moving along better than possibly expected. They asked that by evening 18 Oct. co-optee arrange furnish them with eight to ten tear gas grenades."⁵² Five days before the botched kidnapping of General Schneider, one group of plotters was asking for more materials and reporting back to the CIA on the progress of their plot, demonstrating their continued cooperation with and support by the CIA. The Church Committee examined this discrepancy and could not come to a conclusion regarding continued CIA interactions with the plotters days after Kissinger ordered communication to stop. Even Henry Kissinger, in a private conversation with

⁵⁰ United States. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, "Dr. Kissinger, Mr. Karamessines, Gen. Haig at the White House--15 October 1970," memorandum of conversation, 15 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00251.

⁵¹ See also: Letter, E.H. Knoche to James Wilderotter, 07/03/1975, folder: Intelligence Investigations: Chile, Box 2, Robert K. Wolthuis Papers, GRFL.

⁵² From United States. Central Intelligence Agency to United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Chile (Santiago), "[Untraceable Guns for Coup Leader]," cable, 18 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00262; From United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Chile (Santiago) to United States. Central Intelligence Agency, "[Materiel for Coup Plotters]," cable, 18 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00261; From United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Directorate of Plans. Western Hemisphere Division to United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Chile (Santiago), "[Delivery of Weapons to Coup Leaders]," cable, 18 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00263.

former Secretary of State William Rogers, was unsure of the exact nature of the continued CIA interactions with General Valenzuela. He told former Secretary of State Rogers that “if you read it carefully you will see that the group that did it under no theory had anything to do with us. By all evidence we turned it off on October 15... the CIA representatives staying in touch with the plotting groups and activity might have been more than reporting on what was going on.”⁵³ This conversation occurred on November 21, 1975, one day after the release of the Church Committee’s interim report. With his extensive involvement in US covert activities in Chile, Kissinger needed to present all the evidence that he was not involved in the botched kidnapping of General Schneider in the face of the Committee’s investigation.

Though White House officials initially appeared to direct the CIA’s interactions with Generals Viaux and Valenzuela, for an unknown amount of time after Kissinger gave the order on October 15th to turn off direct contact the CIA continued to interact with the plotters and furnish them with military supplies to aid in the kidnapping plot. This raises the issue of whether CIA or White House officials were in control of the interactions of US intelligence agents with the plotters. Until this point President Nixon or senior White House officials, like Henry Kissinger, appeared to be responsible for dictating the course of covert activities in Chile. It remains unclear if Kissinger did call off involvement with the plotters and the CIA did not follow through with his order, if Kissinger never conveyed his order to the CIA, or another scenario entirely. With no clear answer to who called off

⁵³ United States. Department of State. Secretary, “[Revelations on Chile; Document Includes Previously Withheld Text; Excised Version Appended],” memorandum of telephone conversation, 21 November 1975, Kissinger Conversation: Supplement II, 1969-1977, DNSA accession number KS00598.

the kidnapping plot, it is unknown whether the White House or CIA supervised the kidnapping plot, adding another wrinkle to the narrative.

The Nixon White House found two military officials, Generals Viaux and Valenzuela, who were willing to conduct the kidnapping plot of General Schneider and lead the coup attempt that would hopefully followed. Yet a month after President Nixon declared his intent to encourage a coup in Chile, he and Kissinger decided to call it off. It soon became clear that the administration's orders, channeled through the CIA, for the generals to stand down and wait for further orders were not followed. Although Kissinger later stated that he ordered the CIA to cut off contact with Generals Viaux and Valenzuela, the CIA took no such action. Each general had a variety of military armaments from the CIA, and they saw no reason why they should wait for US orders to act when the Allende's electoral ratification drew closer by the day.⁵⁴ CIA officials in Chile continued their correspondence with the Generals, and CIA headquarters urged agents in Chile to reassure the Generals that "USG [United States Government] support for anti-Allende action continues."⁵⁵ This is at odds with Kissinger's later statement that evidence pointed to the CIA turning off contact with the plotters on October 15; the CIA either believed or wanted the plotters to believe that the US still supported their kidnapping plot. Between October 19th and 22nd the plotters made three attempts, without direct approval from the CIA or the Nixon White House, to kidnap General Schneider. The US was no longer in control of the kidnapping plot; Generals Viaux and Valenzuela were both working independently to execute the plan the US provided to them.

⁵⁴ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

The first two unsuccessful attempts made by Generals Viaux and Valenzuela failed due to the inability to get close enough to General Schneider to kidnap him. In the first plot, General Schneider would be kidnapped as he left a military stag (bachelor) party.⁵⁶ For his first attempt on October 19th, General Viaux extensively planned what would occur during and after the kidnapping plot. The CIA station in Santiago relayed his plans, as follows, to CIA headquarters:

1. After arriving at the house, Schneider would be abducted.
2. He would be taken to a waiting airplane and flown to Argentina.
3. Valenzuela would announce that Schneider had “disappeared.”
4. The military would blame the kidnapping on leftists and would “institute a search for Schneider in all of Chile, using this search as a pretext to raid Communist-controlled poblaciones [neighborhoods].”
5. The military command would be shuffled to put coup plotters in positions of power.
6. Frei would resign and leave Chile.
7. A new military Junta would “be installed” headed by Admiral Hugo Tirado.
8. The Junta would dissolve Congress.⁵⁷

As he walked to his official Mercedes, his security forces would withdraw and the kidnapers would grab him. Yet General Schneider decided to drive his personal car home, and the kidnapers withdrew in nervousness due to this unexpected twist. It is unclear why the kidnapers believed an official car would take him to the party, and why they were not prepared for if he drove himself. General Viaux prepared a detailed timeline, but he was not ready for any surprises when the time came to execute the plot. On October 20th General Valenzuela attempted to kidnap General Schneider. He planned to intercept General Schneider as he left the Ministry of Defense by car at the end of the work day.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ From United States. Central Intelligence Agency. Chile (Santiago) to unknown, “[Plan to Kidnap General Schneider and Initiate Military Coup],” cable, 19 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00267.

⁵⁸ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 28.

Yet General Schneider left during rush hour, and the downtown Santiago traffic caused the car full of kidnapers get stuck in traffic and lose sight of General Schneider's car. Two attempts led by Generals Viaux and Valenzuela to kidnap General Schneider and provoke a coup to stop Allende's ratification in Congress failed, even with the initial support of the US and the CIA.

The third attempt on October 22nd by General Viaux succeeded with the kidnapping group getting close enough to General Schneider, but the plot did not go according to plan.⁵⁹ An unknown number of men waited for General Schneider as he drove from his home in Santiago to work at military headquarters in downtown Santiago. As General Schneider sat in the backseat of his chauffeured car on his way to work at 8:00 a.m., General Valenzuela's group of kidnapers struck.⁶⁰ Eight blocks from his home, the group used a Jeep to hit the car General Schneider traveled in, and blockaded the street with three other vehicles.⁶¹ With nowhere for General Schneider's car to go, the kidnapers approached it and broke the backseat window where the General sat. To their surprise, General Schneider pulled out his own gun to defend himself. With the possibility of quickly and quietly kidnapping him now gone, the kidnapers quickly fired at him three times, hitting him in the hand and the chest. The group quickly took off in their cars as the chauffeur scrambled to find his gun. The chauffeur immediately drove General Schneider to the Military Hospital in Santiago. General Schneider initially survived the kidnapping turned assassination attempt, but he lay seriously injured in the hospital with wounds in his

⁵⁹ For *El Mercurio* coverage of General Schneider's assassination in the days immediately afterwards, see selected front pages from the October 23-27 issues in Appendix 1.

⁶⁰ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 28.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; "Criminal atentado: baleado General Schneider (Criminal Attack: General Schneider Shot)," *El Mercurio*, (Santiago, Chile), Oct. 23, 1970.

arms and chest. At 9:00 p.m. that night, President Frei made a public statement on the shooting of General Schneider. He expressed his grief and extended condolences to the General and his family, and ended his statement by saying that the “attempt is not only an attack on the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, if not the same institution and all of the armed forces, and it shows the purpose of its perpetrators to alter the democratic life of this country.”⁶² President Frei did not know how accurate this assessment was, nor that the perpetrators included generals in the Chilean army backed up with US support.

Allende’s electoral ratification in Congress on October 24th went on as planned, and Congress formally announced him as the winner of the 1970 election as General Schneider lay in the hospital critically injured.⁶³ General Schneider lived for three more days, and died at the hospital on October 25th from his injuries.⁶⁴ The only impact of General Schneider’s death on Allende’s ratification as president was the cancellation of a victory celebration by Allende’s supporters.⁶⁵ On October 27th Chile buried General Schneider in the Army Pantheon, and in the procession from Santiago’s Cathedral to his resting place President Frei and President-elect Allende walked side by side, leading the public funeral procession.⁶⁶ The Santiago police launched an investigation into his shooting within hours, and set out to find those responsible for the crime. Throughout the five days between the ambush on his car and his burial, the investigation continued. The police investigated his shooting as a deliberate attempt, and not a random occurrence.

⁶² “Decretada Zona de Emergencia: Toque de Queda en Santiago (Emergency Zone Decreed: Curfew in Santiago),” *El Mercurio*, (Santiago, Chile), Oct. 23, 1970.

⁶³ Joseph Novitski, “Allende Backers Cancel Plan for Victory Celebration,” *The New York Times*, October 24, 1970; hereafter *NYT*.

⁶⁴ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 12.

⁶⁵ Joseph Novitski, “Allende Backers Cancel Plan for Victory Celebration,” *NYT*, October 24, 1970.

⁶⁶ Joseph Novitski, “Chile Buries General as Martyr,” *NYT*, October 27, 1970.

Therefore, it is misleading to simply call this a shooting that led to a death. Instead it is fitting to say that a group of men assassinated General Schneider when it became apparent that a kidnapping would not work because he took out his gun to defend himself. Although it is not clear whether the group set out to kill or kidnap General Schneider on October 22nd, it is apparent that when they shot him they were motivated by political means to remove a prominent figure in the Chilean military. The end goal of the plot was to remove General Schneider from Chile, and although the original plan stated that this would be by kidnapping him and removing him to Argentina, his death achieved the goal of removing his opposition to the non-constitutional plan to remove Allende from office via a coup. Not only had the plot to kidnap General Schneider gone awry, but the hope that removing him from Chile would encourage a coup to stop Salvador Allende's congressional ratification also proved futile.

Three days before General Schneider's death, as he lay mortally wounded in the hospital, a State Department official sent a memorandum to Kissinger suggesting that he tell President Nixon to send a note of condolences to the Chilean president. The State Department official had no way to know the irony of President Nixon sending his condolences to President Frei for the grievous injuries the public believed that General Schneider received in an assassination attempt by unknown assailants. The State Department official dutifully provided the suggested text for the President's note.⁶⁷ It read:

Dear Mr. President,

The shocking attempt on the life of General Schneider is a stain on the pages of contemporary history. I would like you to know of my sorrow that this

⁶⁷ United States. Department of State. Executive Secretariat, "Message to Chilean President Frei on Attempted Assassination of Army Commander," memorandum, 22 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00277. For more information on the CIA's reaction to General Schneider's death, see: United States. Central Intelligence Agency, "Machine Gun Assault on General Schneider," report, 22 October 1970, Chile and the United States, DNSA accession number CL00276.

repugnant event occurred in your country, and would ask you to extend to General Schneider and his family my sympathy and best wishes for a speedy recovery.

Sincerely,
Richard Nixon

The Aftermath of General Schneider's Death

General Schneider was dead, the Chilean Congress ratified Allende's electoral victory with an overwhelming majority, and newspapers were already pointing to the involvement of General Viaux and even the CIA in his death.⁶⁸ For the next three years of Allende's presidency, the US stopped plotting to target specific individuals in Chile.⁶⁹ Instead, it relied on economic and psychological manipulation in Chile to undermine Allende's presidency and encourage another military coup to overthrow him, which finally occurred on September 11, 1973 under the leadership of General Augusto Pinochet.⁷⁰

The US was forced to balance its fears of a communist takeover in the US with the fear of public backlash if news of US covert involvement got out in the press. The seeming disconnect between White House foreign policy, run by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger who ordered the CIA to tell the kidnappers to halt its plans, and the CIA officials who swore under oath that they never received the orders to halt the operation showed just how tenuous US attitudes towards Chile could be. In 1970, only White House officials and the Chileans involved in the kidnapping plot knew that the CIA followed White House orders and helped foment a coup. A few years later, after the overthrow of Allende, CIA

⁶⁸ Joseph Novitski, "Military Leader Dies in Santiago," *NYT*, October 26, 1970.

⁶⁹ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 79.

⁷⁰ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 255.

and White House involvement in Chile became public knowledge and spurred a “season of inquiry” about US intelligence operations in Chile and around the world.⁷¹

Between 1970 and 1974, little happened to spread knowledge of the story and circumstances of General Schneider’s botched kidnapping turned assassination to an audience outside of Chile. Although the group of plotters failed to kidnap General Schneider and blame it on leftists, the Chilean police quickly uncovered General Viaux’s responsibility for planning the kidnapping. Chilean courts convicted him on the charges of attempted kidnapping and conspiracy to provoke a coup.⁷² With the story of General Viaux’s failed coup attempt splashed across the front pages of the Chilean newspapers and even reaching the New York Times, General Schneider’s death did not serve as the catalyst for a coup as the plotters and US government hoped. Instead, the Chilean police succeeded in finding, arresting, and prosecuting General Viaux, General Valenzuela, and the other men involved in the kidnapping plot. As the true story of what happened on the morning of October 25, 1970 came to light, the Chilean newspapers began to speak of CIA covert involvement in the coup plot. Yet the mutterings of CIA involvement never became more than mere conjecture in the newspapers.

With General René Schneider dead and Allende inaugurated as president, the Nixon White House’s plans transformed into attempts to destabilize Allende’s presidency. It used similar covert measures to those employed during the presidential election to continue to support anti-Allende factions in Chile and make Allende’s presidency a failure.⁷³ Plots to stop Allende’s inauguration transformed into plans to cripple the Chilean

⁷¹ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 8.

⁷² Christopher Hitchens, *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (London: Verso, 2001), 63.

⁷³ Kornbluh, *Pinochet File*, 79.

economy, initiating another round of covert economic involvement that continued until Allende's overthrow in September 1973.⁷⁴ Economic intervention, along with military and political manipulation, formed the long-term plan by the US to destabilize Chile after the failure to initiate a coup in 1970.⁷⁵ Cold War tensions made the US neglect its claims of promoting peace, liberty, and democracy in its foreign affairs. Instead, US involvement in Chile turned to covert activities to overthrow Salvador Allende.

Looking back at the planning and execution of the plot to kidnap General Schneider, it failed in every regard for both the Chilean coup plotters and the Nixon White House. The expectation that the commander-in-chief of the army, a career army officer, would allow himself to be kidnapped without a fight was the first glaring oversight made by the US and Chilean plotters. Then, the confusion over whether the CIA ever received the order from Kissinger to turn off US support of the coup plotters is another issue in determining the course of events leading up to the kidnapping attempt. It is impossible to determine whether there was a genuine mistake made in the communication between Kissinger and the CIA that caused the message ordering the CIA to cease involvement with the coup plotters to never reach the CIA. There is also the more conspiratorial possibility that either the CIA or Kissinger was not telling the truth about having received or sent the order to cease involvement.

These mistakes and oversights had a twofold outcome. On one hand they led to the assassination, and not kidnapping, of General Schneider. However, the documentation of these mistakes in memorandum, telephone transcripts, and cables from the CIA and the White House later served as evidence for the extensive involvement of the Nixon White

⁷⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 80-81.

House in covert activities in Chile, thus setting the stage for the Church Committee's investigation. The evidence of General Schneider's death, and US activities leading up to it, revealed covert economic, political, psychological manipulation by the US and an overt attempt to start a coup with the US sponsored plans to kidnap General Schneider. That the plan to kidnap General Schneider instead became an assassination also led to its inclusion in the Committee's report on alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders. The greater context that his death occurred in reveals the importance that it plays beyond being an assassination. The context of the various, aggressive forms of US covert involvement in Chile speaks to the length that the Nixon White House went to in order to achieve its mission to stop the perceived socialist threat posed by Allende. These efforts by the Nixon White House to stop Allende also provided evidence from the CIA and White House that the Church Committee would uncover and use in its investigation. The body of evidence created by this plot formed the basis of the Church Committee's investigation and allowed them to uncover the extent of the Nixon White House's exploitation of the CIA in order to take down Allende.

The evidence from the White House and CIA provides answers for some questions about the death of General Schneider while still leaving others unanswered. One goal of the Church Committee was to uncover whether President Nixon or the CIA Director dictated US covert involvement in Chile. Memorandums and conversations from the White House revealed to the Church Committee that President Nixon was heavily involved in dictating the course of covert involvement in Chile. These documents also demonstrate the complete lack of congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies and the White House. However, some questions are still unanswered even after the Church Committee's

investigation. It remains unclear whether there are missing documents about what was going to happen to General Schneider after he was kidnapped and flown to Argentina, or whether the US was simply not concerned about this stage of the plot.

Chapter 2: The Creation of the Church Committee

Five years after the events in Chile surrounding the assassination of General Schneider in 1970, the Church Committee showed that his death and US involvement in it was not a finished story. In 1975, the assassination of General Schneider captured the interest of the US government once again with the Church Committee's investigation. When the matter of General Schneider's death came up again in the Church Committee's 1975 investigation, the White House looked very different than it had in 1970. The five years that passed saw the presidency undergo one of its greatest crises of the twentieth century during the presidency of President Nixon. Between 1971 and 1974 President Nixon faced numerous scandals from the publishing of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, the Watergate scandal in 1972, and finally the announcement of his resignation in 1974. As the Watergate scandal broke in Washington, increased protests against the Vietnam War across the country shifted the public opinion of the US' role abroad. The public began to question the Vietnam War's necessity and costs.¹ Disillusioned by the endless fighting of the Vietnam War, many Americans began to critically examine the Cold War context that led the US into Vietnam. In the aftermath of the Watergate scandal and the continuation of the Vietnam War, Congress joined the press and public in actively demanding accountability from the Nixon White House.

For decades, the Cold War preoccupied the American presidency. Dedicated to competing with the Soviet Union, presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon intervened in foreign affairs from Vietnam to Chile in order to expand US influence and keep out Soviet

¹ LeRoy Ashby, "The Church Committee's history and relevance: reflecting on Senator Church," in *US National Security, Intelligence and Democracy: From the Church Committee to the War on Terror*, ed. Russell A. Miller (London: Routledge, 2008), 58.

influence. In determining these action abroad the White House acted nearly unilaterally, utilizing the US intelligence agencies with minimal oversight by Congress. Yet the events during Nixon’s presidency that shook US trust in the White House, such as the information revealed in the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate investigation, signaled the end of unquestioning public acceptance of the president’s choices. As investigations into President Nixon’s actions at home and abroad drew Americans to TV screens and newspapers, the public began to question the actions of the White House. For years, Americans accepted that the decisions made by President Nixon were legal and made in the interest of protecting the US. Yet the investigations revealed that President Nixon’s “imperial presidency” single-handedly controlled US actions abroad with minimal oversight by the legislative or judicial branches.²

The resignation of Richard Nixon in 1974 left Vice President Gerald Ford with the unenviable job of restoring public trust in the presidency while presiding over the investigations that still continued into the abuses of the Nixon presidency. Now President, Gerald Ford confronted the monumental task of restoring public trust in the presidency while guiding America in the aftermath of the first presidential resignation.³ It was in this moment of depleted public trust in the presidency, as President Ford worked to restore that trust, which the Church Committee formed. The “Cold War consensus” that the president had a right to control the intelligence agencies’ actions at home and abroad began to unravel.⁴ Now, the unveiling of the imperialistic rule of the president over the intelligence

² Ashby, “Church Committee’s History,” 58.

³ Barbara Zanchetta, *The Transformation of American International Power in the 1970s* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 148.

⁴ Ashby, “Church Committee’s History,” 58-59.

agencies led to a questioning of the central principles that governed the US' past covert activities at home and abroad.

This questioning took many forms; in investigative reporting, depleted public trust in the White House, and formal organized investigations in the White House and Congress, such as the Church Committee.⁵ It was not easy to create an effective and accepted investigation when faced with competition and communication issues. Amongst other foreign and domestic issues, the Church Committee questioned the consequences of past presidential administrations' foreign policy decisions as they related to assassination plots involving foreign leaders. While the Church Committee's investigation into assassination plots was unique and unusual, it was not unprecedented.

The Watergate scandal inaugurated a season of inquiry, and in the following years many of the White House's and intelligence agencies' most secret activities were subjected to public and legislative scrutiny. At many points during the formation and investigation of the Church Committee, the Ford White House tried to forestall the Committee and its investigation. However, it did not succeed in stopping the Church Committee's intention to investigate US covert involvement in Chile, especially in regards to the death of General Schneider. At this point in the narrative, US covert involvement in Chile and US involvement in plots to assassinate foreign leaders are two separate threads. However, this chapter will lay the groundwork for how the death of General Schneider later brought these two threads together.

⁵ Ibid.; Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 176.

The Origins of the Church Committee

The history of congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies shows a large gap between the intended oversight function and the reality of oversight. With the formation of the CIA, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Security Agency (NSA) and other intelligence agencies post-World War II, the Senate and House of Representative's Committee on Armed Services became the appointed oversight body to oversee the agencies' activities.⁶ However, between the late 1940s and mid-1970s this oversight existed in name only. Before the mid-1970s, there was little in the way of guidelines for what information regarding intelligence activities the President or agency directors had to turn over to the Committee. This left the Committee ignorant, whether willfully or not, of the intelligence activities that various agencies conducted. Beyond the limited number of congressional members participating in the committees, members of Congress were kept unaware of the intelligence agencies' actions.⁷ Previous efforts from 1947 to 1974 to improve congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies resulted in approximately 150 proposals. Of these 150 proposals, two made it to the floor of Congress and members of Congress declined to pass either of them.⁸

Additionally, there was little knowledge of whether the President, the agency directors, or some combination thereof initiated and directed intelligence activities. In this framework of the committee tasked with overseeing the intelligence agencies in name only, it comes as little surprise that these committees never closely investigated US covert intervention in Chile until the establishment of the Church Committee. The year of its

⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee on Intelligence, *Legislative Oversight of Intelligence Activities: The U.S. Experience*, 103rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1994, S. Prt. 103-88, 3.

⁷ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Legislative Oversight*, 3.

⁸ Ashby, "Church Committee's History," 60.

establishment, 1975, marked a moment of change for Congress. Both houses of Congress had a Democratic majority, and in the wake of the Watergate scandal Congress was ready to take action against Nixon's imperial presidency.⁹

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. In order to understand the Church Committee and its eventual investigation into the assassination of General Schneider, it is first crucial to understand the driving forces for the creation of the Committee and its investigation into the intelligence agencies. The first driving force was the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This Committee's investigations and hearings into the US' relationship with Chile in the early 1970s introduced CIA involvement in Chile to Congress. These occurred in March to September 1973 and August to September 1974. First, from March to September 1973, the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations uncovered the CIA's covert partnership with ITT in Chile to transfer money to fund its covert political and military involvement and propaganda during the 1970 presidential election. Then, from August to September 1974, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Détente exposed CIA covert activities in Chile while investigating the broader issue of détente with communist countries.

The second driving force was Senator Frank Church. Serving on both of these committees, Senator Frank Church participated in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' uncovering of concrete examples of CIA covert involvement in Chile from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. From the investigation and hearings of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and his own questions posed to the members of the Nixon White

⁹ "Congress Profiles: 94th Congress (1975–1977)," History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, accessed March 11, 2018, <http://history.house.gov/Congressional-Overview/Profiles/94th/>; Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 7.

House that the Committee interviewed, it became clear to Senator Church that Chile was another overlooked area of congressional oversight of CIA activities. The inquiries by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations uncovered the “tip of the iceberg” that was US covert involvement in Chile, and the Committee’s work shaped and served as a building block for the Church Committee’s investigation into CIA activities in Chile.¹⁰

Before the Church Committee began to investigate the intelligence agencies in 1975, the trend of negligent oversight of the intelligence agencies by congressional committees began to turn already between 1973 and 1974 with the two investigations by the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. First, the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations conducted hearings to investigate the role of ITT in Chile during 1970. The ITT-CIA investigation and hearings regarding détente in Chile laid the groundwork for a large-scale investigation into US covert involvement there. The Committee’s investigation uncovered that the CIA used the American corporation ITT to funnel money into Chile. CIA agents used this money to fund anti-Allende propaganda leading up to the 1970 election.¹¹ After Allende’s election, the CIA used the funding to support efforts to spread propaganda that instilled doubt regarding his economic policies and politics with the goal of encouraging an overthrow of his government.¹² This revelation of US covert influence abroad, aided by a US corporation, was the first disclosure of the realities of US covert involvement abroad for those on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

¹⁰ Ashby, “Church Committee’s History,” 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹² *Ibid.*, 59.

One of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations members impacted by the shocking revelation that the CIA conspired with ITT to block the election and destabilize the presidency of Allende was Senator Frank Church. Not being a member of the Senate Committee on the Armed Services tasked with overseeing the intelligence agencies, Senator Church was unaware of the past US covert involvement in Chile. With the revelation of CIA and ITT efforts to topple Allende, Senator Church discovered that with the exception of the White House and members of the House and Senate Committees on the Armed Forces, both Congress and the American public were unaware of the misconduct of the intelligence agencies. The misconduct of the CIA in Chile demonstrated that no oversight committee knew enough about these activities to do its job and oversee them. Instead, the CIA embarked on ineffective and subversive activities that worked to undermine the democratic process of another nation with minimal oversight from Congress.¹³

The revelations from the ITT-CIA hearing introduced members of the committee, like Senator Frank Church, to the true extent of CIA covert involvement in Chile. Now, instead of being content with an investigation limited to an in-depth look at the role of multinational corporations in foreign policy, Senator Church pushed for a larger inquiry into the activities of the CIA in Chile and other operations conducted by the intelligence agencies without sufficient oversight.¹⁴ In the midst of the hearings on the ITT and CIA, news reached the US that a military coup overthrew President Allende and Chile was

¹³ Ibid., 60; see also: Memorandum, 15 March 1973 Discussion, 03/16/1973, folder: Intelligence Investigations: Chile, Box 2, Robert K. Wolthuis Papers, GRFL; Memorandum, Agency File Review: The ITT-CIA-Chile Question, n.d., folder: Intelligence Investigations: Chile, Box 2, Robert K. Wolthuis Papers, GRFL.

¹⁴ Ashby, "Church Committee's History," 59-60.

under the control of a military junta. The ITT-CIA investigation revealed only a small part of CIA covert activities in Chile to Senator Church, but the greater pattern of White House abuse of the intelligence agencies that it hinted at continued to be exposed by subsequent events in Congress.

The second key congressional hearing that set up the creation of the Church Committee was the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Détente. The Committee conducted hearings to consider US relations with communist countries and the efficacy of détente as a means to normalize relations. In light of the US' fear that the Soviet Union influenced Allende and the White House's application of the term "communist" to Allende's politics, the Committee included Chile in its hearings.¹⁵ The hearings included the testimony of Henry Kissinger, now Secretary of State, who Senator Church interrogated at length about his knowledge of CIA activities in Chile during 1970. For the section of the hearing dedicated to Chile, Senator Church turned the conversation from détente to covert intervention in Chile.

When given the opportunity to question Secretary Kissinger, Senator Church was tenacious in forcing him to explain US activities in Chile. This initiated several abrupt interruptions while each man spoke, with Senator Church asking Secretary Kissinger, "Mr. Secretary, in all deference to you, my question was –" to which Secretary Kissinger responded "I will deal with the substance of your question next."¹⁶ Secretary Kissinger was not eager to discuss details relating to US covert involvement in Chile, and instead dismissed this topic by saying that the Committee was "talking about something that was

¹⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Affairs Committee, *Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations on United States Relations with Communist Countries*, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1974.

¹⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Relations with Communist Countries*, 270.

carried out by procedures in which all the branches of Government participated according to practices that had been established in the entire post-war period—something that was a regular operation.”¹⁷ Although the topic of the hearing was meant to be détente, Church persisted in asking Secretary Kissinger about US covert involvement in Chile:

Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, the practice of this committee has been to give members of this committee an opportunity to ask questions of this character, and I would like the Secretary to tell me how we can reconcile this kind of intervention with moral law which we are supposed to respect, with treaty law, with international law, or with any law other than the law of the jungle.¹⁸

Not only interested in the details of US covert involvement in Chile, Senator Church wanted to know the White House’s moral justification for their conduct that interfered in the democratic process of another nation. After questioning Secretary Kissinger at length regarding the justification and legality of CIA activities in Chile by Senator Church, the Chairman prompted him to save the line of questioning since there would be a future action on this subject. With the détente hearings already uncovering the extensive nature of US covert involvement in Chile, a committee dedicated to intelligence activities would need to conduct a thorough investigation of its own.

Yet it took more than Senator Church’s commitment to holding the intelligence agencies accountable to force the actual formation of a committee to investigate the matter. By the end of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Détente, Senator Church’s commitment to conducting a comprehensive investigation of the intelligence agencies was clear. Yet his was not the only voice calling for accountability; major national newspapers also joined in the call. The investigative reporting into intelligence

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 271.

agencies' abuse occurring at major newspapers around the country caught the attention of both Congress and the US public. Senator Church's persistent questioning of intelligence agencies in hearings and committees, and his calls for oversight, introduced the idea of forming a comprehensive committee to investigate to Congress. Congress prepared to hold the Nixon White House accountable for exploiting the intelligence agencies just as it had held it accountable for the Watergate scandal.

Investigative reporting in national newspapers fueled public interest in intelligence agency's activities at home and abroad. The press covered the investigation and hearings of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, including some of the earliest mentions of US covert involvement in Chile.¹⁹ Seymour Hersh, writing for the New York Times, revealed CIA abuses abroad with his article on the CIA's "family jewels."²⁰ The "family jewels," the CIA's file on its own abuses and potentially illegal activities, was a breakthrough that connected mere accusations of misbehavior by the CIA with the agency's own list of its crimes at home and abroad.²¹ It also, for the first time, was a public reveal of CIA covert involvement in assassination attempts.²² Articles by Hersh and other reporters about assassination plots published throughout 1975 helped to keep this topic on the minds of the American public throughout the course of the Church Committee investigation.²³ This was

¹⁹ Seymour M. Hersh, "C.I.A. Chief Tells House Of \$8-Million Campaign Against Allende in '70-73," *NYT*, September 8, 1974; "Mr. Ford Is In Residence: C.I.A. Had Role in Allende Downfall," *NYT*, September 8, 1974.

²⁰ Gerald K. Haines, "The Pike Committee Investigations and the CIA," Central Intelligence Agency, last modified April 14, 2007, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/winter98_99/art07.html.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Smist, *Congress*, 26.

²³ Seymour M. Hersh, "C.I.A. Told to Curb Activities Abroad," *NYT*, January 7, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Democrats Favor C.I.A. Inquiry Unit," *NYT*, January 15, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Helms Said Nixon Sought Chile Coup," *NYT*, February 10, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Aides Say Robert Kennedy Told of C.I.A. Castro Plot," *NYT*, March 10, 1975; Daniel Schorr, "The Rockefeller Commission Has Been Forced to Add It to the Agenda," *NYT*, May 4, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Kissinger and C.I.A. Said to Conflict in

the first time that possible CIA involvement in the assassination involving foreign leaders, like General Schneider, was made public. Together, pressure from Senator Church inside Congress and the US public outside Congress forced the Senate, House of Representatives, and the White House to establish committees and a commission to inquire into intelligence activities.²⁴ Public and congressional demands for accountability could no longer be ignored. Oversight committees could no longer shut their eyes to the abuses of the intelligence agencies, and the reality of the agencies' actions at home and abroad would be revealed to Congress and the public.²⁵

In the détente hearings, Senator Church did not drop his insistence that Secretary Kissinger explain these actions. Nor did the US public and numerous members of Congress, who also demanded an investigation and explanation for the stories of US covert activities displayed across the front pages. Three months after the détente hearings, Democratic Senator John Pastore introduced Senate Resolution 21 on January 21, 1975, calling for the establishment of “a select committee of the Senate to conduct an investigation and study of governmental operations with respect to intelligence activities.”²⁶ A vote of 82 – 4 officially established the Church Committee on January 27, 1975.²⁷

Testimony on Chile Plot,” *NYT*, November 21, 1975; George Lardner, “Senators issue report on CIA's death plots: The CIA's 'targets',” *Boston Globe*, November 21, 1975; Jim Squires, “Senate CIA report: They didn't fix the blame,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 23, 1975; “Murder as a foreign policy,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1975.

²⁴ Loch K. Johnson, “Establishment of modern intelligence accountability,” in *US National Security, Intelligence and Democracy: From the Church Committee to the War on Terror*, ed. Russell A. Miller (London: Routledge, 2008), 38.

²⁵ Washington Post cartoonist Herbert Block also drew a number of cartoons relating to the CIA-ITT hearings, U.S. intervention in Chile, Henry Kissinger, and President Ford. See Appendix 2 for selected cartoons.

²⁶ S. 21, 94th Cong. (1975).

²⁷ “S.Res.21,” Congress.gov, accessed March 29, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/94th-congress/senate-resolution/21?r=13>.

The Church Committee. In January of 1975, the Church Committee began its seventeen month investigation into intelligence activities.²⁸ From the start, the Church Committee was in a uniquely qualified position to deliver a comprehensive and thorough investigation of the US intelligence agencies due to two factors. First, the eleven-member committee chaired by Senator Church (D-ID) was not split into seven Democrats and four Republicans as was the norm for a committee led by a Democratic chairman.²⁹ Instead, the Committee had a bipartisan structure with six Democrats and five Republicans. The Democratic members of the Committee were Philip Hart (MI), Walter Mondale (MN), Walter Muddleston (KY), Robert Morgan (NC), and Gary Hart (CO). The Republican members of the Committee were John Tower (TX) who served as Vice Chairman, Howard Baker, Jr. (TN), Barry Goldwater (AZ), Charles Mathias, Jr. (MD), and Richard Schweiker (PA).

Second, the Committee's status as a "select" committee allowed the Senate majority and minority leaders to select the committee's members.³⁰ In order to conduct an unbiased investigation, no senators who served on the Senate Committee on Armed Services, previously responsible for intelligence oversight, were on the Committee.³¹ Every member of the Committee had no direct previous experience in congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies, and therefore they would not be "reluctant to expose previous inadequate oversight."³²

²⁸ Ashby, "Church Committee's History," 22.

²⁹ Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 176-177.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

The Church Committee's investigation focused on questions of accountability for the abuses committed by the intelligence agencies.³³ The Committee also wanted to stress the importance of congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies, and the necessity of committed, continuous congressional review of its activities.³⁴ Frederick A.O. Schwarz, serving as chief counsel to the Committee, characterized the investigation as the "first - and still the most wide-ranging - investigation of America's secret government."³⁵

A broad overview of the many different aspects of the Church Committee's investigation reveals the wide scope of intelligence activities it scrutinized. Domestically, the Committee investigated the activities of the CIA, NSA, FBI, and IRS from the 1960s to the 1970s, such as the CIA's program to collect information on the political activities of US citizens.³⁶ It also investigated the opening of US mail by the CIA and FBI, the CIA's mind control experiments codenamed MK-ULTRA, and the NSA's Project SHAMROCK with its Watch List of "subversive" US citizens.³⁷ The majority of the activities covered by the investigation were a part of the CIA's "family jewels" published by Seymour Hersh.³⁸ Almost all of the activities investigated occurred inside of the US, with the exception of the assassination plots involving foreign leaders. This makes the investigation into assassination plots even more prominent, because it was the only example of intelligence activities that occurred outside of the US investigated by the Committee. The Church

³³ Johnson, "Establishment of modern intelligence," 42.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 176-177.

³⁶ Seymour M. Hersh, "Huge C.I.A. Operation Reported in U.S. Against Antiwar Forces, other Dissidents," *NYT*, 22 December 1974.

³⁷ William Burr, "National Security Agency Tracking of U.S. Citizens – 'Questionable Practices' from 1960s & 1970s," National Security Archive, published September 25, 2017, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/cyber-vault-intelligence-nuclear-vault/2017-09-25/national-security-agency-tracking-us>.

³⁸ See also: United States. White House, "Allegations of CIA Domestic Activities," memorandum of conversation, 3 January 1975, CIA Covert Operations II: The Year of Intelligence, 1975, DNSA accession number CT00092.

Committee considered it equally important to address CIA abuses that occurred outside of the US as the ones that occurred inside of the US. In this moment of accountability occurring in congress and the US public, the activities of the intelligence agencies both at home and abroad were subjected to serious congressional inquiry whether the victims were US citizens or not.

The Rockefeller Commission and Pike Committee. The three groups began to investigate the intelligence agencies in early 1975, but the Church Committee lasted the longest and completed the most thorough and comprehensive investigation into intelligence activities domestic and foreign. Neither the House of Representatives' committee nor the White House's commission had the scope or depth of the Church Committee in tackling the various facets of abuse in the intelligence.

The Ford White House created the United States President's Commission on CIA Activities within the United States. Called the Rockefeller Committee due to the leadership of Vice President Nelson Rockefeller and lasting for six months, the commission focused on CIA activities inside of the US. Created by President Ford to stop a legislative "circus," the commission focused solely on questions of accountability for covert activities conducted by intelligence agencies, but the planned investigation did not include assassination plots involving foreign leaders.³⁹ To those involved in the simultaneous activity of the Church Committee, it appeared that the Rockefeller Commission wanted to seize control of the intelligence investigations and render the work of the Church Committee unnecessary.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ashby, "Church Committee's History," 60.

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 10.

Yet the Church Committee already made it clear that the issue of assassination plots involving foreign leaders would be an area of focus in its investigation. For two brief months, President Ford extended the commission's lifetime to take on the question of assassination plots. Yet by May 25, 1975, it became apparent that the topic of assassination plots was too sensitive for the Rockefeller Commission to address.⁴¹ The potential for the investigation into assassination plots to antagonize the intelligence agencies when conducted by the White House was deemed too great for the Rockefeller Commission.⁴² The Rockefeller Commission's limited scope was insufficient compared to the Church Committee, which simultaneously operated with a much larger scope that included assassination plots. It would be left to the Church Committee to investigate assassination plots involving foreign leaders.

Established by the House of Representatives, the House Select Committee on Intelligence also did not succeed in addressing issues of intelligence agencies' abuses to the level of the Church Committee. Called the Pike Committee after its chairman Representative Otis Pike and lasting for twelve months, the committee focused on the weaknesses in the collection and analysis of intelligence by the intelligence agencies.⁴³ This was an intentional difference between the Pike and Church Committees; the two chairmen planned in advance that their investigations would address different intelligence issues.⁴⁴ Chairman Otis Pike described the Pike Committee as an examination of "intelligence costs and fiscal procedures, the performance of the intelligence community - including some specific intelligence failures - and domestic intelligence programs not

⁴¹ Ibid., 43.

⁴² Ibid., 31.

⁴³ Johnson, "Modern Intelligence," 39 & 42.

⁴⁴ Smist, *Congress*, 171-172.

studied by the Church Committee.”⁴⁵ While the Pike Committee did produce a report that included CIA covert involvement in Chile, it mainly focused on the failures of the White House to follow the CIA’s advice that the kidnapping of Schneider would not stimulate a coup.⁴⁶ The Pike Committee’s focus on the failures of the CIA and White House branch to interpret intelligence meant that the Committee only included examples of the CIA’s activities as an argument for the necessity of intelligence oversight.⁴⁷

Although formed within two months of the Pike Committee and Rockefeller Commission, the Church Committee outlasted both by several months. The length of the Committee was due in part to the expanded boundaries of investigation into intelligence activities. The Senate Resolution that formed the Church Committee stated that its mission was “to conduct an investigation of Government intelligence activities, including the extent to which any illegal or improper activities were engaged in.”⁴⁸ Unlike the Pike Committee’s concentration on intelligence collection and the weaknesses of intelligence interpretation, the Church Committee focused on accountability in intelligence activities.⁴⁹ A specific topic addressed by the Committee was “the need for legislative authority to govern the operations of any intelligence agencies.”⁵⁰ Like the Rockefeller Commission, the Church Committee conducted its investigation with the final goal of suggesting new and revised means of Congressional oversight of intelligence agencies.⁵¹ However, unlike the Rockefeller Commission, the Church Committee did not fear antagonizing the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Select Committee on Intelligence, *Hearings before the Select Committee on Intelligence*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, 28.

⁴⁷ Johnson, “Modern Intelligence,” 42.

⁴⁸ S. 21, 94th Cong. (1975).

⁴⁹ Johnson, “Modern Intelligence,” 42.

⁵⁰ S. 21, 94th Cong. (1975).

⁵¹ Johnson, “Modern Intelligence,” 42.

intelligence agencies.⁵² The Church Committee's position in the legislative branch gave it the independence to conduct an investigation unimpeded by internal conflicts.

Senator Church's previous involvement with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations prepared him for his role as chairman of the Church Committee. In order to understand the Church Committee's purpose and investigation it is crucial to first understand its chairman, Senator Frank Church. From his time on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations he became increasingly unreserved about speaking out on US intervention in foreign countries, the unchecked power of Nixon's imperial presidency, and the growth of a national security state inside the US.⁵³

Senator Church's commitment to speaking out stemmed from his principled belief in following the law.⁵⁴ His crusading side was well known to his associates in Congress, with the congressional doorkeeper accusing him of taking his name too serious and being "more like a cathedral" than a church.⁵⁵ Concerned with the lack of oversight of the intelligence agencies at a time when other investigations into Nixon's imperial presidency revealed abuses by the Nixon White House, Senator Church saw a moment of opportunity in which public outrage at the White House could easily shift to outrage over intelligence agencies' actions. Senator Church also excelled at chairing a bipartisan committee investigating the nation's most sensitive and inflammatory secrets. His diplomatic skills that allowed him to effectively mediate clashes between Committee members with a wide ideological spectrum permitted the Committee to steer clear of internal conflicts.⁵⁶

⁵² Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 31.

⁵³ Ashby, "Church Committee's History," 62.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

With the determined leadership of Senator Church and the freedom to investigate a wide array of intelligence activities, the Church Committee was free to address topics that neither the Pike Committee nor Rockefeller Commission could. The Church Committee's investigation of assassination plots involving foreign leaders was the element that set it apart from the other two inquiries. The Pike Committee only covered assassination plots in the context of weakness or failure in intelligence gathering, and the Rockefeller Commission backed off from investigating assassination plots when it threatened to cause tension within the executive branch. These failures to complete a full investigation of assassination plots meant that only the Church Committee conducted a thorough investigation into them, leading to many of the most shocking revelations of the Church Committee's investigation.

White House Opposition to the Church Committee

During the development of the intelligence investigation leading up to the Church Committee, the White House shifted from attempting preemptive actions to trying to curtail the investigation. It was not immediately clear whether the Ford White House would help or hinder the Church Committee's investigation, since Senator Church made it clear that his Committee would leave no stone unturned in its investigation of the White House and its relationship with the intelligence agencies. In order to understand the White House's attitude toward the Church Committee once the Committee began its investigation, it is necessary to trace the development of the White House's attitude toward congressional investigations into intelligence activities from the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to the Church Committee.

Due to reporting by The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, and Boston Globe the public was aware of CIA covert involvement in assassination plots involving foreign leaders. It was not unexpected that the Church Committee included these plots in its investigation after both the public outcry over them and Senator Church's own commitment to addressing assassination plots. The Ford White House was not willing to face the intelligence agencies' reaction when it appeared that the Rockefeller Commission would expand its investigation to include assassination plots involving foreign leaders. It is therefore not surprising that during the process of forming the Church Committee, the Committee struggled to make the Ford White House recognize the necessity of including these foreign intelligence abuses in its investigation. In the months leading up to the formation of the Church Committee, and particularly during the hearings and investigation of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the Ford White House adamantly opposed Congress investigating US covert involvement in Chile.

At first, the Ford White House claimed that there was no need for a congressional investigation into intelligence activities in Chile because it characterized intelligence involvement there as minimal. The Ford White House first confronted the issue of increased congressional interest in intelligence activities in Chile during Kissinger's nomination hearing as Secretary of State before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on September 17, 1973, and in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Détente on September 18, 1974. Kissinger first faced questions about US covert involvement in Chile during his nomination hearings, which coincidentally took place only six days after the overthrow of President Allende. Following the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations hearings on ITT-CIA relations that

occurred earlier in spring of 1973, Senator McGee told Kissinger that “there is a suggestion that the CIA has been deeply involved in Chilean affairs over a period of time in one way or another. This came out in the ITT hearings, for example.”⁵⁷ Kissinger responded that the CIA was “in a very minor way involved in the 1970 election... our efforts in Chile were to strengthen the democratic political parties.”⁵⁸ In light of the ITT-CIA hearings, Kissinger’s response is a severe understatement that characterizes US covert involvement in manipulating the 1970 election as a democratic versus socialist fight taking place on a Cold War battleground.

A year later, in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Détente, former director of the CIA William Colby offered a straightforward and shocking account of CIA covert activities in Chile.⁵⁹ With the CIA director himself discussing US actions to destabilize Chile, the Committee wanted to hear more from Secretary Kissinger since he was a central figure in the Nixon White House during these events.⁶⁰ Again, Kissinger characterizes US covert involvement in Chile in a manner similar to that during his nomination hearing, stating:

What gave the Allende situation a particular character was that, having been elected by 36 percent, he then set about to establish what appeared to be a one-party government and systematically set about to throttle all opposition parties, all opposition press, so that the issue that was raised here was not an intervention in the democratic process. The issue that was raised was whether somebody elected with 36 percent and frankly, pursuing policies that we considered hostile to the United States, should then be able to establish a one-party government.⁶¹

⁵⁷ SFRC Executive Session, Nomination Hearings, September 17, 1973, 09/17/1973, folder: Intelligence Investigations: Chile, Box 2, Robert K. Wolthuis Papers, GRFL.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Nicholas M. Horrock, “Senate Unit Limits Inquiry to 6 Covert C.I.A. Actions,” *NYT*, July 15, 1975.

⁶⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee, *Relations with Communist Countries*, 269.

⁶¹ Ibid., 272.

In this hearing, Kissinger not only defends the specific example of US covert involvement in Chile, but also the practice of US covert involvement in general:

First, the United States has been conducting various kinds of covert operations in the post-war period, and it may be and perhaps should be a matter of philosophical debate which of these are appropriate to conduct and to continue. The difficulty is that by the definition of covert operation, it is not easy to discuss them publicly and this creates certain anomalies. Secondly, all of the matters to which you refer have been developed by well-established procedures in the Government that have been consistently tightened, approved by the President and briefed to the appropriate committees. This does not itself make it right.⁶²

Secretary Kissinger brings up the issue of congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies and implicates the Committee on Armed Services, tasked with overseeing the intelligence agencies, for failing in its oversight capacity. He goes on to suggest a possible course of corrective action is a review of congressional oversight, led by President Ford:

The President had a meeting this morning with the leadership of the Congress in order to put before them what is involved and to point out that as far as the executive branch is concerned, we are prepared to work out those procedures that establish appropriate accountability if it is felt by the Congress that the existing procedures that have existed in the entire post-war period, and I repeat have been progressively tightened by each succeeding administration, are not adequate.

By both affirming the need for covert involvement in general and specifically asserting the necessity of covert involvement in Chile, Kissinger continued to paint this involvement as both necessary and limited to ensuring the maintenance of democracy in Chile. He denied that US covert involvement in Chile was not sufficiently overseen by Congress, and discouraged any further investigation into it.

In both sessions in front of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Secretary Kissinger adamantly defended the US' covert activities. In particular, questions from

⁶² Ibid., 270.

Committee member Senator Church regarding CIA Director Colby's discussion of US covert activities in Chile did not get a definitive answer from Kissinger. He dismissed covert activities in Chile as "something that was carried out by procedures in which all the branches of Government participated according to practices that had been established in the entire post-war period—something that was a regular operation."⁶³

For all the effort Kissinger put into publicly denying any knowledge of US plans of covert involvement in Chile, the formation of the Church Committee in January 1975 signaled the start of new questions for the Ford White House surrounding this topic of investigation. Documents from the Ford White House reveal a palpable White House concern over the Church Committee's congressional inquiry into Chile. In a January 1975 conversation with President Ford and Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Kissinger remarks that "the Chilean thing — that is not in any report. That is sort of blackmail on me."⁶⁴ Kissinger felt personally threatened by the possible inclusion of US covert involvement in Chile in a congressional investigation. Later documents, examined in the next chapter, demonstrate that Kissinger's paranoia only increased as the Committee's investigation continued and reached a peak when he learned that the Committee planned on investigating the death of General Schneider for its interim report.

President Ford also faced questions about US covert involvement in Chile, but he did not offer a public answer until after the Church Committee began its investigation. Even though these questions occurred approximately a year after Secretary Kissinger's

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ United States. Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, "[William Colby's release of information on covert intelligence operations]," memorandum of conversation, 4 January 1975, The Kissinger transcripts: a verbatim record of U.S. diplomacy, 1969-1977, DNSA accession number KT01466.

hearing in front of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, President Ford's response was similar to Kissinger's in that he reaffirmed the necessity of covert operations to protect the US. During a presidential news conference in September 1975, reporter Godfrey Sperling Jr. asked President Ford about testimony heard by the Church Committee that "the CIA, under the direction of a committee headed by Dr. Kissinger, attempted to destabilize the Government of Chile under former President Allende. Is it the policy of your Administration to attempt to destabilize the governments of other democracies?"⁶⁵ The President answered that the US government, "like other governments, does take certain actions in the intelligence field to help implement foreign policy and protect national security. I am informed reliably that Communist nations spend vastly more money than we do for the same kind of purpose."⁶⁶ President Ford added that information about covert operations

...is relayed to the responsible Congressional committees where it is reviewed by House and Senate committees. It seems to me that the 40 Committee should continue in existence, and I am going to meet with the responsible Congressional committees to see whether or not they want any changes in the review process so that the Congress, as well as the President, are fully informed and are fully included in the operations for any such action.⁶⁷

President Ford adopted an appearance that he was willing to work with the "responsible Congressional committees" tasked with reforming intelligence oversight. However, this willingness to work with Congress to reform congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies had limits. In a Cabinet meeting the day after his news conference,

⁶⁵ Gerald R. Ford: "The President's News Conference," September 16, 1975. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5255>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

President Ford emphatically stated that “we need a CIA and we need covert operations.”⁶⁸ President Ford’s defense of CIA activities in Chile took on a similar tone of Cold War necessity that Secretary Kissinger used a year earlier. President Ford defended the CIA’s covert activities since communist countries spend “vastly more money than we do for the same kind of purpose.”⁶⁹ Word of this statement made by the President quickly reached the public, and when asked about it by a group of Georgetown University students in the School of Foreign Service, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Lt. General Brent Scowcroft assured the undergraduates that the President “was just pointing out that they [Communists] spend a lot.”⁷⁰

In later comments on the division between the legislative and executive branches, President Ford characterized congressional oversight of intelligence activities as intrusive. He argued that for issues of foreign policy the Constitution “plainly puts the responsibility for such decisions on the shoulders of the President of the United States. There are institutional limitations on the Congress which cannot be legislated away.”⁷¹ Yet Cold War justifications did not satisfy members of Congress like Senator Church who were not swayed from their intent to investigate the intelligence agencies for actions like those in Chile in the early 1970s. CIA Director Colby’s testimony to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations revealed the true extent of US covert activities in Chile and Secretary

⁶⁸ Memorandum, Cabinet Meeting, 09/17/1974, folder: National Security Advisor. Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, GRFL.

⁶⁹ Gerald R. Ford: “The President’s News Conference,” September 16, 1975. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5255>.

⁷⁰ Memorandum of conversation, Lt. General Brent Scowcroft and 25 Georgetown University Undergraduate Students, School of Foreign Service, 10/29/1974, folder: National Security Advisor. Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, GRFL.

⁷¹ Gerald Ford, “The War Powers Resolution: Striking a Balance Between the Executive and Legislative Branches” (speech, Alfred M. Landon Lectures on Public Issues, Manhattan, Kansas, February 20, 1978).

Kissinger's testimony only further complicated the narrative of US covert involvement in Chile, and accusations of intelligence agency misdeeds intensified.

President Ford already faced the monumental task of rebuilding the nation's trust in the presidency after the Watergate scandal and resignation of President Nixon. In the aftermath of these political scandals President Ford not only wanted to appear open and cooperative with the other branches of government; he had to be after President Nixon's abuse of the law and the power of the presidency led to his resignation.⁷² After being confirmed as President Nixon's vice president not by election but by appointment, President Ford carefully avoided any actions that would implicate him in President Nixon's abuses of power.⁷³ The end of Nixon's imperial presidency meant that President Ford would have to confront allegations of abuse inside the intelligence agencies under his control. With congressional investigations into intelligence activities overseeing the intelligence agencies, the President could no longer ignore the legality of the intelligence agencies' activities and order them to conduct illegal activities. However, President Ford did at first try his best to preempt the congressional investigations with the Rockefeller Commission. However, it could not match the Church Committee's broad scope and ability to receive extensions to its existence in order to conduct a thorough investigation.⁷⁴

The Committee's Purpose for Investigating Assassination Plots

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations established the intent of Senator Church, and the Committee he chaired, to investigate the intelligence agencies' covert

⁷² Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 176-177.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Johnson, "Modern Intelligence," 39.

activities. However, it was not immediately clear that the scope of the Committee's investigation would include assassination plots involving foreign leaders. As previously noted, Senator Church expressed interest in further investigating US covert involvement in Chile during the Senate Foreign Relations Hearings on Détente. Additionally newspaper articles as early as January 1975 demonstrate public interest in assassination plots involving foreign leaders, not long after the Church Committee formally began. As the Church Committee began its investigation in January of 1975, the media already began to discuss both US covert involvement in Chile and assassination plots involving foreign leaders.⁷⁵

The Church Committee's inquiry into assassination plots involving foreign leaders was in part spurred by what it already knew about US covert involvement in Chile, but it was also spurred by the desire to uncover the details of the exact activities conducted in Chile. The Committee's questions that guided its investigation were, according to staff assistant Loch Johnson, "to whom are the intelligence agencies responsible?... Who got us into Chile? Who got us into all over the world, and under whose authority, and why was Congress not told?"⁷⁶ The most compelling example of covert activity in Chile was the potential US covert involvement in the botched kidnapping and subsequent assassination of General Schneider. From the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearings a year

⁷⁵ Seymour M. Hersh, "C.I.A. Told to Curb Activities Abroad," *NYT*, January 7, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Democrats Favor C.I.A. Inquiry Unit," *NYT*, January 15, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Helms Said Nixon Sought Chile Coup," *NYT*, February 10, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Aides Say Robert Kennedy Told of C.I.A. Castro Plot," *NYT*, March 10, 1975; Daniel Schorr, "The Rockefeller Commission Has Been Forced to Add It to the Agenda," *NYT*, May 4, 1975; Seymour M. Hersh, "Kissinger and C.I.A. Said to Conflict in Testimony on Chile Plot," *NYT*, November 21, 1975; George Lardner, "Senators issue report on CIA's death plots: The CIA's 'targets'," *Boston Globe*, November 21, 1975; Jim Squires, "Senate CIA report: They didn't fix the blame," *Chicago Tribune*, November 23, 1975; "Murder as a foreign policy," *Chicago Tribune*, November 24, 1975.

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 8.

earlier, Senator Church knew that US covert involvement in Chile extended beyond funneling financial support to Allende's opponents, but details such as the plot to kidnap General Schneider to initiate a coup were not known. By July 1975, reporting by US media discussed the committee's plan to investigate assassination plots involving foreign leaders:

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence will limit its investigation of covert activities by the Central Intelligence Agency to a "half-dozen or so representative case," including the intervention in Chile, the committee chairman said today... He [Senator Church] said that the committee planned to ask Mr. Colby about the death in October, 1970, of Gen. Rene Schneider... Press reports have suggested that the CIA may have had some involvement in General Schneider's death.⁷⁷

These early reports on the investigation into assassination plots also make clear the intention of Senator Church to publicly disclose the information gathered by the investigation.⁷⁸ Senator Church believed that the findings about "CIA murder attempts and murder attempts abroad" would be one of the most important aspects of the Committee's investigation.⁷⁹

As the Church Committee conducted its investigation into US covert involvement in assassination plots involving foreign leaders, investigations into other aspects of domestic intelligence agencies activities occurred simultaneously. Yet Senator Church continued to propel the investigation into assassination plots forward, even when Committee staff members feared it diverted precious time and resources away from other concurrent investigations.⁸⁰ Senator Church disagreed with other staffers who feared that it was leading them into a swamp because he "knew we had to face it."⁸¹ The determination

⁷⁷ Nicholas M. Horrock, "Senate Unit Limits Inquiry to 6 Covert C.I.A. Actions," *NYT*, July 15, 1975.

⁷⁸ Nicholas M. Horrock, "Church Will Call for Disclosure of C.I.A. Report in Early August," *NYT*, July 16, 1975.

⁷⁹ Ashby, "Church Committee's History," 63.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Senator Church showed during the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' investigation and other hearings about US covert activities in Chile carried over to the investigation into assassination plots involving foreign leaders. Senator Church's recognition of the importance of addressing the difficult and grim topic of US covert involvement in assassination plots saw the Committee through the investigation.

Chapter 3: The Church Committee Investigates Assassination Plots

After the long process of forming a committee, facing White House opposition, and defining what would set the committee apart from the other intelligence investigations, the Church Committee finally began its investigation. By the time the Church Committee's mandate expired in 1976, the Committee acquired documents, compiled exhibits, and invited witnesses to testify. The true scope and depth of the Committee's investigation is apparent when looking at its final result: 14 reports totaling 5,221 pages. These 14 reports were split into seven volumes, six books, and one interim report.¹ These reports covered the intelligence agencies in detail from their formation, operations, and the alleged abuses of law and power they committed.

Described as the most extensive review of intelligence activities ever made available to the public, the Church Committee went into previously unparalleled detail about intelligence activities. The seven volumes included transcripts of public hearings and accompanying exhibits, divided into the categories of hearings on unauthorized storage of toxic agents, the Huston Plan, the Internal Revenue Service, mail opening, the National Security and Fourth Amendment rights, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and covert action.² The books of the Committee's writings covered the topics of foreign and military intelligence, intelligence activities and the rights of Americans, supplementary detailed staff reports on intelligence activities and the rights of Americans, supplementary detailed staff reports on foreign and military intelligence, the investigation of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the performance of the intelligence agencies, and

¹ "Church Committee Reports," Mary Ferrell Foundation, accessed February 18, 2018, <https://www.maryferrell.org/php/showlist.php?docset=1014>.

² Ibid.

supplementary reports on intelligence activities.³ The final report was the interim report *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. It was a public disclosure of many of the US' most closely guarded secrets about assassination plots involving foreign leaders over the previous decades. The interim report contextualized the death of General Schneider within the broader circumstances of alleged US assassination plots involving foreign leaders.

Taken together, the 14 reports are the outcome of the Committee's "determination to expose and correct intelligence agencies' abuse of civil liberties and violations of law."⁴ Not only did these reports detail the various abuses of the intelligence agencies, but they also issued recommendations that the executive and legislative branches could follow to end these abuses.⁵ The legislative branch's three decades of a "don't ask, don't tell" attitude toward US intelligence activities was over.⁶ The Church Committee marked a definitive end to nearly unilateral White House control and the beginning of congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies. To the Church Committee's chief council, Frederick A.O. Schwarz, the purpose of committees investigating the intelligence agencies was "to understand the past and to propose guidance for the future... [They] must investigate past wrongdoing and mistakes."⁷ Those who were a part of the Church Committee understood that it achieved what no congressional body had before: the creation of a functioning system of congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Russell A. Miller, "Introduction: U.S. national security, intelligence and democracy: from the Church Committee to the War on Terror," in *US national security, intelligence and democracy: from the Church Committee to the War on Terror*, ed. Russell A. Miller (London: Routledge, 2008), 1.

⁵ Gary Hart, "Liberty and security," in *US National Security, Intelligence and Democracy: From the Church Committee to the War on Terror*, ed. Russell A. Miller (London: Routledge, 2008), 15.

⁶ Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 175.

⁷ Ibid., 183.

The Church Committee's decision to investigate the alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders marked a watershed moment in defining the unlimited executive power over intelligence activities in previous administrations and demonstrating the necessity of congressional inquiry and accountability in intelligence. The Committee's interim report demonstrated the Church Committee's willingness to look at intelligence abuses outside of the US. Although the Committee also marked the first serious inquiry into intelligence abuses inside the US, looking at foreign abuses showed a greater awareness for the negative impact of US intelligence activities in other countries. The importance of the US on the world stage extended beyond formal diplomacy; the US was also responsible for covertly manipulating countries around the world for the US' own best interest. Countries like Chile showed that the US' official stance of promoting peace, liberty, and democracy was not reflective of its true attitude towards the country when covert activities reflected unbridled hostility and aggression. The Church Committee's willingness to examine assassination plots involving foreign leaders makes it clear that it viewed abuses outside the US against foreign leaders as just as unacceptable as the intelligence abuses that occurred in the US.

With the interim report of alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders, the Committee united the two separate threads that propelled the Committee into existence. One thread was the issue of covert involvement in Chile, which motivated Senator Church to uncover the extent of US intelligence abuses that occurred in Chile. As the investigation into covert involvement in Chile progressed, it became a part of a much larger issue around the world: assassination plots. The other thread was the alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders; one of which was the plot to kidnap General Schneider that

turned into an assassination. In particular, the Committee's investigation into the death of General Schneider marked a new willingness to uncover, and confront, the very worst of US foreign policy during the Cold War. The Church Committee looked at his death and understood that it, and the situation in Chile in which it occurred, was a prime example of the lengths that the US went to achieve its desired outcome in a foreign country. As a result of the interim report, and its revelations of the actions of the CIA and Nixon White House surrounding the death of General Schneider, congressional oversight went from happening *pro forma* to concrete reality.

The Church Committee's Investigation

Before delving into the effects of the interim report on the assassination plots involving foreign leaders and the role that General Schneider's death played in it and how it was instrumental in changing the way Congress handled intelligence affairs, it is important to understand the creation of the report. Throughout the summer and fall of 1975 the Church Committee worked to investigate the assassination plots of the five foreign leaders chosen as the best examples of US covert involvement in these plots.⁸ In the process of forming the Church Committee, two major issues stood out for Senator Church: US covert involvement in Chile and assassination plots involving foreign leaders. In the investigation leading to the interim report, the death of General Schneider tied the topic of US covert involvement in Chile in closely with alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders.

⁸ Ashby, "Church Committee's History", 63.

As the Committee worked to investigate both covert involvement in Chile and the broader question of assassination plots involving foreign leaders and write its interim report, the Ford White House resisted. This was especially true in regards to the investigation into General Schneider's death. The actions of the Ford White House revealed that General Schneider's death was a key example of the abuses of US covert activities in other countries. The death of General Schneider united the Church Committee's two threads of covert involvement in Chile and the assassination plots involving foreign leaders, and the investigation into his death demonstrates the lengths both the Ford White House and Church Committee were willing to go to control the information surrounding his death. The Ford White House wanted to hide its involvement in his death from the public and maintain its public stance that its involvement in Chile did not involve anything as clearly impermissible as a kidnapping plot that led to an assassination. The Church Committee, on the other hand, was singularly committed to carrying out its investigation even in the face of White House resistance. The Committee would negotiate with the White House over issues of secrecy and public knowledge, but it would not budge in including the assassination of General Schneider as one of the examples of the US plotting to assassinate foreign leaders.

Staff Report. The first product of the Church Committee's investigation into assassination plots involving foreign leaders was the staff report *Covert Action in Chile, 1963-1973*. The staff report was included as an appendix in Book VI of the Church Committee Reports *Supplementary Reports on Intelligence Activities*. The creation of the staff report ran parallel with the creation of the interim report and was published a month after the interim report. It was the compilation of all of research done by the Committee

into covert action in Chile, and its stated purpose was to “lay out the basic facts of covert action in Chile to enable the Committee to hold public hearings. This report is based on an extensive review of documents of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Council; and on testimony by officials and former officials.”⁹ The report was just one piece of the Committee’s investigation into US covert activities in Chile and included supplemental information for the wider investigation of US covert involvement abroad. Its goal was to present an “accurate picture of the scope, purposes and magnitude of United States covert action in Chile.”¹⁰ This outline of the facts and motivations of US covert activities in Chile was a critical step in helping to form the Committee’s knowledge of CIA abuses. The interim report would dive much deeper into one facet of US covert involvement in Chile that the report briefly outlined: the assassination of General Schneider.¹¹

Although the staff report did not detail the death of General Schneider in depth, it did provide context for his death and raised questions. These questions came up again in the interim report when it examined the role of his death in the bigger picture of US covert involvement in Chile. In the staff report, the planning of his kidnapping is recognized as the pivotal moment in which the CIA directly tried to intervene in stopping the ratification of Allende’s electoral victory. The report outlines how the CIA

...attempted, directly, to foment a military coup in Chile. It passed three weapons to a group of Chilean officers who plotted a coup. Beginning with the kidnapping of Chilean Army Commander-in-Chief René Schneider. However, those guns were returned. The group, which staged the abortive kidnap of Schneider, which resulted

⁹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Covert Action in Chile, 1963-1973*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, III.

¹⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Covert Action*, III.

¹¹ See also: Letter, William B. Bader to Mr. Seymour Bolten, 10/17/1975, folder: Marsh, John O.: Files, 1974-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, GRFL

in his death, apparently was not the same as the group which received CIA weapons.¹²

Yet the report goes on to make clear that his death involved the US when it posed the question, “Was the United States directly involved, covertly, in the 1973 coup in Chile?”¹³ The report goes on to answer “The Committee has found no evidence that it was. However, the United States sought in 1970 to foment a military coup in Chile; after 1970 it adopted a policy both overt and covert, of opposition to Allende; and it remained in intelligence contact with the Chilean military, including officers who were participating in coup plotting.”¹⁴ While there is minimal discussion of General Schneider’s assassination in the staff report, it set the stage for the main focus of the investigation on assassination plots involving foreign leaders: the abuses and lack of oversight of the intelligence agencies, and in this case specifically the CIA.

The staff report touched on more than just the facts of covert activities in Chile; it included the questions that these activities raised about the nature of US covert involvement in Chile, Latin America, and the world. It took into account the Committee’s purpose to “conduct an investigation of Government intelligence activities, including the extent to which any illegal or improper activities were engaged in” and to address the “need for legislative authority to govern the operations of any intelligence agencies” as stated in the resolution forming the Committee.¹⁵ In the broader investigation of US intelligence activities the staff report found that “the pattern of United States covert action in Chile is striking but not unique. It arose in the context not only of American foreign

¹² U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Covert Action*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ S. 21, 94th Cong. (1975).

policy, but also of US covert involvement in other countries within and outside Latin America. The scale of CIA involvement in Chile was unusual but by no means unprecedented.”¹⁶ The report demonstrates the Committee’s awareness of other examples of CIA covert activities abroad and its understanding of the lack of proper oversight of CIA covert activities around the world. The issue of the lack of oversight is addressed in two of the four overarching questions the report asked:

(2) How was this major covert action program authorized and directed? What roles were played by the President, the 40 Committee, the CIA, the Ambassadors, and the Congress? (3) Did U.S. policy-makers take into account the judgments of the intelligence analysts on Chile when they formulated and approved US covert operations? Does the Chilean experience illustrate an inherent conflict between the role of the Director of Central Intelligence as a producer of intelligence and his role as manager of covert operations?¹⁷

The staff report posed the questions, framed for the specific incidents of US covert involvement in Chile, which the Church Committee sought to answer in its mission to reform intelligence activities. That the Committee’s findings on covert activities in Chile were so extensive that they needed their own staff report demonstrates the depth of the Committee’s investigation and its dedication to following up on the specific instances, like US covert involvement in Chile, that initially motivated Senator Church to pursue an investigation of the US intelligence agencies. Covert involvement in Chile was a motivating factor for Senator Church to begin his investigation into the CIA and he made sure that the Committee followed up with an investigation of the CIA’s abuses that he uncovered during the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Testimonies. As the Committee created the staff report that dove deeper into US covert activities in Chile, it also worked to investigate the assassination plots that formed

¹⁶ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Covert Action*, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

the interim report *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*. This interim report became one of the fourteen volumes of the Church Committee Reports. The process of investigation of these alleged assassination plots, and especially the plot involving General Schneider, put the Committee in direct conflict with the Ford White House. In the process of trying to obtain information for its investigation into alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders, the assassination of General Schneider exemplified the tension that existed between the Church Committee and the Ford White House. The conflict over evidence regarding his death created much of this tension, but the Committee would eventually triumph in obtaining the information needed for a complete investigation of assassination plots.¹⁸

The first issue faced by the Church Committee when looking to obtain information from the White House was a seeming disconnect between the White House and the CIA. Loch Johnson, special assistant to Senator Church during his time chairing the Church Committee, recollected that “the trail of evidence on assassination was at times easily traced, only to disappear completely or, at best, fray apart in a bewildering pattern like the ends of a shattered nerve. Frustratingly, the break would occur most often at the critical synapse between the White House and the CIA.”¹⁹ With the focus of the investigation into alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders focused on the role the White House played in dictating the CIA’s roles in these assassination plots, this was a critical connection. To get a clearer picture of the connection between the White House and CIA,

¹⁸ For more information see also: Letter, William B. Bader to Mr. Seymour Bolten, 10/17/1975, folder: Marsh, John O.: Files, 1974-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, GRFL; Draft responses to the Church Committee Questions, 09/04/1975, folder: Church Committee - Materials on Chile, Aug.-Sept. 1975, Box 1, NSA Staff Assistant Robert C. McFarlane, GRFL.

¹⁹ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 49.

the Committee began calling CIA officials to testify to the nature of the relationship between the Nixon White House and the CIA. This eventually led to approximately 24 hours of “probing” by the Committee throughout the course of 1975.²⁰

In February of 1975 the Committee called former CIA Director Richard Helms to testify. His incredibly frank testimony acknowledged that there was “no doubt” in 1970 that the Nixon White House wanted to make sure that Allende did not become president.²¹ The most shocking revelation to come from his testimony was the first confirmation from an official serving during the Nixon administration that there was US covert involvement in the kidnapping plot that led to the assassination of General Schneider. The Committee immediately honed in on his mention of the assassination of General Schneider, and the association of the Nixon White House to the plot. The Republican counsel for the Committee, Mr. Smothers, asked about the authorization of the plot: “we are a bit unclear as to how one might arrive at and maintain the idea that certain activities surrounding assassination were, I believe, to use your words, completely authorized, how one might entertain this feeling.”²² Helms’ surprising candor about US covert involvement in Chile set the stage for the Church Committee’s increasingly deliberate questioning of other officials about the exact nature of the involvement. Now the Committee knew that US involvement in Chile extended far beyond the benevolent financial aid given to anti-Allende supporters that Secretary Kissinger suggested in 1974. Richard Helms was the first official from the Nixon presidency to offer definitive testimony that the US participated in

²⁰ Ibid., 7.

²¹ Seymour M. Hersh, “Helms Said Nixon Sought Chile Coup,” *NYT*, February 10, 1975, <http://www.nytimes.com/1975/02/10/archives/helms-said-nixon-sought-chile-coup-testimony-on-the-overthrow-of.html>

²² U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Testimony of Richard Helms*, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, 60.

a plot to stop Allende from becoming president that led to the assassination of General Schneider.

In May 1975 the Committee called acting CIA Director William Colby to testify further about the CIA's assassination plots involving foreign leaders. President Ford's top advisors quickly protested, arguing that Colby's testimony should only contain general information about CIA activities to avoid any sensitive information getting out.²³ Privately, their concerns were that his testimony could negatively impact the White House. Aware of how mention of assassination plots involving foreign leaders in testimony from a CIA official could implicate the White House, Secretary Kissinger told President Ford in a private meeting that he thought "the executive branch is in serious trouble."²⁴ However, the Church Committee had the full authority to call a hearing under the terms of the Committee's establishment, so the White House could not stop Colby from testifying.²⁵

Colby's testimony would not deal in the specifics of assassination plots; instead, he discussed the motivating factors behind US intelligence operations in foreign countries.²⁶ He framed intelligence activities as part of the US' moral obligation to help other nations combat Communism, and one way the US helped was through covert activities.²⁷ Without Colby even going into specific examples the White House believed that Colby gained "a reputation for being candid and cooperative with Congress - too much so."²⁸ Yet Colby's limited cooperation with the Committee, but candor about CIA activities abroad, made the

²³ United States. National Security Council. Staff, "[Israel; Church Committee; Turkey; Portugal; Iran]," memorandum of conversation, 5 May 1975, Kissinger Conversations: Supplement I, 1969-1977, DNSA accession number KC00424.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ S. 21, 94th Cong. (1975).

²⁶ John Prados, *Lost Crusader: The Secret Wars of CIA Director William Colby* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 313.

²⁷ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 45.

²⁸ Ibid., 46.

Committee aware that it could dig deeper in its investigation to move from the reasoning behind assassination plots to concrete examples.²⁹ Like Richard Helms, Colby's candid testimony in front of the Committee led the Committee even deeper into the specific details of US covert involvement. Senator Church continued to persevere in following the investigation into assassination plots all the way through. During the testimony of CIA Director Colby, Senator Church commented that "once an agency begins to engage in assassination attempts the disease spreads. Your own testimony shows it spread at least as far as the Dominican Republic and we are going to get into closer questions on others matters such as Lumumba and Chile."³⁰ Colby recalled later that "while the heat from the Church Committee was on the CIA, the White House told us not to cooperate ... but when the heat began to move toward the White House, they began to give up papers."³¹ One of the set of papers that the Committee pushed for the White House to release was those relating to the assassination plots involving foreign leaders.³²

The Investigation Reaches the White House

The Committee continued to be frustrated by the White House's slow response to its document requests and interference in the testimony of CIA officials. The investigation began to gravitate away from the CIA, who remained unwilling to give specific details about assassination plots, and towards the White House. With the Committee's attention

²⁹ Ibid., 41.

³⁰ Testimony of William C. Colby, Director, Central Intelligence Agency, 05/23/1975, folder: Church Committee - Colby Testimony, May 23, 1975, Box 1, NSA Staff Assistant Robert C. McFarlane, GRFL.

³¹ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 44.

³² See also: Memorandum draft, Request of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Activities for Information on Covert Actions, 05/09/1975, folder: Intelligence Investigations: Chile (1), Box 2, Robert K. Wolthuis Papers, GRFL; Memorandum, Background on Covert Operations in Chile, 10/31/1975, folder: Marsh, John O.: Files, 1974-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, GRFL.

turned toward the White House, officials there faced questions about the White House's knowledge of assassination plots involving foreign leaders.

As the Church Committee's investigation shifted away from the CIA and closer towards the White House, the questions driving its investigation expanded. The Committee expanded from just focusing on the CIA to examining the relationship between the CIA and White House, and any control the White House exercised over the CIA. The Committee suspected that permission for the CIA to proceed with assassination plots may have come directly from the White House, and not the CIA. The investigation into the CIA focused on the question of whether US intelligence activities in foreign countries included assassination plots involving foreign leaders. Now, as the Church Committee expanded its investigation to the White House, it began to focus on the question of to whom the US intelligence agencies were responsible, under whose authority were assassinations plotted, and why Congress was not told of these intelligence activities.³³ Even before the Church Committee began to push the White House to provide information regarding its relationship with the CIA, it concerned White House officials that one of the topics the Church Committee would be interested in was assassination plots involving foreign leaders. A memorandum of conversation from January of 1975 records President Ford and CIA Director Colby discussing allegations of CIA abuse and the threats posed by the congressional investigation. At the end of their conversation, President Ford remarked:

President: We don't want to destroy but to preserve the CIA. But we want to make sure that illegal operations and those outside the charter don't happen.

Colby: We have run operations to assassinate foreign leaders. We have never succeeded. [He cited Castro, Trujillo, General Schneider of Chile, et al]³⁴

³³ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 8.

³⁴ United States. White House, "Allegations of CIA Domestic Activities," memorandum of conversation, 3 January 1975, CIA Covert Operations II, DNSA accession number CT00092.

The three foreign leaders, including General Schneider, cited in this conversation were all included in the Church Committee's interim report. This conversation recorded the White House's early and continued preoccupation with a congressional investigation uncovering the true extent of the collaboration to plot assassination between the White House and CIA.

In early March of 1975 Senator Church visited the White House to ask for documents to include in his investigation. The purpose of his visit was to formally notify President Ford and Secretary Kissinger that he would be investigating, among other issues, the allegations of CIA covert involvement in assassination plots involving foreign leaders around the world. The White House's internal files were crucial to the investigation, as the Committee wanted to know what the White House knew about the assassination plots, and whether in any of the assassination plots it encouraged the CIA to act. Relations between the Church Committee and the White House got off to a cordial start, with President Ford accepting the Committee's list of requested documents and promising to fulfill the Committee's requests. Yet accepting a list of requested documents did not translate to actually providing them to the Committee. Declassified documents reveal that Secretary Kissinger was one of the major voices in the White House arguing against allowing the Committee too much access to White House documents. He looked for ways to limit the Committee's investigation into the White House, acknowledging to President Ford in an Oval Office meeting in May of 1975:

Kissinger: We have a problem with the Church Committee. They want to interview anyone in State they want, without a State Department officer present. I think there should be a White House order confirming that these interviews should be limited to Presidential appointees and on specific subjects. This goes to Executive Privilege...

President Ford: Our problem is they have already done it with the CIA.

Kissinger: If we establish a precedent that Congressional committees can run loose in agencies - - that is worse than what McCarthy did... I think the Executive Branch is in serious trouble.³⁵

Secretary Kissinger's reluctance to have the Committee digging into White House interactions with the CIA went beyond issues of executive privilege. Transcripts of Kissinger's private conversations reveal his concern with one topic in particular: the White House's involvement in assassination plots. The internal White House discussion involving General Schneider's death signals the specific threat that this kidnapping plot posed since it directly implicated the Nixon White House and Kissinger in particular. In a June 1975 telephone conversation with National Security Advisor Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, Kissinger emphatically states:

Kissinger: He cannot pick Chile.

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft: I said, what did you pick Chile for? He said Church is determined to go through with details.

Kissinger: I'm determined to stop it. Why not pick one from a previous administration.

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft: It's starting from 1962. He goes through the whole thing.

Kissinger: Including Schneider?

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft: Yes.³⁶

From the beginning of the Committee's investigation the topic of assassination plots proved to be a contentious issue for the White House that officials did their best to try to avoid. In particular, the plot to assassinate General Schneider became a personal issue for Secretary Kissinger since the White House's documentation of the kidnapping plot provided a clear example of how covert involvement in a foreign country could escalate to

³⁵ United States. National Security Council. Staff, "[Israel; Church Committee; Turkey; Portugal; Iran]," memorandum of conversation, 5 May 1975, Kissinger Conversations: Supplement I, 1969-1977, DNSA accession number KC00424.

³⁶ United States. Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs; United States. Department of State. Secretary, "[Intelligence Briefing on Covert Operations]," memorandum of telephone conversation, 24 June 1975, Kissinger Conversations: Supplement II, 1969-1977, DNSA accession number KS00452.

become a concrete plot to kidnap a foreign leader. Additionally, the White House's role in instructing the CIA to formulate this plot could be traced through previous documents like memorandums and transcripts of conversation. These detail the inner actions of the Nixon White House in 1970 with the CIA in regards to General Schneider and the situation in Chile leading up to Allende's electoral ratification.

At this stage in the Committee's investigation, the Ford White House tried to delay delivering the documents that Senator Church requested from President Ford. Given Senator Church's commitment to uncovering the whole truth during the course of his investigation, it is not surprising that staff member Loch Johnson remembered that he "complained strongly about executive-branch delays on document deliveries."³⁷ Chief Counsel Frederick A.O. Schwarz defined the ways the Committee pushed back against the White House's reluctance to give up documents. First, the Committee put political pressure on the White House by using the media as its outlet for complaints about the White House's unwillingness to cooperate.³⁸ This also served to publicly reinforce the Committee's resolve to conduct an investigation into White House abuse of the intelligence agencies. Second, it requested specific document from the White House and intelligence agencies. Finally, the Committee emphasized that its' investigation timeline would continue to be extended until the White House supplied the requested documents. Democratic Committee member Senator Mondale remarked that the Committee "ought to tell them we're going to keep getting extensions for the life of this committee until we finish our business" to which Republican Vice Chair Tower responded "Amen, world

³⁷ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 40.

³⁸ Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 177.

without end.”³⁹ The White House’s foot-dragging united the Church Committee members in their commitment to force the White House to hand over the requested documents with little regard for how long it took or the White House’s protestations over issues of secrecy.

Issues of secrecy became the main point of contention for the White House and the Church Committee. Although the White House could not stop the Committee from obtaining the information it sought, the White House could work to stop the Committee from revealing it to anyone outside of the Committee. The White House and Church Committee had different ideas about what information should remain secret, and these differences led to another conflict centered on information surrounding assassination plots involving foreign leaders. The White House’s main action in pushing back against the Committee’s investigation, after it became apparent that it could not persuade or bully the Committee into giving up its investigation, was the invocation of secrecy. To the Church Committee there was a distinction between obtaining secret information and handling secret information.⁴⁰ Working under the philosophy of practically handling secret information, the Committee negotiated with the Ford White House and came to an agreement acceptable to both sides. Chief counsel Frederick A.O. Schwarz detailed the secrecy arrangements as such:

While it retained all final disclosure decisions, the Church Committee worked out reasonable secrecy arrangements with the Ford administration. When agencies first produced documents, they could redact— or black out— names of informers or secret agents... If, upon review, the committee believed disclosure was important, it could press for the names. The committee also agreed that, before it issued reports, it would let agencies and the White House see final drafts so they could argue that disclosure of particular information would be unnecessarily harmful. The committee’s published reports revealed huge amounts of classified information. No

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 178.

improprieties were withheld, but sensible limits were placed on the details disclosed.⁴¹

Although this arrangement complicated the Committee's investigation, it did not interfere with its mission. Schwarz attributed the increasing trust of the Ford administration, and the US public, to the Committee's ability to keep "its collective mouth shut."⁴² One instance that demonstrates the Committee's willingness to handle secret information in a responsible way was testimony regarding the plots to assassinate foreign leaders. This testimony could either be heard in public or executive (private) session.⁴³ The testimonies would make for riveting reporting and television; they offered "dramatic, conflicting, and often emotional testimony" from CIA officials, executives, National Security Advisors, Cabinet secretaries, and presidential aides.⁴⁴

Yet Senator Church eventually convinced the Committee to hear these testimonies in executive session and preserve the secrecy surrounding CIA covert activities abroad. He recognized that public hearings would almost certainly derail the already limited cooperation between the Committee and the Ford White House. Although televised testimonies would have placed Senator Church in the spotlight, they would have also jeopardized the Ford administration's cooperation.⁴⁵ Besides, the Committee thought that sensitive details surrounding assassination plots involving foreign leaders could easily be included in a sanitized form in the Committee's interim report. However, the secret nature of the details included in the interim report became a main point of contention between the Ford White House and the Church Committee.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 179.

⁴³ Ibid., 180.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The interim report was a secrecy issue that the Committee and the Ford administration did not agree on. The debate between making the interim report public or private was one that neither the Church Committee nor the Ford administration were willing to negotiate on. This initiated a back-and-forth between the Church Committee and the Ford White House and CIA over the extent of the details to be removed before publication. The White House and the CIA tried to prevent publication of the interim report by claiming that the report revealed too many details that could endanger CIA officials. Within the White House, many of the officials who worked closely with President Ford protested the release of the interim report in full, including Secretary Kissinger and Chief of Staff Dick Cheney.⁴⁶ As at the beginning of the Church Committee's investigation into assassination plots involving foreign leaders, the investigation into the death of General Schneider concerned Secretary Kissinger. Unsure of the repercussions the public release of this information could have, Secretary Kissinger called former Secretary of State William Rogers and asked him:

Secretary Kissinger: Bill what do you think the impact of these Chile revelations will be? Have you read it?

Secretary Rogers: Yes. I think they will be serious as I have said before...

Secretary Rogers: ...We have a task force quite frankly that is trying to think up ways to contain the damage. I am frank to say that it is going to hurt us.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., 176-177; for more information on White House concerns over secrecy see also: Memorandum, Procedures for Safeguarding Classified Information, 04/14/1975, folder: Intelligence Investigations: Church Committee (2), Box 2, Robert K. Wolthuis Papers, GRFL; Memorandum, Senate Select Committee Plans for Open Hearing on Covert Activities in Chile, 11/01/1975, folder: Marsh, John O.: Files, 1974-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, GRFL; Letter, President Ford to Senator Church, 10/31/1975, folder: Intelligence Investigations: Church Committee (1), Box 2, Robert K. Wolthuis Papers, Gerald R. Ford Library; Memorandum draft, Public Disclosure of Covert Action by the Senate Select Committee, n.d., folder: Marsh, John O.: Files, 1974-1977, Box 1, Ford Library Project File on Pinochet/Chile, GRFL.

⁴⁷ United States. Department of State. Secretary, "[Henry Kissinger's Visit to Latin America]," memorandum of telephone conversation, 21 November 1975, The Kissinger telephone conversations: A verbatim record of U.S. diplomacy, 1969-1977, DNSA accession number KS00598.

Just as with the reveal by Senator Church that the death of General Schneider would be included in the Committee's investigation, Secretary Kissinger confirmed his personal apprehension at the inclusion of Chile in the interim report. Secretary Kissinger's inability to stop Senator Church from investigating General Schneider's death and including it in the interim report left him to deal with the aftermath of the report to the best of his ability.

Beyond Secretary Kissinger's personal concern at the inclusion of General Schneider's death, the Ford White House was also against the release of the interim report due to other details. The comprehensive nature of the interim report meant that it exposed, in great detail, the worst examples of covert activities abroad during the past four presidencies.⁴⁸ The argument from the Ford White House that the interim report should not be made public forced Senator Church to take drastic action. At a Committee meeting leading up to the report's release, Senator Church threatened to resign if the interim report was not made public.⁴⁹ Shocked, the other Committee members held a rare vote and overwhelmingly voted to release the report to the public.⁵⁰ With the decision made that the interim report would be released publicly, the Ford White House continued to fight against the inclusion of certain details. Beyond the fundamental complaint that the report revealed too much about covert activities, the Ford White House protested many of the details included in the report.⁵¹ Of particular concern to the Ford White House was the inclusion of the names of high-level CIA officials, while the report replaced the names of low-level

⁴⁸ Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 179.

⁴⁹ Ashby, "Church Committee's History," 63.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 179.

CIA officials with pseudonyms.⁵² The tension culminated with an executive session in the Senate, where the Church Committee brought the issue in front of the entire Senate body after describing the nature of the report. After discussing the matter, the Senate found no need to vote on the matter since there was no vocal opposition to the release. At the end of the session, the Church Committee released the interim report in full, without removing any names from the interim report.⁵³

Out of the Church Committee's entire investigation, covering a wide range of covert activities inside the US and abroad, only the investigation into assassination plots involving foreign leaders produced a variety of reports beyond the seven books and seven volumes. The interim report *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders* and the staff report *Covert Action in Chile, 1963-1973* were the only interim and staff reports published on any topic. This was in addition to the volume on the hearings for covert action and the book on foreign and military intelligence. Although the release of the interim report was met with opposition from the Ford White House, its overall begrudging cooperation and deliberate delays eventually resulted in the Church Committee receiving the materials for its investigation. The context of Gerald Ford's presidency ultimately forced him to cooperate with the investigation. After the Watergate scandal and Richard Nixon's disgraced presidency, President Ford needed to appear open and cooperative with investigative bodies like the Church Committee. Nixon's presidency continued to cast a shadow over the Ford White House as Congress conducted its season of inquiry.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Schwarz, Frederick A.O. "The Church Committee, then and now," in *US National Security, Intelligence and Democracy: From the Church Committee to the War on Terror*, edited by Russell A. Miller, (London: Routledge, 2008), 27.

Ultimately, the concern over the Committee accusing the Ford White House of withholding information from its investigation outweighed the apprehension over the Committee digging into US covert activities.

The Committee's Interim Report and its Findings

On November 20, 1975, the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities published its interim report *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*.⁵⁵ The Church Committee's report was the culmination of one part of its broader investigation that when completed extended over fourteen reports covering the various actions undertaken by the CIA, FBI, and NSA that it investigated between 1975 and 1976.

The Church Committee's report on assassination plots involving foreign leaders set out to answer four main questions regarding assassination plots, their authorization, and who was in control of authorizing them. The first question was about assassination plots: did US officials instigate, attempt, aid and abet, or acquiesce in plots to assassinate foreign leaders? Centered on US covert involvement in other killings, the second question asked: did US officials assist foreign dissidents in a way which significantly contributed to the killing of foreign leaders? The third question referred to the authorization of the plots: where there was involvement by US official in assassination plots or other killings, were such activities authorized and if so, at what levels of our government? The last question was about communication and control: even if not authorized, were the assassination activities perceived by those involved to be within the scope of their lawful authority? If

⁵⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, 1.

they were so perceived, was there inadequate control exercised by higher authorities over the agencies to prevent such misinterpretation?⁵⁶

The Church Committee then applied these four questions to the five alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders it examined. The Committee investigated possible assassination plots against Patrice Lumumba of Congo, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, and General René Schneider of Chile. The report concluded that the US attempted, but failed, to assassinate Fidel Castro and Patrice Lumumba. The US plot to kill Patrice Lumumba only failed because another group assassinated him before the US could act. It also concluded that the deaths of Rafael Trujillo, Ngo Dinh Diem, and General René Schneider were at the hands of dissidents that the US supported, but there was no direct US involvement in their deaths. Although the Committee determined that the US was not directly responsible for any of the four deaths, it concluded that the CIA was on friendly terms with the plotters and facilitated the transfer of weapons to supply them for the various plots.⁵⁷ The plots surrounding General Schneider, Fidel Castro, and Rafael Trujillo are connected by their geographic location in Latin America. This is another reminder of the geopolitical importance of Latin America to the US during the Cold War. The first attempt by the US to stop a communist intrusion in Latin America was to plot to assassinate Fidel Castro so he could not inspire any other leaders in the region to follow in his revolutionary path.⁵⁸ Yet the report demonstrates that this would not be the last attempt by the US. The interim report explicitly states that while these examples must be viewed

⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁷ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 48-49.

⁵⁸ Harmer, *Allende's Chile*, 71.

within the context of the Cold War, this “cannot justify resorting to the kind of abuses covered in this report.”⁵⁹ These five examples are representative of a longer pattern of forceful US intervention in other countries to protect them, in the US’ eyes, from the threat of communism posed by their leaders.

The choice of the five assassination plots to investigate also illustrates Senator Church and his Committee’s bipartisan nature. The plots involving General Schneider and Patrice Lumumba occurred during the Republican presidencies of Richard Nixon and Dwight Eisenhower, respectively. The plots involving Rafael Trujillo, Ngo Dinh Diem, and Fidel Castro occurred during the Democratic presidency of John F. Kennedy, and additional CIA abuses occurred during Lyndon Johnson’s presidency.⁶⁰ Senator Church did not hold the Committee back from investigating assassination plots during the presidencies of fellow Democrats.

The questions that the Church Committee set out to answer about the authority behind CIA assassination plots involving foreign leaders embroiled the White House in a controversy about the limits of executive privilege. Those working on the Committee saw its investigation as marking the end of the “imperial presidency of Richard Nixon.”⁶¹ Senator Church later characterized a relationship between the CIA and the presidency where “The CIA operated as an arm of the presidency. This led presidents to conclude that they were ‘super-godfathers’ with enforcers. It made them feel above the law and unaccountable.”⁶² Although the report ultimately concluded that the US was not directly responsible for any of the successful assassination plots, it made it clear that the White

⁵⁹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, xiii.

⁶⁰ Ashby, “Church Committee’s History,” 63.

⁶¹ Johnson, *Season of Inquiry*, 11.

⁶² Smist, *Congress*, 70.

House had been involved in plotting kidnappings, assassinations, and coups. The release of the interim report confirmed suspicions in Congress and the press that the White House plotted assassinations or kidnappings of foreign leaders on multiple occasions. Although President Ford was not in office when the assassination plots took place, he was left to address the allegations of wrongdoing that the White House now faced from the Church Committee.

In its findings on the death of General Schneider, the Committee focused on critiquing the relationship between the CIA and White House when it came to covert activities. With evidence that the CIA did follow through on Kissinger's orders to turn off the kidnapping plot, the committee found that it suggested "an unduly lax attitude within the CIA toward consultation with superiors."⁶³ The interim report believed this was due in part to the White House's practice of giving the CIA a "blank check" when it came to covert operations.⁶⁴ The case of General Schneider's botched kidnapping and death demonstrates the problems that arise from lack of supervision over covert activities. The CIA failed to follow Kissinger's orders to turn off US support to the plotters, leading to confusion and uncertainty over the US' intended and actual course of action in the days leading up to his death.

As a select committee, the Church Committee did not have the power to make laws, but it could make recommendations to the executive and legislative branches. Its findings from the interim report led to the recommendation that all political assassinations be prohibited by the executive branch, and no efforts be taken to overthrow or subvert a

⁶³ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, 272.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

democratically-elected government.⁶⁵ Legislative branch reforms also came from recommendations made by the Church Committee, and led to the establishment of the permanent Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. For the first time in US history, the Senate had a committee dedicated to conducting congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies.⁶⁶ The committee's mission states that it will "provide vigilant legislative oversight of the intelligence activities of the United States to assure that such activities are in conformity with the Constitution and laws of the United States."⁶⁷ No longer relegated to the Committee on Armed Services, congressional oversight of the intelligence agencies was now out in the open with a dedicated committee to make sure that oversight was no longer in name only.

⁶⁵ Smist, *Congress*, 78; U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee, *Alleged Assassination Plots*, 281.

⁶⁶ Johnson, "Establishment of modern intelligence," 44.

⁶⁷ "About the Committee," U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/about>.

Conclusion

The interim report released by the Church Committee led to concrete changes in the control and conduct of covert activities abroad. These changes occurred in both the executive branch and legislative branch, and together they led to reforms in the way that the intelligence agencies, White House, and Congress interacted. Looking back at his time working with the Church Committee, Chief Counsel Frederick A.O. Schwarz recalled its mission “to understand the past and to propose guidance for the future,” and in order to do that “a congressional committee must investigate past wrongdoing and mistakes.”¹ The Church Committee investigated some of the worst wrongdoing and mistakes by the US intelligence agencies, with the end goal of offering recommendations for appropriate and effective reforms. The Cold War could no longer be used as a justification for the misuse of the intelligence agencies by the White House. The CIA, among other intelligence agencies, was not created to carry out the White House’s desired covert activities abroad. What the Church Committee’s investigation uncovered served as a “cautionary note” to the White House, executive branch, and members of Congress of what happened when they failed to provide adequate oversight of the intelligence agencies.²

As riveting as the Committee’s investigation into assassination plots involving foreign leaders is on its own, the full narrative of the examples chosen for the interim report adds a new layer of significance to the Committee’s final results. As this paper has tried to show, the case of General Schneider provided the Church Committee with a crucial component of their interim report. Although the investigation uncovered that he was not

¹ Schwarz, *Democracy in the Dark*, 183.

² *Ibid.*, 180-181.

the target of an assassination plot, the true circumstance of his death was no less shocking than an assassination plot. As demonstrated throughout this paper, the context of the Cold War allowed the events leading up to the death of General Schneider. However, the season of inquiry beginning in 1975 elevated General Schneider's death from another skeleton in the Nixon White House's closet to one of five central examples of US covert activities against foreign leaders.

Chapter 1 set the stage for US covert involvement in Chile leading to the botched kidnapping and subsequent assassination of General Schneider. The US ignored its claims of promoting peace, liberty, and democracy abroad and instead engaged in actions that went directly against these claims. The US' engagement in covert action against democratically-elected Salvador Allende is just one compelling example of the lengths the US went to "protect" the world as a result of Cold War tensions. The death of General Schneider occurred because the US made an overt attempt to impede the ratification of Allende's electoral victory, yet failed due to a series of miscommunications among the White House, CIA, and coup plotters that led to General Schneider's botched kidnapping. However, this failed plot to kidnap General Schneider and stop Allende's ratification led to primary sources from the Nixon White House that proved invaluable evidence in the Church Committee's investigation.

Chapter 2 set the stage for the formation of the Church Committee with the multi-year process of introducing the topic of US covert involvement in Chile to the Senate, and the championing of the necessity of this investigation by Senator Frank Church. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' questioning of Henry Kissinger showed that it was not easy to make the White House accept that it had to face the reality of an

investigation into intelligence abuses perpetrated by the White House. The failure of the Rockefeller Commission and limited scope of the Pike Committee demonstrate that even the investigative bodies struggled to form a good investigation due to issues of communication and competition. The Church Committee's investigation did not occur in isolation, and previous committees and their simultaneous investigations helped Senator Church shape a better committee of his own. Indeed, the demands by Congress and the public for accountability in the White House were a key part of the Church Committee's existence and wide-ranging investigation that set out to uncover the full range of intelligence agencies' abuses in the US and abroad.

Chapter 3 brings in the Church Committee's investigation of the death of General Schneider and the creation of the interim report on alleged assassination plots involving foreign leaders. His death connects the two different threads of US covert involvement in Chile and assassination plots involving foreign leaders. It allowed the Church Committee to engage with the topic of US covert involvement in Chile, already of interest to Senator Church from the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearings, within the broader investigation into assassination plots. The Church Committee's inclusion of General Schneider's death in its investigation demonstrates the moment of serious inquiry into intelligence activities that sought to end the White House's practice of using the CIA as a means to carry out covert operations. Documents contemporary with the Committee's investigation reveal that the Committee's inclusion of General Schneider's death was a serious point of contention for Henry Kissinger. At his urging, the Ford White House pushed back against the Committee including the death of General Schneider in its

investigation. Yet the Church Committee was not swayed by their opposition, and it still included the death of General Schneider in their interim report.

The Church Committee had no way of knowing the simultaneous actions of the White House while the investigation occurred. Every action by the Committee had a parallel reaction in the White House, and the White House's reactions provide some of the most compelling evidence about the White House's anxiety towards the investigation. The White House publicly wrote off their anxiety as concerns over the protection of secrets that could harm the intelligence agencies. In the case of General Schneider's death, however, this went beyond simple anxiety that the interim report might reveal national secrets to the public. Evidence relating to General Schneider's death hit even closer to home; it was a personal liability for Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Secretary Kissinger was afraid of what it revealed about how recently the US participated in covert activities abroad, when he was already working in the White House as a top aide to President Nixon. The same documents that the Church Committee requested for their investigation implicated him in being involved in General Schneider's botched kidnapping.

One change emerging from the Church Committee's investigation into the death of General Schneider was that his death cracked the door open on Henry Kissinger's previous actions during Nixon's imperial presidency, revealing them to the US public. The days of the imperial presidency ended with Nixon's resignation, and the Ford White House now realized that the days of unbridled executive power were over. Henry Kissinger had to deal with the fallout from the imperial presidency when the Church Committee began to inquire about past covert activities that he was extensively involved in. Although it took five years, the death of General Schneider eventually played a key role in revealing the US imperial

presidency to the US public. The death of General Schneider occurred in a void of congressional inquiry, with no oversight of the intelligence agencies and their relationship with the White House. Five years later, increased congressional oversight allowed the Church Committee's inquiry into General Schneider's death to finally take place.

The death of General Schneider and the Church Committee's investigation into his death had lasting implications for Henry Kissinger and the broader intelligence agencies. Following the recommendations of the Church Committee, President Ford issued Executive Order 11905. This executive order was the White House's attempt to reform the intelligence agencies following the recommendations suggested by the Committee. With this executive order, the US formally banned assassinations of foreign leaders for the first time: "No employee of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination."³ This executive order, along with the creation of the House and Senate Select Committees on Intelligence, were the most prominent institutional reforms stemming from the Church Committee and its interim report.

Although General Schneider's death was not the straw that broke the camel's back for Henry Kissinger, the Church Committee's revelations into his role in the death did further tarnish his reputation. Before the interim report Kissinger could operate in the shadows of the White House, with only those closest to him on the inside knowing his involvement in covert activities. After the report, his ability to operate without others questioning him ended. Although never forced to explain his past actions in a court of law,

³ Gerald R. Ford: "Executive Order 11905—United States Foreign Intelligence Activities," February 18, 1976. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=59348>.

the revelations of his past involvement in covert activities made the US public change their opinion of one of the country's most well-known and long-standing political figures.

Ultimately, Kissinger's involvement in the botched kidnapping that led to General Schneider's death did get him the closest he ever came to answering for his past actions in court. On September 10, 2001 General Schneider's sons filed a complaint against the United States and Henry Kissinger for allowing the death of their father by never giving any instruction to the plotters to leave General Schneider unharmed. A number of major news sources picked up this story, but their attention lasted for only one day.⁴ The next day, September 11, a date that would become significant for both Chileans in 1973 and Americans in 2001, this story was overshadowed by national tragedy.

The story of Henry Kissinger being called to answer for his role in General Schneider's death ended three years later on March 30, 2004. The US District Court for the District of Columbia dismissed the case against the United States and Henry Kissinger, declaring that Henry Kissinger enjoyed sovereign immunity as National Security Advisor and the court could not rule on matters of foreign policy.⁵ Although the judicial system never held Henry Kissinger legally accountable for his actions, the Church Committee revealed them to the US public in the midst of a season of inquiry. General René Schneider's death will not be forgotten; it will remain as an indisputable example of US foreign covert involvement that helped to bring about a change in the way the US oversees its intelligence agencies.

⁴ Bill Miller, "Family of Slain Chilean Sues Kissinger, Helms," *The Washington Post*, September 11, 2001; "Kissinger sued over Chile death," *The Guardian*, September 12, 2001; "Family To Sue Kissinger For Death," *60 Minutes*, September 6, 2001; "Kissinger accused over Chile plot," *BBC News*, September 11, 2001.

⁵ "René Schneider et al. v. Henry A. Kissinger et al.," International Crime Database, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://www.internationalcrimesdatabase.org/Case/1073/Schneider-v-Kissinger/>.

Decreto de Zona de Emergencia Toque de Queda en Santiago

Durante la noche y hasta esta mañana...

Al respecto de la medida...

Ante la gravedad de este y otros hechos...

El Gobierno ha decretado...

Desde el día de hoy...

El Gobierno se compromete...

El mapa muestra la forma en que se produjo el atentado...

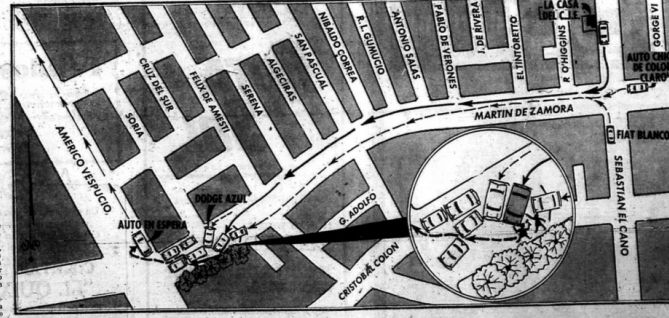


criminal atentado

Baleado General Schneider



En sus vidrios laterales y posterior totalmente destruidos el automóvil Mercedes Benz...



El mapa muestra la forma en que se produjo el criminal atentado...

El Comandante en Jefe del Ejército...

La policía se comprometió...

El atentado ocurrió...

El general Schneider...

ACCION COMANDO...

Desde el Praga...

Los testigos...

"El Mercurio front page" El Mercurio, (Santiago, Chile), Oct. 23, 1970.

Hoy: 10,30 Hrs. Se Reúne Congreso Pleno

Estado del Gral. Schneider.- EXTREMA GRAVEDAD

Comienza mañana y hasta viernes se reanuda el trabajo en el Congreso Pleno...

La sesión continúa de mañana...

A la hora indicada, el presidente del Senado...

En las tribunas y galerías del segundo hervor...

Tanto los invitados como los periodistas...

Se continúan de abascanos los resultados durante la madrugada...

Escucha en la página 15



El sacerdote que ayer ofició una misa por el restablecimiento del general René Schneider...

Afirma la Policía.- Bien Encaminadas las Pesquisas

Una vez que quedó satisfecho el Comandante en Jefe de la Fuerza Armada...

Eco Mundial por el Atentado

WASHINGTON, 23 (AP). - La prensa internacional hoy se ocupó de relatar a las noticias sobre el atentado contra el Gral. Schneider...

"Grave, muy grave", fueron las palabras pronunciadas por todos los personalidades...

La primera persona que se hizo eco de la noticia...

También viajaron y los familiares del general Schneider...

Entre los Ministros de Estado que llegaron al Hospital Militar...

TELTELBOA El senador comunista Volodia Teitelboim...

Una vez que quedó satisfecho el Comandante en Jefe de la Fuerza Armada...

En las tribunas y galerías del segundo hervor...

Escucha en la página 15

"El Mercurio front page" El Mercurio, (Santiago, Chile), Oct. 24, 1970.

Publicado en Valparaíso el 17 de Oct. 1970
No. 42.338 - P. 1, 2, 3
PRIMER CUERPO

EL MERCURIO

Publicado en Valparaíso el 17 de Oct. 1970
No. 42.338 - P. 1, 2, 3
PRECIO: \$ 1.20 6 6 1.200

Santiago de Chile, Lunes 26 de Octubre de 1970

Consternación Nacional.

MURIO GENERAL RENE SCHNEIDER

■ LUEGO de una agonia que se prolongó durante 72 horas, y que terminó el poco en un estado de temblor y angustia, a las 7.52 horas de ayer falleció, en el Hospital Militar, el Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, René Schneider, quien fuera víctima de un atentado a balazos en la mañana del jueves último.

Su deceso se produjo a raíz de un paro cardíaco determinado por la gravedad de las heridas que le comunicaron el hígado y el corazón. Los médicos esfuerzos que durante tres días realizaron los médicos que en el hospital resultaron infructuosos, pese a que permitieron prolongarle la vida, luego de que en el primer instante se había desahogado toda esperanza.

La familia de su muerte, conmovida a través de su autoridad, como autoridad en todos los aspectos y por medio de un verdadero poder de convocatoria, se reunió en el establecimiento hospitalario, lo que permitió que se le hiciera un homenaje de despedida a las 10.30 horas, en la Capilla de la Escuela Militar.

El Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, René Schneider, falleció a las 7.52 horas de ayer, víctima de un atentado a balazos que sufrió el jueves último. Su deceso se produjo a raíz de un paro cardíaco determinado por la gravedad de las heridas que le comunicaron el hígado y el corazón. Los médicos esfuerzos que durante tres días realizaron los médicos que en el hospital resultaron infructuosos, pese a que permitieron prolongarle la vida, luego de que en el primer instante se había desahogado toda esperanza.

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El Vicegeneral Castiblanco, Monseñor Francisco Gilmore, jefe de la República, Eduardo Frei, su esposa, señora María Ruiz Tagle de Frei, Víctor y Jorge del Ejército Militar, desfilando por la Capilla de la Escuela Militar. En primer plano: los tres Comandantes en Jefe de las Fuerzas Armadas, el Director de Carabineros, Ministros de Estado, y otras autoridades.

Restos son trasladados a la Catedral. Velado en la Escuela Militar

Al medianoche se trasladó el cuerpo del Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, René Schneider, desde el Hospital Militar hasta la Capilla de la Escuela Militar. El traslado se realizó en un ataúd de madera, con un acompañamiento de honor. El cuerpo fue velado en la Capilla de la Escuela Militar, donde se celebró un servicio religioso a las 10.30 horas. El Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, René Schneider, falleció a las 7.52 horas de ayer, víctima de un atentado a balazos que sufrió el jueves último.

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“El Mercurio front page” El Mercurio,
(Santiago, Chile), Oct. 26, 1970.

PRIMER CUBRPO

Santiago de Chile, Martes 27 de Octubre de 1970

**M. DE DEFENSA.
Era Recto,
Justo, Severo
Y Decidido**

El pueblo acompañó los restos del General.

emocionante despedida

El Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Sergio Onofre Prev, pronunció un discurso emotivo al despedir los restos del general René Schneider.

En nombre de E. Z. el Presidente de la República, y de la Nación, hizo un llamado a la dignidad del soldado, en el momento de morir, en el momento de morir, en el momento de morir.

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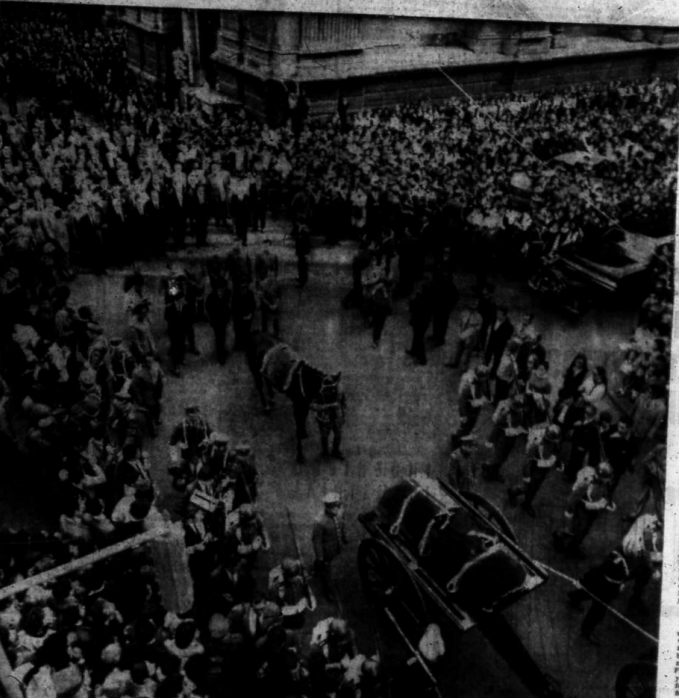
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La catedral con los restos mortales del general René Schneider de la catedral. El altar se cubrió por el pabellón nacional, sobre el cual fue colocado el uniforme de gala del militar desaparecido. El caballo "Tacara" sigue a pocos metros del que lleva el año. Deudal, el Cuartel General de la Comandancia en Jefe, los Presidentes Eduardo Frei y Salvador Allende, los presidentes de ambas cámaras del Parlamento y de la Corte Suprema, y el Ministro de Defensa encabezó el largo cortejo. Una multitud acompañó participó en los momentos fúnebres.

En esta ceremonia importante, en la que participaron una enorme cantidad de militares y gran número de autoridades encabezadas por el Presidente de la República, Eduardo Frei, y por el Mandatario recién electo, Salvador Allende, fueron despedidos ayer los restos del Comandante en Jefe del Ejército, general René Schneider, quien fue el primer presidente de la democracia en Chile.

El ceremonial fúnebre se realizó a las 10 de la mañana cuando una numerosa comitiva se dirigió a la Escuela Militar, donde se realizó un momento de duelo por el general Schneider.

La comitiva de su esposa, el hijo que fue el primer de sus parientes congresales y otros parientes que acompañaron la comitiva, se despidió del general Schneider en un momento de gran emoción.

En la Catedral Metropolitana de Santiago, el general Schneider fue enterrado en un momento de gran emoción. El general Schneider fue enterrado en un momento de gran emoción.

A su paso por la catedral, el general Schneider fue enterrado en un momento de gran emoción. El general Schneider fue enterrado en un momento de gran emoción.

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Ultimo Adiós en la Escuela Militar

Justo como la despedida de la primera línea del día por la Catedral de Santiago, el general Schneider fue enterrado en la Escuela Militar "Bernardo O'Higgins" ayer.

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"El Mercurio front page" El Mercurio, (Santiago, Chile), Oct. 27, 1970.

Appendix 2

“First The Good News, Mr. President — You Wanted That \$400,000 Contribution Story Off The Front Pages ...”



A 1972 Herblock Cartoon, © The Herb Block Foundation

Block No. 7930

Block, Herbert. “First the good news, Mr. President -- you wanted that [dollar sign] 400,000 contribution story off the front pages ...” Drawing. March 23, 1972. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division: Cartoon Drawings: Herblock Collection. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012638085/>.

“It’s common practice to interfere with other governments — if they’re elected, that is”



A 1974 Herblock Cartoon, © The Herb Block Foundation

Block No. 8542

Block, Herbert. “It’s common practice to interfere with other governments -- if they’re elected, that is.” Drawing. September 27, 1974. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division: Cartoon Drawings: Herblock Collection. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012638427/>.

"THANK GOODNESS I HAVE AN EXPERT NAVIGATOR LIKE YOU, HENRY, OR I'D BE IN TROUBLE"



A 1976 Herblock Cartoon, © The Herb Block Foundation

Block No. 8851

Block, Herbert. "Thank goodness, I have an expert navigator like you, Henry, or I'd be in trouble." Drawing. January 1, 1976. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division: Cartoon Drawings: Herblock Collection. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012638441/>.



"A 1976 Herblock Cartoon, © The Herb Block Foundation"

Block No. 8863

Block, Herbert. "[State Department door with Kissinger on seal of State Department]." Drawing. January 21, 1976. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division: Cartoon Drawings: Herblock Collection. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012639449/>.

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- Block, Herbert. "[State Department door with Kissinger on seal of State Department]." Drawing. January 21, 1976. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division: Cartoon Drawings: Herblock Collection. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012639449/>.
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