

Review / Reseña

Joaquín Fernandois, *La Revolución Inconclusa: La Izquierda Chilena y el Gobierno de la Unidad Popular*. Santiago: Centro de Estudios Públicos, 2013.

A Classic on the Never-Ending Debate on the Allende Years¹

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Joaquín Fernandois is a distinguished historian of twentieth century Chile, whose previous work concentrates on the international arena.² The present book, although it deals with the international context of the time, is an extensive analysis of the history of the left in Chile and particularly the Popular Unity (UP) government of Salvador Allende.

Few subjects in Chilean, or indeed Latin American, history have been the subject of such extensive analysis as the coup of 1973. At first,

¹ This review was first published in Spanish in *Estudios públicos*, N^o 135 (2014): 251-268.

² With books such as *Chile y el Mundo 1970-1973* (Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile: 1985) and *Mundo y Fin de Mundo: Chile en la Política Mundial 1900-2004* (Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile: 2005).

much of the analysis was of a markedly polemical nature, either praising or condemning the coup—though recent writing is more nuanced.³ *La Revolución Inconclusa* builds upon previous writings—the author is generous in his acknowledgement of them—but the scope of this account, the sheer volume of detail, and the careful and balanced principal arguments ensure that it will be a central part of the presumably never-ending debate on how the Allende government fell, for what reasons, and on the balance between internal and external factors.

In the prologue Fernandois writes that he discarded the idea of undertaking a general history of the period, covering economic and social aspects, in order to concentrate on what he calls “*una historia política clásica*,” in part because the former enterprise would require an even longer book, but primarily because of the importance of the political dimensions in the intent of the Allende government to recreate state and society in Chile. That the attempt at revolution failed led to the choice of title—*La Revolución Inconclusa*.

The starting point of Fernandois’s analysis is that the overthrow of Allende was one of the defining moments of the history of Chile—and indeed he could have gone further and argued that it was one of the defining events of the twentieth century. Nonetheless, he argues that the 1970-73 period cannot be understood without a firm grasp of the development of the left in Chile in the twentieth century. The Allende government was the inheritor of the previous history of the left, and the first nine chapters are devoted principally to an analysis of the left in the history of Chile.

However, the story of the Chilean left needs to be placed alongside the development of the political system in general. Fernandois is critical of those who see Chilean development in terms of an ever-strengthening democracy, but equally critical of those who posit

³ Such as the book by Tanya Harmer, *Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (University of North Carolina Press: 2011), which is an authoritative analysis of Chile in that period, or Julio Pinto and Verónica Valdivia, *Cuando Hicimos la Historia* (LOM: 2005), which examines the social and cultural changes of that period. Politicians active at the time have written some indispensable personal memoirs—from the right there is Andrés Allamand, *La Traversía del desierto* (Aguilar: 1999), and from the left, Jaime Gazmuri, *El Sol y La Bruma* (Ediciones B: 2000). And Sergio Bitar *Isla 10* (Pehuen: 1987), though it deals with events subsequent to the coup, it throws light on the perceptions of politicians active in the government of Allende.

a pseudo-democracy concealing a system of oligarchical control. He insists that an analysis of Chile's political development must be seen in comparative terms, and with a clear understanding of what was happening elsewhere at critical times: principally in Latin America, but also elsewhere and especially in Europe. As he writes, "the development of Chile was not very distinct from that of many modern societies" (9). He is critical of the notion of Chilean exceptionalism, and examines the episodes of regime breakdown, repression of protest,⁴ and authoritarian interludes such as the first Ibáñez government. If he sees merit in the development of a well-rooted institutionally in the political system, he is critical of the limited size of the electorate well into the 1950s, and of widespread social and economic inequalities. On the political scene, the electorate was restricted at best to 20% of the adult population; women could not vote till 1949 and, until the *cédula única* of 1958, electoral fraud was common. He draws attention to the juxtaposition of backward social and economic development and an advanced and institutionalised state structure.⁵ These were the circumstances which led to the development of a left which had relative freedom to organise politically (even allowing for the banning of the PC for ten years after 1948) in a society with enough social inequalities to create a mass support for a left committed to radical socialist reform. It is not surprising that Chile developed possibly the most advanced left in Latin America.

Fernandois captures very well the differences between Chilean socialism and communism when he writes,

El partido comunista es una organización que se sentaba sobre un movimiento obrero y sindical, sin ser de ninguna manera idéntico a este. El socialismo en cambio era un estado de ánimo, un estilo, una mentalidad, más ligado a un desarrollo de idea central del país, e igualmente aspiraba en ocasiones a identificarse con sectores sindicales, abarcando un amplio radio de acción social de la sociedad sindical. Mientras el comunismo tenía una trayectoria política y social más rectilínea, el socialismo se conectaba con el centro de sentimiento políticos y sociales y con un modo de expresarse que le parecía connatural a una *intelligentzia* cultural muy amplia. (89)

⁴ Though the only reference to the *Matanza del Seguro Obrero* is made in passing later in the text, whereas it seems more appropriate to discuss it in more detail in the context of some of the distinctly authoritarian right-wing movements of the 1930s and 1940s.

⁵ Which, of course, is the argument of the highly influential book of Jorge Ahumada, *En Vez de la miseria* (Editorial del Pacifico 1958).

The discipline of the PC rested in large part on the basis of the strength of the union movement but, more than that, on unions of miners—of both copper and coal. There is something about mining unions—not just in Chile but worldwide—which produces movements characterised by high levels of solidarity and discipline. Geographical isolation, the need for complete trust in other workers in the dangerous activities of mining, squalid living conditions and resentment towards unscrupulous employers have produced militant mining unions across the globe. The social and political cohesion of the mining communities impressed me forcefully in the 1960s when I met the coal miners of Lota and Coronel, where it was obvious that the social fabric of the area rested on a combination of the miners' union and the PC.⁶ A cursory examination of the electoral support of the left would show the contrast between the concentration of electoral support for the PC in areas of high union density, and that for the PS which was much more dispersed and urban.

In contrast with the communists, although Fernandois does not use this phrase, the socialists of Chile were political romantics. Chilean socialism in the 1960s was as much a debating society—in which different groups violently rejected the analyses of other groups and were certain that theirs was the only correct interpretation—as it was political party. Disciplined it certainly was not. Debates were about doctrine, not about policies; the vision of Chilean society was based on a rather mechanical application of Marxist doctrines. Hence, the solidarity of the working class, rural and urban was never questioned, and there was an unwarranted belief that eventually the middle class (whose support was vital for electoral victory) could be won over to the socialist camp.

From the beginning of the left in the early twentieth century, the central issue was whether to destroy the existing system, or to work within it and to seek reform. The position of the Communist party depended largely on the position of the Communist International, which varied from Popular Front style tactics to those insisting on party hegemony. Within socialism there was a continuing debate between reformists and revolutionaries, which reached a bitter and destructive climax during the Allende government.

⁶ And also Pentecostal churches, though that is another story.

It is sometimes difficult now to remember how intense the ideological conflicts of the 1960s were—and not just in Chile. This was the time of the Cuban Revolution, of guerrilla movements all over Latin America and notably in Argentina and Uruguay, of student rebellions in France and Europe more generally, of the terrorist Red Brigades in Italy and Baader Meinhof in Germany, and of opposition to US involvement in Vietnam and elsewhere. Chile, perhaps more than any other country in Latin America, was both an observer and a participant in these international ideological debates. Indeed, the party system resembled those of some European parties, and at least two parties—the PDC and the PC—had close ties with parties in Europe: the Italian Christian Democratic party in one case, the Communist Party in Moscow in the other.

There were, of course, differences between parties in Chile and those of similar names in Europe. The PDC was much more radical than its namesake in Germany, let alone than in Italy and, along with some of the left, faced the dilemma of wanting a radical and rapid transformation of the existing system, while simultaneously wanting incremental change compatible with Chilean democracy. As within socialism, opposing factions emerged inside the PDC that eventually led to the exodus of an important group of young intellectuals to form the MAPU (which later joined the Allende government). Only the political right seemed perplexed about the direction it should take in the new circumstances of the 1960s and this was not resolved until the two old parties—Conservative and Liberal—united to form the National party.

The Chilean PS was never a member of the Socialist International—that was the preserve of the Radical party. It drew its inspiration from a variety of sources. There was flirtation with the policies of Tito's Yugoslavia based, as Fermandois points out, on an inadequate understanding of the realities of that country. More important, was the profound influence of the Cuban Revolution on the PS, with its emphasis upon armed struggle. It is not surprising that the more cautious Communists viewed with apprehension the increasing radicalisation of the PS and, in the language of communism, saw the activities of the most radical of the PS groups as "a leftist deviation."

Fermandois insists on the need to look at commitment to socialism and communism as a conscious decision to adopt a distinct

kind of political culture, which he defines as “un espacio de sentimientos y mentalidades” (25). Being a militant on the left meant entering a defined world with strict rules, specific and detailed demands, and a commitment to fundamental beliefs and texts. Militancy shaped friendships, social life and even, for the PC, could entail approval of a proposed marriage. The left had intellectuals in plenty to lend a degree of sophistication to its worldview, and Neruda in particular received a degree of popular veneration well beyond the left. Joining the parties of the left meant adopting a life style in which the worst sanction was expulsion from the party. It is easier to understand the strength of party bonds in closed and remote communities such as Lota or Chuiquicamata, less so for the more open urban centres. If Moscow served as the model for the Communists, Cuba became that for the Socialists, and Fernandois quotes at length statements from spokesmen of the PS parties invoking the need for violent revolutionary action.⁷ Allende said that he would be the Castro of Chile but using different methods; a strange statement as a crucial part of Castroism surely was its method. The PC was more circumspect in its doctrines, but insisted that the *vía democrática* was not necessarily the same as the *vía pacífica*.

There are examples of other parties and movements in Latin America that created closed worlds for their militants—Peronism in Argentina, or the *Acción Democrática* of Venezuela. But I think Chile is the only country in Latin America where two parties of the left created such a profound level of political commitment to the central ideas of Marxism without themselves being the products of opposition to political dictatorship.⁸

This raises the question, of course, of how far heated and extreme debate at the level of the party elites was shared at the popular level. Nancy Bermeo is sceptical and argues that the radicalisation of the

⁷ I remember attending a meeting of the Socialist party in the late 1960s addressed by Altamirano in which he preached the need for armed revolution. When asked by an enthusiastic follower when would this happen, his reply was, “well, that is an organic question.” A reply that puzzled the questioner as much as me.

⁸ A brilliant account of what it was to be a militant Communist is Roque Dalton’s biography of the Salvadorian revolutionary *Miguel Marmol* (Ocean Press: 2007). And as a sad commentary on the sectarianism of the left in that country, Roque Dalton was assassinated by a rival group on the Salvadorian left.

party elites was not common at the level of the electorate. She points to the stability of political identities and the longevity of popular commitment to democratic—not revolutionary—discourse. She argues further that the increased vote for the left is explained not by increased radicalisation of the electorate, but by the rapid growth of the registered electorate, which grew from 18% of the population in 1957 to 36.4% in 1970; growth largely due to the enfranchisement of the poor. She also points out that “what is most surprising about the increased support for the left between 1965 and 1969 is not that it occurred but that it occurred on such a small scale... Voter patterns evinced remarkable continuities across time and the political center remained remarkably resilient.”⁹ In other words the left never achieved, even with its highest vote of 43% in 1973, the support of a majority of the population; and the increase of their vote may be explained by the fact that this was the first election in which 18 year olds and illiterates were able to vote.

Allende spoke the language of revolutionary socialism and his championing of the various internationals of revolutionary groups and regimes seemed to leave no doubt about his revolutionary credentials. But is always easier to preach the need for revolution in other countries. Within the PS he had rivals who doubted his sincerity to revolution and were critical of his lifestyle, but as Fermandois points out there was an “*un pueblo allendista*,” that is, an electorate broader than the committed party voters, which made him indispensable if the PS wanted to win political office. The hostility to Allende was shown in the grudging way in which the party directorate announced that he would be their candidate for the election in 1970, whilst adding that it was the first time that the PS had been unable to make a unanimous choice.

Fermandois devotes a long chapter to Allende, examining his origins, his gradual political development, his beliefs and his lifestyle.¹⁰ Allende was very much the product of his time, and it would be difficult to imagine him as a leading political actor in the professional politics of later decades. He notes that Allende, unlike most politicians of the time, never had a specific geographical base and represented areas from the

⁹ Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 2003), 144 & 152.

¹⁰ A short and illuminating recent biography of Allende is by Victor Figueroa Clark, *Salvador Allende: Revolutionary Democrat* (London: Pluto Press: 2013).

north to the south of Chile, and this helps to explain his popular support. Allende made it clear that for all his revolutionary ideas, he wanted to effect radical change without violating the constitution and laws, although this raises the question of how the Constitution and the laws are interpreted; an issue that became central to the political conflict during his government.¹¹ His legalistic stance may account for part of his broad appeal, but it damaged his authority within the PS where many members viewed him as not sufficiently revolutionary in his politics and policies, and too likely to do the kind of political deals that the more radical sectors rejected. Relations between Allende and the PS look rather like an unhappy marriage kept together by the force of circumstances. The PC was to prove a more reliable ally.

As one would expect from a close observer of Chile in the world, Fernandois examines the international impact of the Cold War in Chile. The facts of US intervention in Chile in the period 1964 are fairly well known, though there is still a debate on how much influence this had on the course of Chilean politics.¹² Fernandois argues that the US could help its allies but could not determine their strategies or tactics. To balance the greater coverage that the role of the US normally receives, he analyses the extent of USSR support for the Chilean left and draws attention to the obsession of the left with the Germany Democratic Republic (GDR). The praise heaped upon the GDR by the left—even if the major impulse was to seek financial support—is reminiscent of those British observers who after visiting the USSR during the time of famine and terror, enthused about the new ‘utopia’ in that country.

The story of the UP government starts with the election of 1970, and in well-documented detail tells the story of the three candidates and their campaigns. Jorge Alessandri based his campaign on his personality rather than any elaborate policy statement. His age showed to his disadvantage in the TV programmes and he was the subject of vitriolic and abusive treatment in the media. If Alessandri was a poor choice for the right (though it is not clear that there was a better candidate), Radomiro Tomic proved to be poor candidate for the PDC.

¹¹ It was argued, for example, that the legal justification for many factory seizures and incorporation into the state area of the economy (the ASPs) was alien to the spirit of the laws, and was designed to by-pass Congress

¹² Tanya Harmer’s work draws attention to the neglected role of Brazilian involvement in Chilean domestic policy.

Desperate not to be outflanked by the left, his programme was seen as a repudiation of the past government of President Eduardo Frei, while his support base was weakened by the defection of the intellectuals of MAPU. Allende had the support of the PC, but the PS was more equivocal and symbolised its attitude to him by insisting it was the programme that mattered and not the candidate. Allende could, however, count on wider support than the militants of the left, and was nothing if not a consummate campaigner.

Yet the signs of the obstacles facing the left were clear in the electoral statistics. Allende was a minority President; his support amongst women voters was far less than it was for Alessandri and not much more than for Tomic. The 35% who voted for Alessandri were hardly likely to be won over by a socialist revolution, and as many on the left of the PDC had formed other parties, the electoral base of the PDC was more conservative than in the past. The electoral omens for a successful revolution—even if it was one of *empanadas y vino tinto*—was not encouraging, unless the left could win over substantial numbers of those who did not vote for Allende in 1970. And as we know that did not happen.

The post-election manoeuvrings to prevent Allende from taking office were but the prelude to what followed. All the manoeuvres—of those who wanted to elect Alessandri with PDC support, as well as of those in the military who wanted to create a situation of chaos (including a bungled attempt to kidnap General Schneider, encouraged by the CIA and the White House) failed because, as Fermandois argues, the time was not ripe. Few in the military wanted to take precipitate action; the PDC negotiated a statute of guarantees which kept most of its militants disposed to accept the electoral result; there was a feeling that Allende would not be as bad as feared: after all, he was not a communist. Above all, the assassination of General Schneider pulled would-be plotters away from immediate action. Most opponents of Allende accepted the position of Patricio Aylwin, that with the statute of guarantees, “tendremos una cancha adecuada para dar con posibilidades de éxito la pelea que en estos momentos es preciso dar en Chile” (345).

The story of the Allende years is like one of those tragedies where the ending is known, but a detailed narrative of events—as is this

account—grips the reader’s attention as the struggle for power intensifies, as conflict spreads to the streets and fields, as the government desperately tries to hold on to power, the forces of the right mobilise their support, and the military moves eventually to centre stage with the brutal coup of 1973. Fernandois cites Tomic who expressed this idea of an inevitable tragedy, “Como en las tragedias del teatro griego clásicos, todos saben lo que va a ocurrir, pero cada cual hace precisamente lo necesario para que suceda la desgracia que pretende evitar.”¹³

Fernandois covers many aspects of these turbulent years: the economy, agrarian reform, the judicial system, the international context, the conflicts between and within the parties, the savagery of the press on both sides, and the role of international actors. Every struggle seemed to be about power—the taking of enterprises into the state sector, he argues, was more about political power than economic policy.

Someone wanting a comprehensive narrative of those turbulent years will find it in these pages. But the book is more than that. Writing about this period in a balanced way—avoiding either denunciation of the follies of the left or claiming that international conspiracies led to the fall of the regime—is difficult. Whether one agrees or disagrees with some of his arguments, the basis is there for informed debate, though those interested in the social or cultural changes of the UP period will have to look elsewhere.

At least in the first year, there was some optimism engendered by the growth in the economy, even if the policy “tenía algo de revolucionario y mucho de populista” (380). A dramatic increase in money supply and a corresponding increase in wages and salaries produced a spur in economic growth. But this was a fragile basis for sustained growth. If it is doubtful that Allende was well versed in the classical texts of Marxism, it is quite clear that he was no economist. Neither he nor his economic team foresaw the economic problems that were beginning to emerge at the end of their first year—or if they did see them, they argued for an acceleration of programmes of nationalisation that, badly conceived and executed, were in many ways themselves the source of the economic crisis. An exception to this generalisation, and a nationalisation that served Chile well in the years to come, was that of

¹³ Quoted, 743.

copper—passed with support of right and left. But this was also an area in which the US blockade of vital spare parts for the industry had adverse effects on production.

However, if the economic policy of the UP was misconceived, it should be noted that the record of economic policy in Chile was over the long term very dismal. No government—Radical, right wing, PDC—had been able to combine economic growth with low inflation rates, or make inroads in reducing inequality or deal with the appalling conditions of the rural labour force. Of course, there were some positive reforms: the creation of CORFO in the Popular Front period; the agrarian reforms, timid under Alessandri and better if still inadequate under Frei; and improvement in living standards during the Frei government. But overall, in the long term, growth had been inadequate, inflation far too high, productivity poor, and poverty widespread. Even the first ten years of the Pinochet government were lamentable in terms of steady growth, and despite the Chicago reforms, the Pinochet government left power with high levels of poverty, even higher levels of inequality, and increasing inflation. Only the period since 1990 represents a real departure from the Chilean pattern of poor economic performance combined with marked social progress.

None of this is to suggest the criticisms Fernandois makes of the failures of monetary and fiscal policy, the dubious legality of the Area de Propiedad Social and an agrarian reform that reproduced yet again the failures of collectivisation in agriculture are not correct. But it was not the case that the UP ruined a thriving economy. The economic problems of Chile were deep-rooted and long term. Any government taking power in 1970 would have faced enormous pressure for progressive social change given the intensity of political demands for radical change reflected in the campaign promises of Tomic for the PDC as well as those of Allende. Had Allende enjoyed political control over his coalition, had his economic team not been so dogmatic and unwilling to change course, had the pace of change not been so rapid, it might have been a different story. Had the international context been more propitious—both in terms of favourable rather than adverse international price movements, and of boycotts organised by the US—then the path of reform might have been easier. International prices moved adversely for the UP as food prices (which Chile increasingly

imported) went up, and copper prices went down, and then came the petrol 'shock' of 1973. It would have been difficult times for any government of whatever political orientation.

If there was considerable electoral continuity, there was a massive increase in popular mobilisation as *poder popular* and the *cordones industriales* came out on the streets in support of the government—but so too did the miners of El Teniente and the various *gremios* in opposition to the UP. The political right in Chile was never going to accept the reforms proposed by the UP, even if they had been better designed and implemented, and the political rhetoric less confrontational. In the end, the UP government failed to generate enough social support to force through its policies and achieve some degree of political stability.

Fernandois writes much about the ambiguities of Allende. Was he really committed to a democratic road to revolution as he often stressed or ultimately did the revolutionary end take precedence over the democratic means? Allende was performing a continuing balancing act within his own coalition, let alone with the forces opposing him. It is no surprise that his discourse was tailored to the audience he was addressing. If he had had a disciplined support his rhetoric might have been more moderate. Facing a Socialist party increasingly intent on taking power by any means, the only way he had of retaining his authority was to adopt the language of the far left. But surely it was an error to recruit his bodyguards from the ranks of the MIR; and equally an error to declare that he was not the President of *all* Chileans—even if he did attempt to gloss over that statement.

Allende's power and authority seemed to be slipping away as the boom of 1971 turned into the economic collapse of the next two years. His desperate attempts to come to an agreement with the PDC, and to calm the political temperature by involving the military in the government failed. And Castro stayed far too long in Chile: in the end, the right probably gained more political capital from his visit than the left.

Politics and political conflict seemed to engulf all aspects of social and economic life, including even the legal system as the judiciary strongly opposed the creation of *justicia popular*. It is difficult to imagine any society surviving such a high degree of polarisation and

mobilisation. But in Chile there appeared to be no solution; the government lost authority not just with its opponents, but also its supporters. Allende walked a political tightrope but ultimately even his political dexterity could not avert catastrophe. The results of the 1973 elections both signalled and strengthened polarisation into two camps. Fernandois comments that the UP exaggerated the positive nature of the 43% they had gained, while the right was rather pessimistic about their (to them) slender majority vote. The result was that the left exaggerated its support and accelerated the reform process, while the right increasingly believed that the only solution lay in the violent overthrow of the UP.

A vote of 43% is not bad considering the parlous state of the economy. But it could only have been increased by winning substantial support from the middle sectors. Allende stressed constantly that small and medium sized businesses and professional people in the private and public sector would be incorporated into the UP project. But he was not believed. The rhetoric of the left in general exalted the working class above all others, and the reality of arbitrary factory occupations dismayed just those small businesses that Allende wanted to win over. The UP never had the support of the middle sectors to start with and failed to gain it once in power. How could you win a democratic revolution without the support of the majority of the people? If Allende recognised this dilemma, his was a minority position within the UP.

This points to a general problem in the way that the UP analysed the social structure of Chile. The assumption was that there were clear-cut class divisions, and the logic of action would push the majority of society into a coalition against the minority of upper class groups. But the failure to win over substantial sectors of the middle class shows the fault in this analysis. There were multiple social groups composing the so-called 'middle class' and there was no overall policy that would bring them to the side of the UP. Factory takeovers alarmed proprietors of firms small as well as large; professional workers (*empleados*) in union elections cast a large vote for the PDC; newly formed rural unions were allied to the right and centre as well as the left. Strikes may have shown worker militancy, but they were a grievous blow to the economy. The number of strikes in the private sector rose from 564 in 1964 to 2377 in 1972 and 2474 in 1973 with over a million man-days lost; in the public

sector alone in 1972, there were 815 strikes with close on half a million man-days lost.

The UP failed badly in its attempts to win over women voters. Only a minority of women worked in the labour force and not in occupations that were normally unionised. Though poor women benefitted from better housing policies and a food supply from the JAPs, the constant sense of crisis, the difficulties of everyday life and the problems in holding together a family help to explain that while in 1973, 46% of men voted for the UP, only 36% of women did.¹⁴

It may seem surprising that 43% of the electorate voted in March 1973 for a government unable to enact a working economic policy. But it needs to be remembered that Chile at that time was a very unequal society with rural areas more like the nineteenth than the twentieth century. There was a real need and demand for redistribution of income, for better housing and welfare policies, for reform in the countryside, for modernisation of the industrial structure; all problems recognised but not solved by the Frei government despite the best of intentions. Popular support for the UP was bolstered by the JAPs, which secured adequate food supplies for the poor¹⁵. There were advances in housing policies, wages increased (though far too fast and indiscriminately for economic stability) and there was much in the cultural area to admire—new songs and new groups, the theatre and the arts. But none of this could achieve majority support for the UP.

Fernandois is anxious to debunk the notion that planning for the coup of 1973 began soon after the election of 1970 and he is insistent that for all the talk of US involvement before and during the coup, at most it was a contributory factor. The coup was made in Chile and by Chileans. There is no doubt that the US military was in close contact with their Chilean counterparts—but the UP enjoyed support from Cuba, even if aid from the USSR and the GDR was disappointingly inadequate.

Fernandois traces the process by which a military, not by any means committed to political intervention in the first year of the UP

¹⁴ I have tried to analyse these issues in “Political Mobilisation and Class Alliances in Allende’s Chile” in *A Contracorriente*, Vol 7. No 2 (Winter 2010): 1-51.

¹⁵ Fernandois comments that though there were many complaints about the queues for food there was a positive side as the queues also served as a meeting place for social interaction.

government, underwent a gradual transformation in response to the growing incidence of violence and, no doubt, influenced by the increasingly confrontational stance of the political right, eventually decided to overthrow the government.

The subject of the military moves centre stage in the last pages. Fernandois notes that at least Allende in the government had consistently tried to win over the armed forces while respecting their autonomy. He tried, for example, to link the idea of national security to the economic and social development he hoped to achieve. It is obvious too that leading members of the military—Carlos Prats, for example—were respectful of the rights of the President to make policy and to request the support of the armed forces. But there were other ways in which the UP tried to influence the military—namely, by creating cells of UP loyalists to resist possible actions by right wing opponents of the government. The radical forces of the UP—notably the MIR and sections of the Socialist party—exaggerated both their number and capacity to act. That they were not a myth is shown by their actions, especially in the navy. But in the end, the existence of these groups were counterproductive as they became to be seen as a threat to the unity of the armed forces and an attack on their professionalism; one more motive to build support inside the armed forces for a coup.

It seems inconceivable that in a situation of daily and increasing violence, with an economy falling ever deeper into crisis, with calls from the right and business sectors, and encouragement from Brazil and the US, with a country divided into two antagonistic blocs, that the army would not have taken such decisive action. But two questions remain.

Why did the military not impose a temporary government to pave the way for the return of a democratic government? After all, the forces against the UP were the majority. Fernandois offers several reasons. To organise a coup in a society with a strong constitutional tradition such as in Chile, the arguments in favour had to be that as so much had gone wrong that the road to reconstruction would be long and a quick return to the rule of politicians would not be enough to bring stability. The plotters also believed that the coup would be met with violence, although they exaggerated the extent of the threat in practice. Hence, in their view, a period of prolonged military rule was necessary to deal with such threats. The military knew that they had the

support of the right and the business sectors for a new departure and were confident of receiving international support from the countries that mattered to them; namely, Brazil and the US. And in a point the author makes throughout, the families of the military were subject to the privations of UP rule and put constant pressure on them to do something.

An experienced economic team was waiting in the wings to provide justification for a coup as the only way to achieve economic reforms. If, as the military thought, this team had the key to the successful reform of the Chilean economy, this was another reason for wanting a long period of rule. And for political legitimation, there was Jaime Guzman ready to provide a guide for a future authoritarian state.

The second question is, why was the coup so brutal? One might expect initial violent repression of pro-UP militants, but once military rule was firmly established, and that happened quickly, why did torture, executions and disappearances continue for so long? If the military met so little resistance and if after an initial period most resistance groups were eliminated and many activists exiled, why did the military government persist in its violation of human rights? Fernandois might well have addressed this issue in the conclusion, for the genesis of these policies occurred during the period he covers and sheds some light on the nature of the plotting to overthrow the UP.

La Revolución Inconclusa is a long book and I hope that its length does not deter potential readers, for once you start reading it is difficult not to be caught up in this compelling narrative. It is essential reading in the study of the Allende regime and of the left in Chile. Perhaps its author might be persuaded to apply his talents next to the story of the right in Chile?¹⁶

¹⁶ After all, he has already written one illuminating and thoughtful essay on the right in his review of Allamand's, *La Travesía del desierto*, published in *Estudios Públicos*.