

Latin American Press Review, Program 1973-30

txu-oclc-768426768-1973-30

October 11, 1973

28 minutes, 23 seconds

Speaker 1: This is the Latin American Press Review, a weekly selection and analysis of news and events in Latin America as seen by leading world news sources with special emphasis on the Latin American press. This program is produced by the Latin American Policy Alternatives Group of Austin, Texas.

Speaker 2: More than a month has now passed since the Military coup in Chile, which overthrew the government of President Salvador Allende. Yet events in Chile still dominate the news. The British Newsweek Weekly Latin America reports on some of the economic policies of the new military junta.

Ken: With the cancellation last week of the 200% wage adjustment, which had been decreed by the Allende administration for the 1st of October, the full impact of inflation will now be felt by that sector of the population that can least bear it, the poorest. The late President Allende had always publicly maintained that wages must keep pace with inflation, so that it was not the poorest that had to take the strain as it always had been in Chile and the rest of Latin America. This policy has now been reversed in the middle classes, which were bearing the brunt before, will doubtless breathe a sigh of relief. What will particularly please them, and by the same token, be of concern to the working classes is that the military government has also decreed a return to normal methods of distribution. In other words, state distribution networks of food and consumer goods through which adequate supplies of rationed, low-priced goods were maintained to working class areas are to be abolished and free trading competition is to be restored.

Speaker 2: With inflation estimated to have been approaching 300% in the past 12 months, says Latin America, it is difficult to see how wage earners will manage during the first stage of the government's economic strategy. It is true that the government has said the wage freeze will be only temporary while it studies the situation and that it plans fair and realistic prices when production gets underway again. At present, however, the freeze on basic rates looks very much like a tough economic measure aimed mainly at forcing industrial workers to return to work and produce as much as they can in an effort to boost their earnings by overtime and production bonuses. The economy minister has said that the government will eventually produce a coherent program for public finances, taxation, wages, and prices, but this will only be after detailed studies.

Ken: But if the outlook is bleak on the economic front for that part of the population, which supported the Allende regime says Latin America, they can derive no more satisfaction from the new military rulers' political actions. Practically nothing positive has yet emerged from the government politically. It is still

dismantling the Unidad Popular apparatus and suppressing opposition. Two weeks ago, nine more people were summarily executed for armed opposition to the military junta. While even the United States magazine, Newsweek, published a report from its special correspondent in Santiago, who said he had seen hundreds of bodies in a morgue of people who had been shot at close range.

Speaker 2: According to Latin America, perhaps the toughest right-wing general in the junta has said, "The government junta's clear aim is to purge the country, especially morally." To this end, not only have Congress and municipal councils been abolished, but rectors of state and some other universities have been dismissed and are to be replaced by military men so as to exclude Marxist influence.

Ken: Latin American concludes that perhaps the most unpleasant aspect of life under the new regime is its encouragement of a witch hunt of former Allende supporters and officials. Special telephone numbers have been published for everyone to use in denouncing such people secretly to the authorities and successful discoverers of former officials will be given not only a government reward, but also all the money in the victim's bank account. The government recently captured Luis Gavilan, secretary general of the outlawed communist party, and the most important prisoner on the junta's list of most wanted men.

Speaker 2: This from the London Weekly Latin America. Indeed, one of the most consistent themes in press reporting of recent events in Chile is the sternness and brutality of the measures being adopted by the junta. A Mexican journalist, Patricia [inaudible 00:04:26], has provided new accounts of the treatment of prisoners inside Santiago's National Stadium, where she was held for three days by the Chilean authorities. According to a report this week from the Cuban News Agency, Prensa Latina, Ms. [inaudible 00:04:43] talked about her detention to reporters in Lima, Peru after she was allowed to leave Chile.

Ken: The journalist said that she was arrested with a group of teachers, employees, and students at the technical university. She told reporters that troops had stormed the campus after an artillery attack, indiscriminately beat young and old men and women. She was taken to the defense ministry and later to the National Stadium where she said she was held with a large group of women. She said she saw soldiers beat an old man to death, and when other prisoners protested, an officer ordered them to lie down and fired over their heads. She said, "When we were told we could stand up, the old man was gone."

Speaker 2: Prensa Latina continues with Ms. [inaudible 00:05:25] saying that on another crucial occasion, one prisoner in a nervous crisis started walking around the grandstand among the soldiers muttering incoherently. He got into a squabble with one of the guards who shot him in the head. One woman, an Argentine filmmaker, was treated with particular brutality. Ms. [inaudible 00:05:47] said, They beat her all over with clubs and rifle bets. She passed out several times and came back with bruises over her whole body."

Ken: The journalist said, "One man couldn't take anymore and threw himself from the highest point of the stadium, shouting, 'Long live the people's struggle.' He fell on a wall and appeared to be dead. After a quarter of an hour, two soldiers moved him and a scream was heard. They lifted him up by the hands and feet. I think his spine was broken." This report from Prensa Latina.

Speaker 2: A somewhat similar story was published last week in Excelsior about a student who was kept in the National Stadium and later released by the junta. [foreign language 00:06:30]. The student said, "I don't know why they didn't kill me like they did so many others. I have returned from hell. No one can really understand what it was like." He said, "No words can really describe it. The fear, the passage of time, the cold, the heat, the hardness of the concrete, the nights, the anguish. It all truly belongs to another dimension."

Ken: The Mexico City Daily Excelsior also reports that for the first time since the coup, the military has announced full-scale military operations against resistance fighters in rural areas in both the southern and northern parts of the country. In Valdivia, in southern Chile, government planes and helicopters combined with 1000 troops in actions against organized groups of workers in sawmills of the Andes Mountains. There are unconfirmed reports that two military patrols were defeated there by groups of resistance fighters.

Speaker 2: 35 armed civilians were reportedly arrested outside of Santiago. According to Excelsior, 32 civilians were executed recently in various parts of Santiago, and more than half of them were peasants and workers captured in the military operations in Valdivia. A group of newsmen recently visited the island of [inaudible 00:07:45], where 545 civilians have been held since the coup. The island is one of four concentration camps, which according to Excelsior, have held a total of 1,700 prisoners. No information has been released on three fourths of these prisoners.

Ken: The Washington Post has revealed that dozens of Brazilian secret police have flown to Chile to interrogate political exiles from Brazil and to bring them back to Brazil. There are an estimated 3 to 4,000 Brazilian political exiles in Chile. That report on Chile from the London Weekly Latin America, The Washington Post, the Mexico City Daily Excelsior and Prensa Latina.

Speaker 2: Uruguay has been admired by many as one of the most democratic countries in Latin America. Since the coup which occurred there last June however, the government of Juan Bordaberry has proved to be one of the most repressive on the continent. Latin America now reports that-

Ken: A further meeting between Juan Bordaberry and the country's military authorities could well lead to the actual outlawing of Uruguay's communist party. The move was urged last week by the director of the Army's Institute for Higher Education, and the interior minister admitted that government was considering the possibility. As if preparing the ground, the government has been emphasizing the threat to Uruguay posed by international communism. Fidel

Castro has been cited as instructing the Tupamaros to collaborate closely with the communist party. And the Soviet ambassador was called to the foreign ministry to receive a strong protest against the condemnation of the Chilean coup published in the Bulletin [foreign language 00:09:21], which is distributed by the embassy in Montevideo.

Speaker 2: ... Domestically too, says Latin America, anti-communism of the crudest kind has come to the fore. Last week, the opposition press was virtually silenced. Even the Christian Democrats, Aura, was also shut down for a week, and the opposition radio station CX30 was closed down for its coverage of Chile. This was the first closure of a radio station since 1955, when various radio stations were temporarily silenced for their involvement in the anti-Peronist coup. Of course, the actual prescription of the communist party would only take the existing situation one step further. Party political activities of all kinds have been virtually brought to a standstill. That report on Uruguay from Latin America.

Ken: Last week, we reported from Excelsior of Mexico City that Jose Rucci, who was head of the Conservative General Confederation of Workers in Argentina, had been assassinated. It was believed by many that Rucci, whose thugs were generally held responsible for many violent acts against leftist political elements and rival unions was killed by a leftist guerrilla group, the People's Revolutionary Army or ERP. Although the ERP immediately denied killing Rucci, they were soon outlawed by the government, in line with its recent crackdown on nationalist and leftist political groups. But the London Weekly Latin America now reports that-

Speaker 2: Quite apart from the energetic denials of the various factions of the ERP, evidence is beginning to accumulate around the thesis that the killing of Jose Rucci was a right wing and not a left wing crime. It was always difficult to see how the ERP saw any profit from Rucci's death. It would inevitably have increased the repression, which is building up against the guerrilla organization. And now, the search for other culprits is well underway.

Ken: ... An intimate friend of Rucci and a member of the Chamber of Deputies said in Congress last week that, "Agents of imperialism and not ultra leftists were responsible for the trade Union leader's death." President Raul Lastiri, no leftist, reinforced the impression that the government did not now accept the theory that the ERP was responsible. Lastiri was the bearer of a special message from Peron who recalled the events of the 22nd of August, 1972, when Peronist and Marxist gorillas together planned a daring break from [inaudible 00:11:52] jail and the government rescinded the ban placed on the leftist paper El Mundo, which published the ERP's disclaimers.

Speaker 2: Latin America continues [foreign language 00:12:03], which generally reflects radical thinking, also saw the killing as the work of the extreme right. Diehard anti-Peronists might be expected to benefit from the internal struggles which were likely consequence of Rucci's death. But whatever the truth about Rucci's death, there is to be no relaxation of Peron's drive against the more radical

elements in his political movement. On the contrary, the president-elect, last Sunday issued the strictest instructions to the leaders of the Peronist party to combat Marxism with the utmost vigor at all levels. This took place at a meeting of the movement's leaders from all over the country.

Ken: Latin America comments that indeed the whole tenor of the message published last week in La Opinion was combative and aggressive. Marxism and Marxists it said were to be completely eradicated, not only from the Peronist movement, but also from provincial governments controlled by the Peronists. Furthermore, anyone who refused to take an active part in this war situation against Marxist groups would be expelled from the movement and any organization claiming to be part of the Peronist movement must declare itself against Marxism.

Speaker 2: This certainly puts [foreign language 00:13:16], where Marxism is deeply entrenched on the spot. But it seems that Peron is determined not to suffer the same fate as Salvador Allende who he feels was pushed so far by his more left wing supporters that the middle classes and perhaps their foreign allies felt obliged to strike back through the armed forces. To avoid the fatal irritation of the Argentine middle classes and of the armed forces as well, Peron is emphasizing his aim of a class alliance and publicly demonstrating his hostility to Marxism. Whether his political movement can stand the strain remains to be seen.

Ken: This from the London Newsweek Weekly Latin America, a more recent issue of Excelsior confirms that Peron's anti-Marxist campaign is going strong. At the inauguration of Rucci's successor as head of the General Workers' Confederation, Peron devoted most of his speech emphasizing the necessity of defending Peronism from "Marxist infiltration." That report on Argentina from the Mexico City Daily Excelsior and the London Weekly Latin America.

Speaker 1: You are listening to the Latin American Press Review, a weekly selection and analysis of news and events in Latin America, as seen by leading world news sources with special emphasis on the Latin American press. This program is produced by the Latin American Policy Alternatives Group. Comments and suggestions are welcome and may be sent to the group at 2205 San Antonio Street, Austin, Texas. This program is distributed by Communication Center, the University of Texas at Austin. The views expressed are solely those of the Latin American Policy Alternatives Group and its sources and should not be considered as being endorsed by UT Austin or this station.

Ken: Because of the continuing public interest in the current situation in Chile. For today's feature, we've asked Father Charlie McPadden, a Maryknoll missionary born in Ireland, who recently returned from spending three years in missionary work in Chile, to talk with us about the work of the church under the Allende government and church policies toward the current military regime. Father McPadden, what did your work in Chile consist of actually?

Charlie McPadde...: Ken, I work in a parish in Southern Chile. Most of our people live in a city of 130,000 people. It's called [inaudible 00:15:34]. We also have a lot of area in the Campo. But my work in the parish consisted of... Really, I was very involved with the social program of our parish, because we had a large number of people who lived in [foreign language 00:15:47] areas. We had seven different [foreign language 00:15:51] in our parish, which I began working with. And later on, I was asked to work with 30 and all. So, I spent quite a bit of my time with these people, the people in the [foreign language 00:16:03].

Ken: Mm-hmm. What were you actually doing with them?

Charlie McPadde...: Well, we tried to do many things to uplift their standard of living, to cooperate with the programs of the government, and to be a Christian presence in that [foreign language 00:16:21].

Ken: Mm-hmm. What was the political orientation of the community where you worked? And were people very politically active there?

Charlie McPadde...: Yes, of necessity they had to be, because the government, President Allende had made promises to build houses for the poor. And about one person in five in Chile is involved with this problem of lack of housing. One person in five lives in a [foreign language 00:16:49] area, a shantytown area. So, in order to qualify to get houses, they had to belong to the UP, Unidad Popular. So, of necessity, the people had to be political. The Chileans are very sophisticated politically. And the poor especially who were the basis of power of the Allende government were continually being taught, being trained, being indoctrinated, if you will, in the programs of the government, and how to carry them through, how to bring about the necessary social changes.

Ken: What was the position of the church toward Allende toward the advent of socialism in Chile?

Charlie McPadde...: Well, to explain that, Ken, I think, where it would be well to compare the church in Cuba when Castro took over from the oppressive regime of Batista in '59, I believe it was. And what happened when Allende came to power in 1970. In 1959, when Castro declared himself a Marxist, the church immediately published a pastoral letter condemning communism. And at that time, the church and the leftist of the Castro's couldn't see any possibility of coexisting or cooperating. The church viewed these people as being prosecutors of the church, being atheistic, of being violent. And of course as well, the communists of the church has been against communism, has been reactionary, has been preaching pie in the sky, not putting themselves really on the side of progress or trying to make the brakes necessary in order to help the [foreign language 00:18:39].

But, that's how it was at that time. But in the short interval of 14 years or so, 14 or 15 years, between Cuba and Allende, between Castro and Allende, traumatic

changes have taken place in Latin America and in the church in general. A great maturing process has taken place apparently, both on the part of the church, and on the part of the leftist groups in Latin America. Because, in the meantime, we've had Pope John who has asked the church in general, especially the church in Latin America, to put itself very firmly and positively, and make every effort to bring about social change, to correct the injustices which exist in Latin America. Vatican too followed, and it gave a mandate to the church to help Latin America, to help the poor in Latin America. They changed the miserable conditions which exist there for many millions of people.

So, also in the meantime, the church in Latin America has been called by the poor, the church of the rich. And this, in part is true. Many of the hierarchy and the church have come from the wealthy who haven't been too inclined to be on the side of the poor, let's say. But, the leftist people have also been working there, and in a very dedicated manner, they began by bringing many facts on the forces which are affecting very much the economies and the conditions of life of the people of Latin America. So the progressive people in the church saw that really what the leftists were trying to do, that their goals were very Christian goals, and that, they showed this other possibility, the advisability of cooperating in these same programs. So, communication began, understanding began, they ceased to criticize one another so much. And, in that way, many things have been happening. Many things have been done in a cooperative fashion to help the poor.

So, when we came to Chile, when Allende took over, you didn't have any immediate repression of the church. Castro had expelled many of the foreign priests from Cuba when he took over. He had closed the parochial schools, because he said they were promoting the status quo in the country. But when Allende took over, the church responded in a very mature manner, by having an ecumenical service in the cathedral in Santiago, and the prayer for the success of Allende's government. Allende himself said that he was given complete freedom to all the different faiths in Chile. And, he hasn't tried in any way to repress them. He looks upon the church as an ally.

I think, from the beginning, I should say that, within the Chilean church that there has been somewhat of a division from those who back almost completely the programs of the NDI government, to those who are somewhat scared still of the generalizations, socialism, and communism. So, I think, the church in general, its attitude has been one of understanding and cooperation, bringing about needed social change and bringing about changes in the social structure. In the meantime... Or meanwhile, I think, maintaining an attitude of constructive criticism.

The church has spoken out various times against threats to human rights when this has appeared necessary to do, because it was evident that with the growing economic chaos in the country, where food stops became very scarce, where there seemed to be a growing polarization among the different groups, the church has had to speak out on the danger of violence, the danger of mixing

politics with Christianity. But in general, I would say the church has enjoyed complete freedom under the regime of President Allende. It hasn't been hampered in any way. It has been looked upon by most church people as a great challenge, because Allende's people and his parties have worked in a very dedicated fashion, with much opposition always to the programs. But I think that I would say that the church has given this government every chance and every cooperation to make its programs work, as far as the poor are concerned.

Ken: Were there sections of the parts of the church that worked actively for socialism, worked actively on behalf of the UP government?

Charlie McPadde...: Yes. There was, in the beginning, a group of 80 priests who were called the 84 Socialism. And they almost completely sanctioned the programs of Allende's government. They didn't get the backing of the hierarchy, because I think the hierarchy's position was that socialism under Allende, the radical groups, at least in his government, were believed indiscriminate revolution, which the church could not back.

Ken: Father McPadden, was the church subject to any of the repression initiated by the military after the coup last month?

Charlie McPadde...: I think the position of the church at the moment would be this that, Cardinal Silva, the Cardinal in Chile, before the coup, had been very active in trying to get the different groups, the Christian Democrats and the socialists together to work out some compromise, rather than to permit the country to end up in civil war. And he made every effort on their behalf, on behalf of the country to do that, up until the very end. The Christian Democrats didn't want to compromise in any way with the government of President Allende. They were in favor, I believe, of what they call, a white coup. That is a bloodless takeover by the military, because they believe that the country at the moment was in complete chaos politically and economically, that there was a growing polarization, growing threat of violence, and that the only solution was for a military takeover.

But now that that did occur, a very bloody takeover, the Cardinal, his position at the moment, I believe, is that he offered cooperation to the military leaders to cooperate in the reconstruction of the country. But, as time goes along, it's become more evident that these military leaders are acting in a very heavy-handed manner, and using a lot of repression, going against the constitution of Chile. It has expelled many foreign priests from the country. At least two priests have been killed, I believe. It has arrested all of the native Chilean priests and warned them, detained them for some time, and warned them not to engage in politics. It has been especially repressive to the foreign priest in the country. And, the church in general is very disillusioned with, again, the repression of political parties, and the repression of freedoms, and the violence, the bloodshed, the atrocities taking place in Chile under the military regime.

Ken: Were there very many church people among the estimated 10 to 15,000 political exiles from other countries present in Chile at the time of the coup? And if so, what's been their fate?

Charlie McPadde...: I don't really know much more than what I read in the papers. I read the newspapers every day, because it's very difficult to get much information out of Chile. It's perhaps filtered. And I know there's a great effort being made by the church from all areas to intercede for these prisoners.

Ken: Thank you, Father McPadden. Today we've been talking with Father Charlie McPadden about the church in Chile. Father McPadden is a Maryknoll missionary who recently returned from spending three years in missionary work in Chile.

Speaker 1: You have been listening to the Latin American Press Review, a weekly selection and analysis of news and events in Latin America, as seen by leading world news sources with special emphasis on the Latin American press. This program is produced by the Latin American Policy Alternatives Group. Comments and suggestions are welcome and may be sent to the group at 2205 San Antonio Street, Austin, Texas. This program is distributed by Communication Center, the University of Texas at Austin. The views expressed are solely those of the Latin American Policy Alternatives Group and its sources, and should not be considered as being endorsed by UT Austin or this station.