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A Case of “New Soviet Internationalism”

Relations between the USSR and Chile’s Christian Democratic Government, 1964–1970

❖ Rafael Pedemonte

Under Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Union attached much greater importance to the developing countries. The absence of enthusiastic engagement with the Third World was conspicuous during the late Stalin era, when Soviet officials perceived the world as being rigidly divided into two contradictory spheres, in which Latin America was no more than the “aggressive core” and “the most solid and obedient army” of the United States.¹ Federico Cantoni, the Argentinian ambassador to Moscow, noticed that the signing of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance in 1947 contributed to deepening Soviet hostility: “the attitude of the Soviet government toward Latin American diplomatic representatives has ceased to be cordial; it has even become disrespectful.”² Some indications of a new global approach emerged during the final months of Iosif Stalin’s long reign, but it was only after his death in 1953 that his lack of interest in the Third World gave way to mounting connections beyond the Eastern bloc.³ At the beginning of 1954, Afghanistan received the first Soviet economic assistance to a non-Communist country.

1. Iosif Stalin used this formulation to characterize Latin America in 1951. See Stephen Clissold, ed., *Soviet Relations with Latin America, 1918–68: A Documentary Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 157; and Tobias Rupperecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 1–9.

2. Isidoro Gilbert, *El oro de Moscú: Historia secreta de la diplomacia, el comercio y la inteligencia soviética en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2007), p. 166.

3. As the Russian scholar Mikhail Lipkin has observed, the Moscow Economic Conference of April 1952 represented the first attempt to change the logic of the Cold War, introducing the concept of “peaceful coexistence.” According to Lipkin, this international meeting enriched Soviet foreign policy and announced the Khrushchev era’s new strategies. See Mikhail Lipkin, “Avril 1952, la conférence économique de Moscou: Changement de tactique ou innovation dans la politique extérieure stalinienne,” *Relations internationales*, Vol. 3, No. 147 (2011), pp. 25–26.

The amount was insignificant (\$3.5 million), but more substantial exchange programs with India and Egypt rapidly followed.⁴

The most noteworthy event challenging the USSR's detachment from the Third World was the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Opening the Congress, Khrushchev proclaimed a new international stance and formalized the theory of "peaceful coexistence." He included Latin America in the "critical areas" of the battle against imperialism, and Victorio Codovilla, head of the Argentinian Communist Party, delivered a speech on behalf of the whole Latin American Communist movement.⁵ From that point forward, Latin America gradually became an important topic of Soviet internationalism, and people-to-people contacts increased.⁶ In the second half of the 1950s, the CPSU provided expanded financial assistance to local Communist parties, while resolutely launching widespread "cultural diplomacy."⁷ In 1958, nearly 30 "friendship" societies, which received systematic aid and support from their Soviet counterparts, were dispersed in seven countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Brazil).⁸

The Cuban revolution of 1959 attested that radical change in the "backyard" of the United States was now possible and fueled Soviet engagement in Latin America. Under Khrushchev, who proved to be enthusiastic about the project of the *barbudos* and its global projections, the Soviet Union defined a vigorous foreign policy toward Latin America. However, Moscow did not want to foster continental turmoil in a practically unknown area, one made all the more challenging by its proximity to the White House. As Jeremi Suri has stressed, the USSR's priority—especially after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, when Soviet leaders became brutally aware of the dangers of

4. "Tendances et conséquences de la politique soviétique: rapport du Secrétariat international," in NATO Archives, C-M (56) 133, Brussels, 3 December 1956, p. 2.

5. Alberto Faleroni, "Estrategia soviética en América Latina," in Gregory Oswald and Anthony Strover, eds., *La Unión Soviética y la América Latina* (Mexico City: Letras, 1972), p. 54.

6. An example of this is the case of Nikolai Leonov, who was sent to Mexico in 1953 for Spanish-language training and met on the ship a young member of the PSP (the Cuban equivalent of the Communist Party), Raúl Castro. It was the beginning of a long friendship that shaped the progression of the Cuban revolution. Later, in 1956, Leonov gathered with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara during their Mexican sojourn and eventually became both official interpreter of the Cuban authorities and chief of the Latin American department of the Soviet Committee on State Security. See Nikolai Leonov, *Likholet'e* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniya, 1994), pp. 29–30.

7. Olga Ulianova and Eugenia Fediakova, "Algunos aspectos de la ayuda financiera del Partido Comunista de la URSS al comunismo chileno durante la Guerra Fría," *Estudios públicos*, No. 72 (Spring 1998), pp. 113–148.

8. Dorothy Dillon, *International Communism and Latin America: Perspectives and Prospects* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1962), pp. 20–22.

excessive interventionism in the heart of the U.S. “sphere of influence”—was to establish normal relations at the state level, even if the new partners were not necessarily attempting to construct a socialist society.⁹ The Soviet Union should instead build diplomatic links and encourage rapprochement with Latin American societies in order to spread a better image of the Soviet model and, therefore, gradually undermine the overwhelming U.S. supremacy on the continent.¹⁰

However, Soviet leaders were not the only ones seeking to enlarge connections with “progressive” regimes. Some Latin American governments, especially those that had developed a more independent position toward the United States, could see the importance of further reducing their dependence on the White House and found in the new Soviet internationalism a suitable opportunity to gain leverage in commercial and political negotiations with the superpowers.¹¹ João Goulart, president of Brazil from 1961 to 1964, decided to reestablish official relations with Moscow and began to benefit from Soviet assistance programs. A trade and payments agreement was signed, and specialists from the Soviet bloc explored oil reserves across Brazil. Other countries, such as Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, also decided to exchange ambassadors with the USSR before the end of the 1960s.¹²

My article focuses on the Christian Democratic experience in Chile (1964–1970), which offers an example of the mutual advantages entailed by an “entente” with the USSR. In September 1964, when Eduardo Frei comfortably won the Chilean presidential election with a reformist agenda (the so-called revolution in liberty), Chile’s international policy entered a period of reconsideration. Within a few weeks of Frei’s inauguration, Chile’s new minister of foreign affairs, Gabriel Valdés, boldly announced the establishment

9. Edy Kaufman, *The Superpowers and Their Spheres of Influence: The United States and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 195–199. According to Jeremi Suri, “the specter of nuclear war forced the Kremlin to retreat from the most dangerous forms of military conflict . . . expanding Soviet power in areas that did not threaten direct confrontation with the United States.” Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 42.

10. Augusto Varas, *América Latina y la Unión Soviética: Relaciones interestatales y vínculos políticos* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: XIV Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología de CLACSO sobre Relaciones Internacionales de América Latina, 1981), pp. 12–13; and Ronald Pope, “Soviet Foreign Policy toward Latin America,” *World Affairs*, Vol. 135, No. 2 (Fall 1972), pp. 140–145.

11. The expansion of the commercial network was, according to Gabriel Valdés, the primary impetus for the new foreign policy of his government. Gabriel Valdés, *Sueños y memorias* (Santiago, Chile: Taurus, 2009), p. 129.

12. Cole Blasier, *The Giant’s Rival: The USSR and Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), p. 18.

of diplomatic relations with the "great Russian people."¹³ This was the first step toward a political, commercial, social, and cultural rapprochement with the Soviet bloc, a policy that was reinforced by Salvador Allende's interrupted presidency (1970–1973). Yet, contrary to expectations, the nature of Soviet-Chilean interactions did not beget a radical transformation after Allende's leftist coalition (Popular Unity, UP) came to power. Instead, and despite the positive prospects heralded by the victory of the Marxist-inspired candidate in 1970, Moscow's position remained ambiguous. In the 1960s, amid intense and constant animosity between the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and its political foes on the Left, Soviet officials opted to consolidate ties with Frei's administration.¹⁴ More surprisingly, the Soviet Union seemed eager to welcome a second PDC mandate, even if that outcome implied the fourth electoral defeat of Allende.

Based on a wide range of sources, including Chilean and Soviet diplomatic reports, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) documents, press articles, and interviews I conducted, the article delves into the nature of Chilean-Soviet relations during the second half of the 1960s. The article is presented in three sections, each covering a specific dimension of the links between the USSR and Chile: official/diplomatic relations, cultural exchanges, and Soviet political assessments of Frei's administration. I outline both the Soviet efforts to expand ties with Latin American "progressive" governments and the PDC's unanticipated willingness to benefit from the new "Soviet internationalism."¹⁵ Frei's Chile provides a particularly illuminating case study by which to measure the extent to which Moscow's global position was restructured after years of "Stalinist isolationism."

An Accelerated Growth of Bilateral Relations (1958–1970)

Before the six-year PDC term, the Soviet Union represented for most Chileans a practically unknown reality. Despite earlier initiatives from financial

13. *Memoria del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores correspondiente al año 1964* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Universidad Católica, n.d.), p. 44.

14. On the increasing tensions between Chilean Christian Democrats and leftwing parties toward the end of Frei's mandate, see Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 106–107. For the perspective of a Socialist leader, see Ricardo Núñez, *Trayectoria de un socialista de nuestros tiempos* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Finis Terrae, 2013), pp. 61–70.

15. The best global perspective on Chilean foreign policy during the twentieth century is Joaquín Fermandois, *Mundo y fin de mundo: Chile en la política mundial 1900–2004* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005). For insight into Frei's international priorities, see ch. 9, "Triunfo y tormenta" (pp. 293–333).

circles that allowed, for instance, the dispatch of a Soviet delegation to Santiago in July 1958, negotiations had not produced considerable rapprochement.¹⁶ Little changed under the presidency of Jorge Alessandri (1958–1964), a conservative statesman supported by the two major rightwing (Liberal and Conservative) parties. Although Alessandri was interested in selling copper to the USSR and even sent his minister of national assets, Julio Philippi, to Moscow to negotiate (Philippi eventually managed to meet Aleksei Kosygin in June 1963), pressure from influential, strongly anti-Communist sectors within Chilean society discouraged Frei's government in due course.¹⁷ Of the few intellectuals who had the opportunity to visit the USSR before 1964, most were already convinced party-line Communists, such as the writers Pablo Neruda and Francisco Coloane.¹⁸

Outside the leftwing spheres, relations with Soviet-bloc countries were almost non-existent under Alessandri, and most people had a distorted, stereotypical view of the world beyond the Iron Curtain. Thus, the cooperative links with the Soviet Union that emerged after Frei's election started from a near-tabula rasa. Frei's "revolution in liberty" included far-reaching social and economic reforms such as the partial nationalization of copper, land redistribution, and unionization of agricultural workers, and it was accompanied by a reevaluation of foreign priorities and a genuine diplomatic opening toward the Eastern bloc.¹⁹ After a straightforward negotiation between a Chilean representative and the Soviet ambassador in Buenos Aires, Aleksandr Anikin was appointed ambassador in Santiago, and Máximo Pacheco, a young and committed PDC activist, opened the first Chilean embassy in Moscow since 1947.²⁰ Pacheco and his large family (he had eight children) made the USSR's

16. "L'offensive économique du bloc sino-soviétique: Rapport du Comité économique," in NATO Archives, C-M (59) 2, Brussels, 21 January 1959, p. 16.

17. "Chilenos en la URSS," *Enfoque internacional* (Santiago, Chile), January 1967, p. 16.

18. Invited to the Soviet-bloc countries in 1957, Luis Oyarzún was one of the rare Chilean visitors to develop a critical view. He condemned the Soviet Union as a country in which "reflection is chained to action" and concluded that he would not like to live in a society in which "profound and long meditations have no place." Luis Oyarzún, *Diario íntimo* (Santiago, Chile: Universidad de Chile, 1995), pp. 277–281.

19. Luis Corvalán Márquez, *Del anticapitalismo al neoliberalismo en Chile: Izquierda, centro y derecha en la lucha entre los proyectos globales: 1950–2000* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Sudamericana, 2001), pp. 73–80.

20. When the Chilean diplomat Enrique Bernstein was sent to Buenos Aires to transmit Frei's wishes to establish relations with the USSR, Ambassador Aleksandr Alekseev was exultant. He immediately contacted Moscow and, less than twenty hours after the meeting, Bernstein received the approval of the Soviet authorities. Diplomatic links were restored in Santiago one month after this conversation. See Enrique Bernstein, *Recuerdos de un diplomático*, Vol. 2 (Santiago, Chile: Andrés Bello, 1986), pp. 173–175.

capital their temporary home from June 1965 onward. Soon after arriving, Pacheco was asked to meet with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Pacheco was astonished by his interlocutor's knowledge of Chilean politics, and he announced a promising evolution of bilateral relations. In correspondence, Pacheco revealed to Gabriel Valdés the Soviet Union's apparently sincere willingness to extend financial assistance to Chile.²¹ This meeting was the first of a succession of significant talks with the most important Soviet authorities.

From 1965 to 1967, Pacheco also met with Leonid Brezhnev, Anastas Mikoyan, and Prime Minister Kosygin. In a general evaluation of his mission addressed to Gabriel Valdés in January 1966, the ambassador reported that the "political atmosphere" in the USSR was "splendid."²² Upon arriving, he asked for concrete advice about "the nationalization of our natural resources." He said that although, "according to the foreign diplomats I have consulted, it is very hard to obtain an appointment with the prime minister," his own bid for a meeting with Kosygin was granted just "one week after my request." This swift approval, he said, was a clear sign of Soviet assent to Frei's administration.²³ Pacheco's detailed reports regarding Soviet goodwill toward Chile indicate that both sides were hopeful of what the reestablishment of Soviet-Chilean relations could bring.

On a more personal level, Pacheco found another reason to express satisfaction with Soviet officials. The luxurious residence the Soviet Union provided to him became "the latest evidence of [Moscow's] wonderful willingness." His family easily acclimated to Moscow's daily life and culture, and his sons and daughters improved their language skills to such an extent that they made Russian friends.²⁴ Pacheco was eventually replaced in 1968 when the Frei administration recalled him to Chile to serve as minister of education. But the rapprochement did not stop with the next ambassador, Óscar Pinochet de la Barra, who led the diplomatic mission until 1971. In memoirs coauthored with his wife, Pinochet de la Barra claimed that the Soviet

21. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Moscow, 8 June 1965, in Archivo Histórico del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores de Chile (AHMAEC), Fondo Países Rusia 1965.

22. Máximo Pacheco to Gabriel Valdés, Moscow, 14 January 1966, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1966.

23. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 6 July 1965, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1965.

24. Máximo Pacheco to Eduardo Frei, Moscow, 26 November 1965, in Archivo Casa Museo Eduardo Frei Montalva (AEFM), No. 57.

Union had been eager to expand bilateral links, and he described the cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman to fly in outer space, as “the best collaborator for the embassy.”²⁵

During the PDC government, many other signs confirmed the Chilean ambassadors’ impressions. In October 1965, La Moneda Palace allowed the organization of a huge Soviet exhibition addressed to potential trade partners and open to the general public. For the first time, Chilean visitors could form their own perceptions of Soviet scientific progress and see a wide range of products, from tractors to medical equipment, as well as discover Soviet culture and everyday life. A small restaurant was installed together with numerous stands displaying 800 books translated into Spanish, several phonograph records, pieces of traditional art, and paintings.²⁶ Julio Donoso, one of the exhibition organizers (and known among the political community as the Chilean “Red Dandy”), recalled that Frei “came with all his court,” and thousands of people filled the Soviet exhibition.²⁷

In this favorable context, Soviet and Chilean leaders signed three agreements in 1967 (on commercial exchanges, technical assistance, and distribution of Soviet equipment), and the USSR granted Chile two generous credits (one of \$40 million and another of \$15 million for the purchase of Soviet products).²⁸ Political exchanges were also encouraged. In 1965, twelve parliamentarians headed by Eugenio Ballesteros, a member of the PDC and chief of the Chamber of Deputies, toured the Eastern bloc on an official invitation from the Soviet parliament.²⁹ The vice president of the Chilean Senate, Luis Fernando Luengo, together with eleven colleagues, visited Moscow in July 1968 before moving on to Irkutsk, a large city in Siberia.³⁰ At the same time, 29 young Chileans belonging to different political parties took part in

25. Óscar Pinochet de la Barra and Carmiña Alexander Dupleich, *Por Siberia al sol naciente* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial del Pacífico, n.d.), p. 45.

26. *Primera exposición soviética del Pacífico* (Santiago, Chile: Talleres gráficos P. Chile, 1965).

27. Julio Donoso, *El porqué de las cosas* (Madrid: Letra Clara, 2002), p. 183.

28. Jorge Vera Castillo, “Las relaciones bilaterales de Chile con los países socialistas durante el Gobierno del Presidente Salvador Allende,” in Jorge Vera Castillo, ed., *La política exterior chilena durante el Gobierno de Salvador Allende: 1970–1973* (Santiago, Chile: Instituto de Estudios de las Relaciones Internacionales Contemporáneas, 1987), p. 242; and Joaquín Fernandois, *Chile y el mundo: 1970–1973: La política exterior del gobierno de la Unidad Popular y el sistema internacional* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 1985), p. 354.

29. *Memoria del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores correspondiente al año 1965* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Universidad Católica, n.d.), p. 167.

30. Óscar Pinochet de la Barra to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 5 August 1968, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1968.

a "Soviet-Chilean Friendship Week" in Ukraine.³¹ Such exchanges were certainly not one-sided. In October 1966, Frei greeted a Supreme Soviet delegation that subsequently embarked on a tour throughout Chile, from the northern copper mines to the steel plants in the south.³² Some Soviet unionists also toured Chile, returning afterward with an optimistic account of their visit. Having met the leaders of the Workers' United Center of Chile, Novikov concluded that the Chilean unions were working "for the unity of the workers and labor movement . . . defending an independent [political] route aimed at eradicating American imperialism from every sphere of the national economy."³³

Motivated by different aspirations and political goals, Christian Democratic cadres became assiduous visitors to the USSR as well. Some PDC figures, such as Jaime Castillo Velasco and the future President Patricio Aylwin, traveled to the Soviet Union. In addition, the Chilean minister of labor and social affairs, William Thayer, landed in Moscow in June 1966 to meet Soviet authorities and present Nikolai Podgorny with an invitation to visit Chile from President Frei. Despite the tight agenda, and with French President Charles de Gaulle touring Novosibirsk at the time, Podgorny, who was a full member of the Soviet Communist Party's ruling Politburo and chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, received the Chilean visitor at the Kremlin as an act of goodwill.³⁴ For Ambassador Pacheco, the publication of several articles in the local press about Thayer's visit, the warm reception, and the meeting with Podgorny, who was supposed to escort the French head of state in Siberia, proved the "absolutely exceptional" nature of the sojourn. Thayer's mission, Pacheco remarked, "obviously contributed to the consolidation of both countries' relations."³⁵

Another significant indication of strengthening ties between both countries came when the PDC candidate for the next presidential election, Radomiro Tomic, resolved to visit the Soviet Union in mid-1969, just before

31. Óscar Pinochet de la Barra to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 22 August 1968, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1968.

32. *Memoria del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores correspondiente al año 1966* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Universidad Católica, n.d.), pp. 495–496.

33. I. Novikov, "Informe del viaje de una delegación sindical soviética a Chile," June 1968, in Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), Fond (F) 5451, Opis' (Op.) 52, Delo (D.) 885. All documents from GARF quoted in this article were collected and translated into Spanish by Olga Ulianova, with copies of the translations now in my possession.

34. William Thayer, *Memorias ajenas* (Santiago, Chile: Andrés Bello, 2012), pp. 233–235.

35. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 27 June 1966, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1966.

the beginning of one of the most controversial political campaigns in Chile's contemporary history. Amid a tense political climate marked by ideological polarization, his decision was politically risky. Tomic succeeded in charming Soviet authorities, who in turn did not seem to reject the possibility of a second PDC victory.

To enhance commercial cooperation, Frei considered sending close advisers to the Eastern bloc, where they were supposed to assess the complementarity of the two economies. To this end, Belisario Velasco, the operations manager of the Agricultural Trade Company (*Empresa de Comercio Agrícola*), explored economic opportunities in the Soviet bloc and stayed in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Alejandro Hales, minister of mines from 1966 to 1970, and his Christian Democratic colleague Sergio Molina Silva, minister of finance (1964–1968), engaged in an equivalent mission.³⁶ But, despite the ongoing state-to-state rapprochement, Frei never dared to cross the Iron Curtain, where Soviet leaders waited with open arms. In a letter written in March 1968, Podgornyi invited Frei to Moscow and stressed that the Soviet government was ready to “make further efforts for the development of economic, commercial, scientific, and cultural relations between our countries.”³⁷ Disappointed by the lack of response, Pacheco sent a note directly to Frei (he previously had communicated with Minister Valdés) emphasizing the need to accept the invitation.³⁸ Frei, however, was hesitant. Despite the growing cooperation between the two states, Chile remained an integral part of the Western Hemisphere. Frei, a committed Catholic with undeniable anti-Communist leanings, tried carefully to avoid upsetting his U.S. partners.³⁹ Additionally, at a point in the Cold War when no other Latin American political leader apart from Fidel Castro had taken such a step, the presence of Frei in the Soviet Union would undoubtedly have triggered an international controversy. Nevertheless, this geopolitical constraint did not prevent the Chilean

36. Belisario Velasco, interview, Santiago, 20 September 2016. Velasco did not manage to make a deal with the Soviet Union in the field of agriculture, but he signed an agreement for 1,000 tons of tea with Mao Zedong's China, which represented further significant evidence of Frei's diplomatic opening. In 1968, the Chilean government also decided to reestablish commercial relations with Cuba, breaking the continental blockade adopted by the Organization of American States since 1962.

37. Nikolai Podgornyi to Eduardo Frei, Moscow, 20 March 1968, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Moscú 1968.

38. Máximo Pacheco to Eduardo Frei, Moscow, 7 September 1966, in AEFM, No. 57.

39. According to Sebastián Hurtado, the ideological affinity between President Frei and the White House went beyond a philosophical rejection of Marxism to also include a common vision of modernization and economic development. See Sebastián Hurtado, “The Gathering Storm: The United States, Eduardo Frei's Revolution in Liberty and the Polarization of Chilean Politics, 1964–1970,” Ph.D. Diss., Ohio University, 2016, p. 313.

government from diversifying its foreign policy, challenging Chile's traditional dependence on the Western world and discovering a helpful new partner. The USSR proved willing to assist the South American country, strengthening connections in a variety of areas, particularly in cultural relations.

Long-Range "Cultural Diplomacy" (1964–1970): The Emergence of Unexpected Mediators

Apart from some renowned travelers, few Chileans could tour the USSR before 1964. Soviet invitations were mostly reserved for activists of the Communist Party or members of the Workers' United Center of Chile. Without diplomatic relations, formal difficulties discouraged communication between the two countries. Frei's victory represented a major turning point, allowing for growth and "democratization" of cultural exchanges. The institutional platform boosting such transnational relations was cemented during the PDC administration, long before the advent of Allende's far-left government in November 1970. In 1966, a Soviet-Chilean Friendship Society was established in Moscow. Simultaneously, nearly fifteen Chile-USSR cultural institutes (by far the biggest network of any Latin American country) were actively involved in stimulating artistic and people-to-people interactions.⁴⁰

Ambassador Pacheco was a key player in the Chilean-Soviet negotiations on cultural activities. From the mid-1960s onward, Chilean visitors no longer solely included Marxist sympathizers yearning to discover Vladimir Lenin's world. Instead the visitors from Chile were a motley crew of people with different political inclinations. Occasionally, they even openly opposed the Communist system. After holding talks with the coordinators of Goskontsert, a department attached to the USSR Ministry of Culture, Pacheco announced that Soviet musical administrators would be welcoming the first official Chilean cultural delegation, comprising Pedro d'Andurain, a violinist trained in New York, and the folk music group Los Huasos Quincheros.⁴¹ The latter's performance in the USSR was peculiar. The four members of the band were

40. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 28 September 1966, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1966. At the beginning of 1969, the Chilean-Soviet Cultural Institutes (ICSC) were operational in several cities across the country: Arica, Iquique, Antofagasta, Copiapó, La Serena, Valparaíso, San Antonio, Concepción, Temuco, Chillán, Valdivia, Osorno, and Punta Arenas. In a colonial house located in the city center and bought by the Soviet Union, the ICSC of Santiago carried out an active and diverse program of cultural activities. "Actividades del Instituto Chileno-Soviético," *Enfoque internacional*, April 1969, p. 47.

41. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 8 December 1967, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1967.

known to have rightwing orientations, and they fervently supported Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship after 1973. Benjamín Mackenna, leader and singer of Los Huasos Quincheros, acknowledged that the government's decision took them by surprise: "we were not Marxists, not even Christian Democrats. . . . Choosing us was a very open attitude from a political point of view."⁴² The band arrived in Moscow in mid-1966, performed in 21 Soviet cities and played 46 crowded concerts in theaters and stadiums.⁴³

Soviet officials encouraged the selection of a group of artists with diverse political backgrounds and deliberately proposed non-Communist representatives. In December 1965, Vice Minister of Culture Ivan Tsvetkov dispatched a proposal to the Chilean authorities regarding a cultural exchange. Potential guests included the pianist Claudio Arrau, the baritone Ramón Vinay, and the chamber ensemble of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile directed by Sylvia Soubllette, Minister Valdés's wife.⁴⁴ This was certainly not a Communist-inclined group of artists. The aim of the exchange program, however, was to attract outstanding cultural figures without making a political distinction, thus demonstrating that "Stalinist dogmatism" had been replaced by a new international approach. In the 1960s, Soviet officials were hoping to demonstrate a commitment to artistic excellence, shedding their former ideological inflexibility. Beyond political struggles, the Soviet authorities wanted to foster the image of a cultural superpower.

Soubllette arrived in the Soviet Union in 1966 with her chamber ensemble. They played in Moscow, Leningrad, Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius before touring in Romania and Yugoslavia. Despite her strong Catholic faith, Soubllette was eager to encounter the radically different political and social system: "to see how it was, what the people looked like." She was not disappointed "from a historical point of view": "it was very interesting . . . to know that, to know those people," she acknowledged. Additionally, the journey also constituted a rich cultural experience for the twelve members of her group. They performed in a joint concert with a Soviet company, recorded a long-play album, and had dinner in the Kremlin with Minister of Culture Ekaterina Furtseva.⁴⁵

42. Benjamín Mackenna, interview, Santiago, 11 January 2013.

43. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 8 February 1967, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1967.

44. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 6 December 1965, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1965.

45. Sylvia Soubllette, interview, Santiago, 25 October 2016.

Arrau, widely considered one of the greatest classical performers of the twentieth century, played in several cities during a visit in 1968. His performance in Leningrad was accompanied by the Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Neeme Järvi. Before the end of Arrau's stay, the Soviet Ministry of Culture organized a gala in his honor in the presence of important figures such as the composer Aram Khachaturian.⁴⁶ Everything was designed to charm the Chilean visitor, making him the center of attention. The Soviet Union routinely used what Paul Hollander described as an "ego massage" strategy—that is, a range of sophisticated hospitality techniques intended to captivate foreign travelers.⁴⁷

This method was not used solely for such guests as Arrau. His less famous colleague Flora Guerra also became a regular intermediary between Chilean and Soviet cultures, despite not being "a left-wing woman."⁴⁸ She went to Moscow three times from 1965 to 1972, including twice during Frei's administration.⁴⁹ However, initially, she did not seem to be the most tactful of visitors. In 1965, she refused to move beyond the capital and looked indifferently upon life in the USSR. When her hosts suggested she perform in the House of People's Friendship, she hesitated and accepted only reluctantly.⁵⁰ But this initial reserve soon turned to enthusiasm. Soviet efforts had the desired effect on Guerra's behavior, and two years later she not only visited Moscow but also played piano for audiences in Romania and Poland.⁵¹ In 1972, the Soviet Ministry of Culture sent another invitation that allowed her to exhibit her skills in Ukraine, Kazan, and Moscow. In the Chilean ambassador's words, Guerra "is very popular among the musical circles, she is always very successful during her performances, and she was invited to come back . . . whenever she wants."⁵²

46. Apparently impressed by Arrau's talent, Järvi told Radio Moscow that the Chilean interpreter was "the greatest piano master of our time." See Óscar Pinochet de la Barra to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 10 June 1968, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1968.

47. Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba (1928–1978)* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 351–372. On the same subject, see François Hourmant, *Au pays de l'avenir radieux: Voyages des intellectuels français en URSS, à Cuba et en Chine populaire* (Paris: Aubier, 2000).

48. Enrique Silva Cimma, interview, Santiago, 19 October 2007.

49. See the coverage of Flora Guerra's visits in *El siglo* (Santiago, Chile), 13 April 1972, p. 11.

50. "Informe de la Unión de las Sociedades Soviéticas de Amistad sobre la cooperación con Chile en 1964," January 1965, in GARE, F. 9576r, Op. 10, D. 50.

51. See the coverage of her trip, including her piano performances, in *El siglo*, 24 February 1967, p. 10.

52. Guillermo del Pedregal to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 7 March 1972, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1972.

Interactions also intensified in the field of education. In May 1967 a delegation including the heads of seven universities (only the president of the University of Chile could not travel, for personal reasons) toured Soviet-bloc countries for almost two months.⁵³ Surprisingly, even the main authority of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, the deeply conservative Archbishop Alfredo Silva Santiago, accepted the invitation of the USSR's Ministry of Higher Education. As part of an intense journey that brought him and his colleagues to Erevan, Kiev, Novosibirsk and three East European Communist states (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia), the prelate visited Zagorsk (today Sergiev Posad), where he met the Orthodox patriarchs of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, a monastery located about 70 kilometers from Moscow.⁵⁴ On Sunday, 28 March 1967, he was asked to conduct a mass in the only Catholic church in the capital.⁵⁵ In arranging this trip for the archbishop, the Soviet authorities were obviously not expecting to convert him to Marxism; rather, they were merely seeking to mitigate his negative predispositions. If he returned to Chile with a less hostile view of the Soviet system, that would be a "small triumph" of cultural diplomacy. Upon returning to Chile, in a climate of growing tolerance toward the Eastern bloc, the archbishop justified his hosts' expectations by declaring that he was impressed by the quality and seriousness of theological studies in the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

Most of the Soviet Union's new and unpredicted "partners"—the rightwing singer (Mackenna), the celebrated pianist (Arrau), the initially reluctant (Guerra), and the conservative archbishop (Alfredo Silva), among many others—appear to have discovered an attractive side of a previously neglected country. Besides this group of personalities, a mounting number of young Chileans had the opportunity to study or perform in the USSR during Frei's government. Students at the Patrice Lumumba University, an institution founded in the USSR in 1960 that granted scholarships to many university students from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, hosted the most important Chilean community in a single foreign university (nearly 200 Chilean students in 1967).⁵⁷ Roberto Bravo—today's most widely known Chilean

53. See the coverage of the delegation's visit in *El siglo*, 27 April 1967, p. 5.

54. The same destination was chosen to charm the Catholic musician Soubllette. Soubllette, interview.

55. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 31 May 1967, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1967.

56. Vadim Nizski, "Rector de la UC visita Monasterio Ruso," *Enfoque internacional*, July 1967, p. 21.

57. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 1 June 1967, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1967. See also Rafael Pedemonte, "Le sort des lumumbistes chiliens face aux enjeux de la guerre froide (1964–1973)," *Caravelle*, No. 108 (2017), pp. 149–168.

pianist—was a 23-year-old when he obtained a grant to pursue his training at the Tchaikovsky Moscow State Conservatory. Despite Bravo's eagerness to study in the USSR, he did not have any special ideological affinity with the Communists. He said to the press in 1968 that "my experience in Moscow was crucial for my artistic maturity," but then he confessed that "I have no political position, I have never asked myself what ideology I have."⁵⁸

The intensification of cultural ties was not simply a one-way process.⁵⁹ Many Soviet artists were sent to Chile after the reestablishment of diplomatic links, engendering growing curiosity and admiration within Chilean society. Soviet visitors to Chile during the Frei administration included film directors (Roman Karmen, Revaz Chkheidze), poets (Margarita Aliger, Semen Kirsanov, Yevgeny Yevtushenko), chamber music performers (Leonid Kogan, Igor Bezrodnyi, Nina Beilina, Sergei Dorenskii, Tat'yana Nikolaeva), and numerous ballet dancers. Beyond these individual artists, the most impressive phenomenon for the public was the presentation of large musical ensembles such as the Red Army Choir, the Dance Ensemble Zhok of Moldavia, and the Moiseev Ballet. The Moscow State Circus's performances in 1966 are still remembered for their excellence.⁶⁰ In 1967, a delegation of 80 Soviet dancers performed throughout the country under the name Beriozka.⁶¹ That same year, the Soviet Music Hall ensemble filled theaters and enjoyed great success. Even the conservative newspaper *El Mercurio*, which harshly criticized the general line of Soviet policy, featured a glowing review of a show that "enchants young and old" spectators.⁶²

The cultural connections between Chile and the USSR that proliferated rapidly under Frei's "revolution in liberty" were a concrete sign of both the new Soviet international approach and the PDC government's global opening. Soviet leaders relied heavily on cultural exchanges to disseminate an attractive picture of the Soviet model and of daily life in the USSR. As a result of this effort, the Chilean community began increasingly to appreciate aspects of Soviet society, especially the excellence of its artists and ensembles and its

58. Luis Alberto Mansilla, "Roberto Bravo, un pianista que maduró en la URSS," *Enfoque internacional* (Santiago), August 1968, p. 3.

59. According to the Soviet ambassador Aleksandr Anikin, 1,000 Chileans visited the USSR and 500 Soviet citizens, "most of them members of artistic ensembles," came to Chile in 1966–1967. Clissold, ed., *Soviet Relations*, p. 206.

60. Dirección de la política exterior, Difusión cultural, Santiago, 1 October 1966, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1966.

61. "Beriozka viene a Chile," *Enfoque internacional*, May 1967, p. 32, as well as coverage of performances in *El siglo*, 1 June 1967, p. 1, and *El siglo*, 2 June 1967, p. 10.

62. See the music review in *El Mercurio* (Santiago), 19 October 1967, p. 35.

scientific developments. But this growth of mutual relations would not have occurred if the Soviet authorities had not developed a positive political stance toward the PDC.

A Positive View in Moscow of Frei's Administration?

In a distant continent, historically dominated by U.S. influence, the reformist and relatively independent project of Frei's "revolution in liberty" suited Moscow's interests.⁶³ The former Soviet State Security (KGB) officer Nikolai Leonov has claimed, with some exaggeration, that Marxist revolutions "frightened the Kremlin more than the reactionaries" because a leftist government under Soviet auspices "requests help, credits, and money," whereas "a stable, conservative government presents no problems, no concerns."⁶⁴ Leonov insists that Soviet leaders preferred to foster a gradual path to socialism in Latin America instead of the radical shift embodied by the Cuban experience. From the 1960s onward, the Soviet Union seemed to prefer to diversify its potential allies without assuming risky and expensive engagements. The Cuban-Soviet embrace was economically burdensome for Moscow. Moreover, the "adventurist" behavior of Khrushchev in provoking the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 was one of the reasons for his removal in 1964.⁶⁵

A moderate stance vis-à-vis Latin America was compatible with the official doctrine that emerged from the Twentieth CPSU Congress, which incorporated the "institutional path" as a real alternative to revolution.⁶⁶ The Soviet Union's openness to Chile's PDC was also justified by a renewed theoretical framework incorporating an "intermediary phase" between a "capitalist stage" and a revolutionary society. A transitional period (alternately qualified as a "non-capitalist path of development," "national democracy," and even "revolutionary democracy") was depicted as the basis for a more conclusive transformation. Close ties with a reformist government promoting an adjustment of the economic system, growing political participation of the

63. The transformative potential of "progressive" regimes and even of the "petit bourgeoisie" was often highlighted by a new generation of internationalists (*meždunarodniki*) grouped within the Institute of Latin America. See the examples collected in Gregory Oswald, ed., *Soviet Image of Contemporary Latin America: A Documentary History, 1960–1968* (Austin: Texas Press, 1970), pp. 69–130.

64. "El general Nikolai Leonov en el CEP," *Estudios públicos*, No. 73 (Summer 1999), p. 78.

65. Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 193–194.

66. Olga Ulianova, "La Unidad Popular y el golpe militar en Chile: Percepciones y análisis soviéticos," *Estudios públicos*, No. 79 (Winter 2000), p. 86.

underclass, and land redistribution (all of which were contemplated in Frei's electoral program) were in line with Soviet practice.⁶⁷ A Soviet expert on Latin American history, Iosif Grigulevich (who also secretly worked as a spy and assassin), hailed the independent line of the Chilean administration and argued in November 1965 that President Frei "is carrying out [his] pre-election promises quite consistently." The Christian Democratic victory, Grigulevich added, "has opened a new page in [Chilean] history."⁶⁸

Numerous reports sent by Pacheco to the Chilean Foreign Ministry also reflected a sense of optimism. According to the diplomat, the eager reception given to Chilean representatives and the invitations addressed to Frei confirmed the Soviet government's interest in bolstering relations. Pacheco himself was summoned by such prominent leaders as Mikoyan, Kosygin, and Gromyko. The highest Soviet leader, Brezhnev, met with Pacheco for 90 minutes and emphasized that the Soviet Union "appreciated Frei's government."⁶⁹ A few weeks after the PDC's electoral triumph in 1964, Andrei Kirilenko—a close associate of Brezhnev—visited Santiago, another indication of the USSR's keen interest in improving mutual ties.⁷⁰

In a more symbolic gesture, Chilean Independence Day (18 September) was widely commemorated in the USSR from 1965 onward, resulting in a variety of activities such as press conferences, exhibitions, and special evening festivities dedicated to the South American country.⁷¹ In 1966, celebrations of the 18th of September coincided with the opening of a Soviet-Chilean Friendship Society, and the USSR's Channel 1 broadcast a documentary about Chile.⁷² In 1967, Pacheco stressed the "absolutely exceptional" nature of the celebrations, which went beyond "any precedent" and "contrasted with the national days of other Latin American countries."⁷³

67. An article published in the Soviet magazine *Kommunist* identifies three different groups of undeveloped countries: those that had chosen a "non-capitalist path of development," those that were making efforts to reinforce their independence under capitalist conditions, and those that were dominated by "reactionary elements" linked with imperialism. Leon Gouré and Morris Rothenberg, *Soviet Penetration of Latin America* (Miami: University of Miami, 1975), p. 10.

68. I. R. Grigulevich, "The Significance of the Christian Democratic Electoral Victory in Chile," in Oswald, ed., *Soviet Image*, p. 129.

69. Pacheco to Frei, 7 September 1966.

70. Pacheco to Frei, 26 November 1965.

71. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 21 September 1965, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1965.

72. Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, 28 September 1966.

73. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 21 September 1967, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1967.

According to the ambassador, Uruguay's independence day was barely celebrated, and the Argentinian commemoration (9 July) did not even warrant a mention in the press—in marked contrast to the festivities on 18 September.⁷⁴

The positive stance toward Chile was also reflected by Moscow's willingness to help Frei's government. Thayer recalled that the warm reception he received during a tour of the USSR could be explained by "the Soviet interest in establishing contact with Chilean Christian Democracy."⁷⁵ In a note to Valdés, Pacheco said he had met the Soviet deputyminister of foreign trade four times to discuss the implementation of a commercial agreement. The deputy head of the USSR's State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations made similar proposals. Pacheco urged Valdés to make an additional effort. For La Moneda not to take advantage of this mood would be "a big mistake," Pacheco said.⁷⁶ The Chilean authorities heeded Pacheco's call and approved three commercial plans in 1967. They also authorized him to negotiate a cultural agreement that was eventually signed during the final year of the PDC administration, just before Allende came to power.⁷⁷

In the second half of the 1960s, Latin America was convulsed by two radically different conceptions of how to make a revolution. In Cuba, Castro and his acolytes advocated armed struggle to topple existing regimes in a short period of time. Elsewhere in Latin America, however, Communist parties committed themselves to an "institutional road"—a strategy based on electoral participation, gradual reforms, and a progressive mass education led by the party.⁷⁸ This posture, seemingly in line with the Soviet position of "peaceful coexistence," collided with Havana's priorities. In January 1966, during the Tricontinental Conference, Ernesto "Che" Guevara dispatched a letter encouraging the participants to fight for a "bright future" in which "two, three or many Vietnams" would flourish.⁷⁹ In an era of détente, when Brezhnev's administration seemed eager to foster rapprochement

74. Ibid.

75. Thayer, *Memorias ajenas*, p. 232.

76. Pacheco to Valdés, 14 January 1966.

77. "Máximo Pacheco: Me he sentido muy feliz . . ." *Enfoque internacional*, April 1970, pp. 28–29.

78. Daniela Spencer, "The Caribbean Crisis: Catalyst for Soviet Projection in Latin America," in Joseph Gilbert and Daniela Spencer, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 98–104. For deeper insight into the divergences between Cuba's doctrine and the "democratic road" defended by the most important Communist Parties in Latin America, see James Blight and Philip Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle with the Superpowers after the Missile Crisis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), pp. 73–145.

79. *Commandant Ernesto Che Guevara: Message à la tricontinentale* (Havana: Secrétariat exécutif de l'OSPAAAL, 1967), p. 5.

with the West and, especially, with "reformist regimes," Guevara's message and Castro's speeches were likely to disconcert officials in Moscow.⁸⁰ To appease the Chilean authorities—who, moreover, were being severely attacked by Castro—the Soviet government provided Pacheco with a document outlining the official (but secret) Soviet position on "revolution."⁸¹ The document denied that the USSR was supporting "subversive actions," emphasized the need to respect each country's "sovereignty and independence," and explicitly rebuked "the exporting of revolution."⁸² Claiming this nonviolent stance in the context of a global debate within the left, the Soviet Union not only distanced itself from the radical Cuban path but also made clear its desire to maintain a rapport with Santiago.

Pacheco, through his perseverance and diplomatic skills, played an important role in gaining Moscow's confidence, but the cordiality continued when, at the beginning of 1968, Pinochet de la Barra arrived in Moscow to replace Pacheco. Pinochet de la Barra's memoirs are full of beautiful remembrances of his stay in Moscow and his trips around the Soviet Union (to Kyiv, Novgorod, Murmansk, Ulyanovsk, Kazan, Baku, Erevan, Ashkhabad, Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, and many other cities). He also recalled that personalities such as Yevtushenko and Mstislav Keldysh (the head of the Soviet Academy of Sciences) regularly visited the Chilean embassy.⁸³ Pinochet de la Barra proudly informed Minister Valdés that Tereshkova and Viktoria Brezhneva (Brezhnev's wife) had attended a reception organized by the embassy. "In each case," the ambassador noted, "it marked the first visit of those remarkable personalities to a Western embassy."⁸⁴

Political convergences between some PDC and Soviet leaders also strengthened. Tomic, a presidential candidate in the 1970 election, toured the USSR. He belonged to the progressive wing of the PDC and advocated a more far-reaching reformist turn than many of his fellow party members favored. He even proposed a program for the construction of a socialist, although not

80. Marie-Pierre Rey, *La tentation du rapprochement: France et URSS à l'heure de la détente (1964–1974)* (Paris: Publication de la Sorbonne, 1991).

81. Some months later, Frei was denounced by Fidel Castro in a polemical speech as a "reactionary," a "coward who abuses power," a "liar," and a "vulgar politician." Castro alleged that, instead of a "revolution in liberty," Frei was carrying out "bloody politics without revolution." See Fidel Castro, "Frei y la máscara del reformismo," *Cuba* (Havana), April 1966, p. 16.

82. Máximo Pacheco to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 12 February 1966, in AH-MAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1966.

83. Pinochet de la Barra and Dupleich, *Por Siberia al sol naciente*.

84. Pinochet de la Barra to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, 5 August 1968.

Marxist, society.⁸⁵ A Soviet specialist on Latin American history wrote a report on Tomic's visit, remarking that the aim of the Chilean's trip was to "improve his prestige among leftist forces."⁸⁶ After highlighting the "revolutionary spirit" of the guest, the expert observed that Tomic had managed to arouse public sympathy in the USSR thanks to his intelligence, cordiality, charm, and mastery of French and English. He was, the report concluded, "a sincere friend" of the Soviet Union.⁸⁷

Taken together, these factors help explain why the Soviet Union was favorably inclined toward the potential reelection of a Christian Democratic president. Pacheco returned to Moscow in February 1970 as the minister of education. Accompanied by Ambassador Pinochet de la Barra, he was received by Podgorny, who, in an "exceptionally positive" interview, stressed his support for the Chilean government.⁸⁸ The conversation between the minister, the ambassador, and the Soviet leader was recorded and sent to President Frei. The content of this document, found in the archives of the *Casa Museo Eduardo Frei Montalva*, is extraordinary because Podgorny not only praises the Christian Democratic project but also explicitly affirms his commitment to the reelection of the PDC. Of course, scholars must be careful when considering such sources. On the one hand, the visitors wished to legitimize their mission and transmit a good impression to La Moneda Palace; on the other hand, Podgorny, familiar with the diplomatic protocol, undoubtedly wanted to fulfill the guests' expectations, showing himself to be open and cooperative. In any event, the report leaves no doubt that the Soviet authorities maintained a sympathetic outlook toward Frei's administration.

After acknowledging that, in international politics, Soviet and Chilean "objectives are the same," Podgorny asked, "Why do you not re-elect President Frei, who is doing such a good job?"⁸⁹ However, the Chilean constitution did not allow the immediate re-election of the head of state. Upon learning this, Podgorny said that "a Constitution that impedes Frei's re-election is a bad Constitution," and he promised to speak with the Chilean Communists

85. See, for example, Tomic's Socialist program in Radomiro Tomic, *El camino chileno al socialismo* (Santiago, Chile: Quimantú, 1972). His aim was to transform Chile into a "socialist, communitarian, pluralist, and democratic" society.

86. S. Yangaykin, "Informe interno de la Unión de las Sociedades Soviéticas de la Amistad sobre la visita de Radomiro Tomic a la URSS," 24 August 1969, in GARE, F. 9576r, Op. 10, D. 135.

87. *Ibid.*

88. Máximo Pacheco and Óscar Pinochet de la Barra to Eduardo Frei, Moscow, 11 February 1970, in AEFM, No. 60.

89. *Ibid.*

to find a solution to this constraint.⁹⁰ Even though there is no evidence that a conversation with the Communists actually took place in subsequent weeks, Podgorny concluded by noting that the electoral process in Chile was of great importance to the USSR and declared that the Soviet Politburo would be pleased to deal with a second Christian Democratic president:

Relations between our countries have considerably progressed under Frei, and the perspectives indicate that they will progress even more. Frei's policy is favorable for us and for the democratic forces. Obviously, it would be a shame if the results of the elections stop or distort this progress. Chile plays an important role in Latin America and its influence is visible in countries that do not follow a progressive line. If you keep doing so, you will have good relations with Cuba. . . . We hope that the Chileans will support the progressive circles that lead the country in the right direction. If we had in Moscow people speaking Spanish, we would send them to Chile to vote for the Christian Democrats.⁹¹

To claim that the Soviet Union would have preferred the advent of a new PDC government in Chile over the victory of Allende, an overtly Marxist candidate allied with the Communist Party, would be an exaggeration. What is clear, however, is that Soviet officials had developed a generally positive view of Chile's Christian Democratic government. Soviet leaders would not have been disappointed by the election of Tomic. On the contrary, a Tomic presidency, which would have been more leftist than Frei's administration, would have guaranteed the maintenance of cordial relations between Santiago and Moscow, as well as the continuity of an independent and reformist political line. Therefore, without requesting unaffordable assistance (as Allende ended up doing during his administration), Tomic could have fulfilled Soviet aspirations in a "low-interest" area of the world.

We will never know for sure how extensively involved the Soviet Union would have been in Chile under a Tomic administration. The PDC candidate achieved a disappointing third place, and the Socialist Allende won a tight victory and ruled the country from November 1970 until he was overthrown on 11 September 1973. Yet, the documents and testimonies collected for this article indicate that the three-year-long UP did not entail an entirely different international position with regard to Soviet-bloc countries. The political, economic, and cultural platform on which Chilean-Soviet relations sought to build during Allende's "thousand days" was to a large extent established under Frei's administration. General ties with Moscow were reinforced and

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

diversified after 1970, but, on the whole, the logic of reciprocal connections did not change substantially.⁹²

In the end, Soviet assistance did not meet Allende's expectations. He repeatedly voiced his disappointment with Moscow's lack of commitment. During Allende's tour of the USSR, when he realized that the Soviet Union was unwilling to offer the financial support his government needed to cope with the internal crisis, he confessed to one of his advisers, "this is the end."⁹³ Additionally, Moscow was pessimistic about the UP's prospects. Soviet diplomats doubted that Allende could hold power until the end of his mandate. According to Olga Ulianova, one of the Soviet officials who came to Chile to witness Allende's assumption of power concluded "this is going to end badly."⁹⁴ Reluctance turned into real fear about a potential coup. After a conversation with two of the most important Communist leaders (Luis Corvalán and Volodia Teitelboim), Soviet Ambassador Aleksandr Basov sent a report to Moscow commenting on the "sharp decline of Allende's prestige."⁹⁵ He also remarked that divisions within the Left and the conspirators' activity could lead to a coup attempt.⁹⁶

The speech Podgorni gave during Allende's visit to Moscow in December 1972 also reflected the Soviet government's cautious approach. He made broad references to Chile, inserting the country in the general Latin American context, without stressing the particularities of the Chilean political process. He praised the efforts to build a "better future" and a "new life," but he deliberately avoided using the word "socialism" to qualify Allende's project.⁹⁷ Overall, Soviet authorities and Latin American experts made clear that Popular Unity still had to face many obstacles before starting to construct a socialist

92. Even the most emblematic Soviet assistance offered during Allende's administration—a plant for prefabricated houses established in El Belloto—was already under consideration during Frei's presidency. Therefore, despite what many people in the 1970s claimed and despite what many still believe, the project did not amount to clear evidence of Soviet solidarity with Chile's Marxist coalition. See Clissold, ed., *Soviet Relations*, p. 206.

93. Gonzalo Martner, *El gobierno del Presidente Salvador Allende, 1970–1973: Una evaluación* (Concepción, Chile: LAR, 1988), pp. 224–226.

94. Ulianova, "La Unidad Popular y el golpe militar en Chile," pp. 89–90.

95. "Conversación del embajador A. V. Basov con Luis Corvalán y Volodia Teitelboim," in "Chile en los archivos de la URSS (1959–1973): Comité Central del PCUS y del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la URSS," *Estudios públicos*, No. 72 (Spring 1998), pp. 441–443.

96. *Ibid.*

97. "Palabras del Presidente del Presidium del Soviet Supremo de la URSS, Nicolai Podgorni, pronunciadas en la cena ofrecida al Presidente de la República de Chile, compañero Salvador Allende Gossens," in *La gira de Chile: Documentos especiales* (Santiago, Chile: Quimantú, 1973), pp. 88–91.

state.⁹⁸ Moscow had no particular interest in backing a "second Cuba." Soviet officials were content to maintain the foundations on which Soviet-Chilean relations had been based since 1964, when Frei's PDC government ushered in a new era of Chilean foreign policy.

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98. Even a rather optimistic analyst, the Soviet historian Sergo Mikoyan, son of Anastas Mikoyan, seemed reluctant to describe Allende's government as a Socialist experience. In an article published in mid-1971, he put Chile in the same category as the Peruvian military regime of Juan Velasco Alvarado (a reformist ruler but in any case an avowed Marxist sympathizer like Allende). Guillermo del Pedregal to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile, Moscow, 10 June 1971, in AHMAEC, Fondo Países Rusia 1971.