Beyond the Cold War. Czechoslovakia’s Policy toward Allende’s Chile

Abstract

This paper focuses on the ever-growing area of study developed state of relations with the countries of the “Third World” on the example of the Czechoslovak policy to Chile at the age of superpower “détente”, especially the reign of socialist Salvador Allende (1970–1973). Based primarily on Czechoslovak archival documents it challenges expectable and intuitive picture of Czechoslovak policy of the late 60s and early 70s. Despite proclamations of internationalist solidarity Czechoslovak policy, like other states of so called Eastern Bloc, embodied considerably more pragmatic economic and political goals. I show that the Czechoslovak side was something critical or skeptical about the happenings in the left-wing government coalition “Unidad Popular” and at the level of economic cooperation strived primarily for mutual economic advantages. If Czechoslovakia could even help to Chile economically during this time, the help came, like in the Soviet case, late and has remained largely unused.

* * *

The author retains all rights to the paper and its content. The paper is in progress and should not be cited without the author’s permission.
Introduction. Beyond the “Cold War” – but what kind?

When first reports on the events of 9/11 in Chile, the overthrow and death of the heroic Chilean socialist president Salvador Allende arrived in Czechoslovakia’s, began the period of solidarity and support of Chile (and condemnation of the new military regime). Czechoslovak regime “Chilean affair” used to extensive propaganda and probably organized extensive campaigns. Apart from a certain overestimation of the Chilean events, it yet reflected a broader public reaction in many other (non-socialist) countries and regions of the world to the tragic events and the fate of progressive forces in Chile. In subsequent years in Czechoslovakia, as in other countries of so called Eastern Bloc, was published a considerable amount of work, which in one way or another critically reflected events after the coup and onset of the junta, discussed its repressive measures and the crimes it committed. (No doubt some of the titles as “White Terror in Chile,” “Betrayal of the generals,” “Chilean tragedy” or “Chile: Accusation and a Warning” and similar others have some informative value).

Yet neither media reports nor those publications, as we can see from close examination, naturally have not been completely false, but only emphasized the certain information and also some concealing. However, probably even more interesting point is, that until 1970 was to Chile – despite the significant and with (at least regional) influence and strength of Communist Party of Chile (Partido Comunista de Chile, PCCh) – devoted relatively little space, and during 1971 Czechoslovak regime started a systematical effort to create a feeling of harmony and emotional ties with the people of Chile readers.

But even some of the current scholarly work published in the former so-called Eastern Bloc sometimes tends to simplify the relations of Czechoslovakia (or other socialist countries of Central-Eastern Europe) and Chile, respectively, viewed it from (almost a pure) doctrinal or propaganda standpoint. They do not have too great a willingness to examine policy hidden behind the rhetoric, at the politics it looks mechanically and interpret it as a “pendant of the Moscow”, and are not willing to perceive different nuances in the foreign relationship of each country of the bloc.

---


2 Cf. for example (in chronological order) Bílí teror v Chile: fakta nelze zamílit (Praha: Rudé právo, 1973); Zrada generálů. Sborník reportáží a dokumentů z Chile (Praha: Rudé právo, 1974); Chilská tragédie: materiály a dokumenty (Praha: Pressfoto, 1975); Chile: An Accusation and a Warning (Prague: Orbis Press Agency, 1979) and many others.

“Socialist experiment” or outright “Chilean road to socialism” (*La via chilena al Socialismo*) (as Allende himself talked about it) took place in a specific – and highly fluid – period of the late 60s and early 70s, when international events have been affected by radicalized generation of leaders of the “Third world”, which not only believed in the usefulness of the struggle for full political and economic independence, but also for the new thinking of world capitalism and world revolution. Of course, there was a reason for that: United States invested in the years 1952 – 1969 for example in Latin America of the sum of amount of $ 7,473 millions of dollars, and at the same time exported from these areas sum of $ 16 billion of dollars. “United States drove out the capital from Chile equivalent to the two times more of capital than was set up during the whole time”.

Ideology in the international relations during the late 60s and early 70s softened and could be during this time be strictly tied to the great power conflict. Confrontation and rivalry superpower was during the 60s and 70s more stable and less acute among the great powers than within societies. But the détente (if, at the same time, we completely reject the the meaningful use of the concept of “Cold War” as a collective label for designating almost the entire second half of the 20th century) however do not have “a one face”. At one level, American Nixon–Kissinger policy sought to temper US engagement in Southeast Asia; at another were explored the possibilities of new relations with China, while USSR was very gently simultaneously reassured, that it was not “anti-Soviet” move.

The end of the first half of the 60s was important period for Soviet policy as well as for the development of internal affairs of the Latin American countries. During the 2nd half of the Khrushchev era (1958–1964) Soviet policy continued in the support of Popular Front strategy, in which important part was taken by Communist parties. Its broad character fit to the communist tactics, which disqualified the use of the armed force in the politics and protecting parliamentary and electoral positions of the regional Communist parties. But if until the end of the Khrushchev leadership this strategy was

---


7 This view was espoused among others by IR lawyer Richard Falk or political scientist and Latin Americanist Richard Fagen. See Richard A. Fagen, “The United States and Chile. Roots and Branches,” *Foreign Affairs* 53, no. 2 (January 1975): 310 – 311.
impeded by the tensions between the USSR and United States, after Khrushchev USSR strived for policy parallel to the “peaceful coexistence”, or détente among the camps.8

So, the relations between the USSR and Latin America countries was dependent not only upon the internal political/economic developments in the USSR, but also upon Soviet global policy and relations with the United States, which reflected important conservative limitations of the “progressive strategy”.9 General Secretary of the CPSU Leonid Brezhnev later (1977) voiced, that “(t)he contest between capitalism and socialism should be decided on the field not on the field of battle (...) but in the spheres of peaceful work”.10

International context of the late 60s and early 70s in general, and the above-mentioned economic dependence of the countries of Latin America (and other countries in different areas) led some recent authors to start talking about the “Inter-American Cold War” (Tanya Harmer) or “Latin America’s Cold War” (Hal Brands). Harmer by the term denote the reality, that the real challenge to the United States’ regional (and secondary its global) power influence came from the leaders like Allende or Castro, than from elites and officials of the USSR and countries of the “Eastern Bloc”. US intervention in Chile was the result of the struggle against Latin Americans, who challenged American agenda.11

From “Revolution in Freedom” to Unidad Popular

On the political-ideological level Czechoslovak view of Chile and of the Unidad Popular coalition corresponded with the one that expressed the Soviet leadership and other countries of so-called Eastern bloc. For countries that have not yet reached a level of development of European socialist states, it was diagnosed and criticized the practice of contemporary imperialism and the “monopoly capital”. The central problem is “imperialist exploitation of underdeveloped economies in many forms (...”). It is

manifested in many forms, investments, industrial, banking and trade activities, in the area of technological control.\textsuperscript{12}

As their Eastern Bloc counterparts Czechoslovak officials considered Chile a “capitalist country dependent on imperialism, controlled by the bourgeoisie, which is structurally associated with foreign capital, and that it cannot solve the current problems, because they are derived from its activities”. Specifically in Chile, according to them, “the American monopolies with complicity of bourgeoisie governments” seized almost all copper, iron, and nitre. It controls foreign trade, dictating economic policy through the International Monetary Fund and other organizations and dominate important industries and services, but also intervene in education, culture, means of communication etc.\textsuperscript{13} In the field of foreign trade, 60 \% of the country’s income depends on copper exports.\textsuperscript{14}

The ruling class, thus meaning the president’s Christian Democratic Party (\textit{Partido Demócrata Cristiano}, PDC), according to Czechoslovak officials, was not able to resist this trend. “Laws are issued for several big capitalists, companies that dominate the national economy and for landowners. The country became a thrall of big businessmen”.\textsuperscript{15}

Czechoslovak officials acknowledged, that the concept of “Revolution in Freedom” of the program of Frei’s government and of Christian Democrats (1964–1970) in general incorporate “broad reform measures” to enable the country to turn to higher degree of social and industrial development of economy. Yet they still criticized process of “chileanization” (and not just it) as something, which was pushed through strong resistance of left-wing forces, and at the same time be convenient for American companies in the country.\textsuperscript{16} Czechoslovak embassy in Santiago informed Prague, that Frei’s policy, including social policy, policy of wages and salaries (and hence inflation), has a major impact on the country’s situation, which is characterized by “considerable stagnation”.\textsuperscript{17}

The only alternative, according to Czechoslovak diplomats positively referring to the Unidad Popular program, was the peoples government “confronted with the goal (…) to launch the construction of socialism in Chile”. Chile, according to the program,

\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{12} AMFA, f. DTS, Chile 1970–1974, Základní rysy programu vlády lidové jednoty, 2.
    \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 1, 2; cf. the same document in AMFA, f. Dokumentace teritoriálních odborů 1953–1989 (Documentation of Territorial Departments 1953–1989) [further DTD], Book No. 9.
    \item \textsuperscript{14} AMFA, f. DTD 1953–1989, Chile, Book No. 9, Hlavní rysy vnitropolitické situace v Chile, 5. 1. 1970, 2.
    \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 2–3. Officials observed, that Frei’s government amplified – in an attempt to strengthen economic development – the country’s debt, which is currently “the most indebted state in the world as compared to the number of inhabitants”.
    \item \textsuperscript{16} AMFA, f. DTD 1953–1989, Chile, Book No. 9, Program Freiovy vlády a jeho naplnění, 5. 1. 1970, 1.
    \item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 4–5.
\end{itemize}
has more than 3 million workers and their connections with other people “can overthrow the existing regime and liberate itself”. The revolutionary changes could be realized only through the taking the power over by the Chileans.\textsuperscript{18} Unidad Popular coalition victory in early September 1970 general election allowed, according to Czechoslovak officials, to leftist forces, and their candidate claiming allegiance to Marxism-Leninism, to gain power by constitutional and peaceful way.\textsuperscript{19} So Allende tried to “break out from the influence and the dictate of North American capital” and Czechoslovakia wanted to help him to win over the domestic and foreign reaction.\textsuperscript{20}

Regarding the nature of the Unidad Popular and partly its program too, Czechoslovak officials were much more ambivalent. They were during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} half of 1969 and 1\textsuperscript{st} half of 1970 frequently and extensively informed by the embassy in Santiago about the process of coalition formation and well aware that the consensus on Allende as presidential candidate was the result of a longer and difficult process of negotiations between leftist parties and groups. It is possible to say that the Czechoslovak Unidad Popular support was unqualified in the regard, that UP express opinions and priorities shared by the PCCh, and therefore the international communist movement, of which PCCh was inseparable and integral part. Diplomats of Embassy in Santiago argued, that party consensus on a single candidate of Unidad Popular, is the result of “tactical indefatigable work of CPCh”. At the same time, they mentioned, that he do not have, however, guaranteed wholehearted support of some important groups of radical parties, namely of Independent Popular Action (\textit{Acción Popular Independiente}, API) and of Social Democrats (\textit{Social Democráta}, PSD). Czechoslovak authorities therefore identified themselves with Unidad Popular, or at least accepted it, in the sense that it was the “strategic objective of the PC, for which it won allies, and set out the conditions”.\textsuperscript{21} They reflected the idea that it was the PCCh, which played a decisive role in forming a coalition of the Popular Unity and “led principled struggle for the realization of its program. After all, as observed officials at the embassy in Santiago, the program of the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{18} AMFA, f. DTS, Chile 1970–1974, Základní rysy programu vlády lidové jednoty, 4, 5.
\bibitem{19} AMZV, f. DTD Chile 1953–1989, Book No. 13, Základní informace, 5.
\bibitem{21} Embassy staff report observed that Chilean CP originally assumed that the candidate Allende passes smoothly and will be approved before Christmas 1969, but that did not happen, because of “the obstinate resistance of radicals and API.” AMFA, f. DTS Chile 1970–1974, Dodatek k naší 06/70 z 20. 1. 1970 /formování lidové jednoty/, 22. 1. 1970, 1. Cf. ibid., Informace o stavu formování lidové jednoty, 20. 1. 1970, 1, 3.
\end{thebibliography}
Unidad Popular was “essentially a proposal, which was put forward and approved by XIV. Congress of the PC of Chile”.\(^{22}\) According to them, “it is undeniable that the influence of KS Chile rose.” XIV. Congress they were calling it “the most significant event in the life of the communist parties of South America”, “the biggest congress in the whole history of the party.”\(^{23}\)

Attitude Czechoslovak officials to PCCh least partly contrasted with their attitude towards the Unidad Popular and certain of its other components, especially in the later period. The establishment of people’s power would not “in any event not to weaken those efforts, whether differences of opinion and approach other leftist parties are whatever.”\(^{24}\) The Socialist Party, although numerically strong, “suffer mainly from a lack of organization, decision-making and spontaneity of some disagreements within the management, which often lead to the formation of groups that stand against each other in substantial contradictions.”\(^{25}\)

It is not surprising that opinion Czechoslovak officials was identical with the interpretation representatives PCCh, for example its secretary general Louis Corvallán, that “it’s not possible to appear two or more approaches to such weighty issues such as the issue of various kinds of ownership, the problem of supply and other”.\(^{26}\) On the contrary, before the parliamentary elections in March 1973 officials positively commented the situation, that The Revolutionary Left Movement (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria, MIR), whose support of other groups represented 4–10% of the votes, failed to get into the government at the expense of a decline PCCh votes.\(^{27}\) Officials even referred to the polls, according to which “detailed program [program of the Unidad Popular, 1970] borders with lack of transparency”, and to the public concern, that the concept of government as a collegiate folk “goes against tendencies that want to strengthen the authority of the central power.”\(^{28}\)

---


\(^{23}\) AMFA, f. DTD, Chile 1953–1989, Book No. 9, XIV. Sjezd KS Chile, 15. 1. 1970, 1, 2.

\(^{24}\) AMFA, f. DTD, Chile 1953–1989, Book No. 9, XIV. Sjezd KS Chile, 2.


\(^{27}\) AMZV, f. DTD Chile 1953–1989, Book No. 13, Stručná charakteristika současné situace, 8, 9.

\(^{28}\) AMFA, f. DTD, Chile 1953–1989, Book No. 9, Základní rysy programu vlády lidové jednoty, 15.
Policy of the Eastern Bloc and Chile's internal politics

It seemed possible that Chile would be the new Latin American player in the politics of the socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc. It was to be expected that the new Chilean government will receive the support of the countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (RVHP, further as COMECON). Of course, there was precedent of the Cuba, which in the early 60s took the path of socialism and obtained only from the Soviet Union in the years 1967 – 1972 amount of $ 4,14 billions of economic aid.29

But, as stated above, Soviet policy after Khrushchev’s death has changed significantly. At the beginning of the 70s it was based on doctrinal assessment of the development in noncapitalist countries on the basis of two stage theory of development, as formulated by leading expert on the Third World policy R. A. Ulyanovsky approximately one year after Allende came to power in Moscow’s based journal International Affairs. If Cuba reached the second stage of “socialist construction”, as it achieve the peoples democracies of Eastern Europe, Chile was still on the first, “non-capitalist road of development”. Ulyanovsky diagnosed political power in Chile as represented by coalition of working class and bourgeoisie, which strived to peculiarly strengthen the state sector through nationalization of industry.30 In this context, it was further limited amount of “gratis” USSR aid provided to developing countries, which was during Khrushchev successors further reduced from $ 870 million (1970) to $ 750 million in 1973.31

New attitude toward what is happening in the developing world is also evident from the observations of Czechoslovak officials. They – very optimistically – assumed, that “(...) if further development will be undisturbed, the building of socialism will be diametrically different from the Cuban way. It will resemble in its form rather socialist countries of Europe and the center of gravity of national-liberation struggle in South America will move from Peru to Chile.”32

---


32 AMFA, f. DTD 1953–1989, Chile, Book No. 9, Chile po volbách 4. 9. 1970, 5; cf. also ibid., Současná společenská a hospodářská struktura Chile, 8.
As early as at the end of November 1970, three weeks after Allende’s inauguration, Czechoslovak officials declared the need of some “conception of development relationship with Chile”.

According to FMFA officials, Chile reached “qualitative change in its perspectives (…), political development and the whole foreign policy orientation”. However, relationship developed slowly, possibly no so much due to Czechoslovak bureaucracy and its caution, but because of chaos in offices in Santiago in the period of transition to power and because Allende and his associates initially focused on the situation inside the country.

Strengthening of economic competition between the countries of Western and Central Eastern Europe, Japan, China and the Soviet Union provided to the countries of Latin America opportunity in the medium run to diversify external financial resources and thus weaken economic ties and dependence on the United States (and hence their political influence in the region). As US intelligence predicted, Allende actually explored the possibility of extending economic relations with communist and socialist countries, but due to his nationalism was careful not to subordinate interests of the country to no power (or completely severed relations with capitalist states).

Even Chinese officials warned Chilean leaders in a later period (Chou En Lai in letter to Allende in January 1973) that “it is dangerous to rely too much on foreign aid, especially (...) great powers”. Third World countries “must lean on their own strength and external help understand as supplemental measure”.

Chile, however, could succeed in reducing dependence only, that it would found other sources of supply. However, as the economic situation began to deteriorate significantly during 1972, the country started much more to seek foreign aid. United States cut off almost all short-term loans, which fell from $ 240 mil. to $ 30 million in October 1972. While in 1969 there was a trade surplus of CZK 245 million, in 1972 it...
was already a deficit of $427 million, while import food into the country has tripled. Debt totaled $4.2 billion, while $3.8 billion of which were just long-term loans.  

During his December 1972 trip to Moscow Allende asked Soviet officials for untied convertible currency credits or commodity assistance. Although Soviet officials did not refuse to help, instead USSR granted more long-term credits, largely to finance the Soviet's imports of machineries and equipment. Since Chile had at that time a small figure of hard currency, it contributed little to solve its economic and political problems of the country. Czechoslovak diplomats stated in their report, that “it is increasingly recognized, but also the expected aid from the Soviet Union and the socialist countries.” Agreements that president Allende concluded in Moscow “are highly appreciated, and yet the assistance provided is accepted with gratitude.”

Apart from that there is at least one interesting interest point in the Soviet attitude to the regime apart from that of caution and restraint during the overtures, and it is that Soviets urged Allende during his 1972 visit of Moscow to negotiate differences with United States. Some similar comments and recommendations we may read in Czechoslovak documents.

Features of the Czechoslovak-Chilean economic cooperation

Czechoslovak officials undoubtedly seek to improve the situation in the field of mutual trade, many reports contained rather skepticism about the possibilities of increasing of Chilean exports to Czechoslovakia, whether due to its cost, technical requirements or other factors. Paradoxically, Czechoslovak trade with Chile reached its highest point not during the Allende or the 60s, but in 1928, with the volume about CSK 100 mil.: officials

---

42 Covert Action in Chile, 47, 48. The report stated, that “(t)this was, in part, due to Soviet reluctance to antagonize the U.S. and, more importantly, a Soviet desire to avoid with Allende the type of open-ended commitment for aid that they had entered into with Castro. (…) Allende’s December visit to the USSR, reflected Moscow’s decision to continue a cautious policy toward Chile and to avoid a major open-ended commitment of aid to Allende. According to the Intelligence Note, the Soviets apparently advised Allende to negotiate his differences with the U.S."
explained it by higher purchases of Chilean saltpeter for the needs of Czechoslovak agriculture, which already were not repeated after the Second World War.\textsuperscript{43}

Czechoslovakia took the first steps to strengthen mutual economic relations even during Frei presidency. At the beginning of 1968 the Czechoslovak Trade Bank (CSTB, CSOB) concluded loan agreement with the Chilean Corporación de Fomento de la Producción (CORFO), e. g. state institution for development and production, on loan in the amount of $ 5,000,000 and duration of 8 years.\textsuperscript{44} This loan corresponded with the rule in relations with countries in Latin America from the second half of the 60s, under which Czechoslovakia did not offer government loans, but only loans from banks and businesses. All loans provided to Chile in the years 1968–1973 were thus non-state loans.\textsuperscript{45}

But the “economic internationalism” and the support of the development of Chilean economy got a crack even before Allende achieved the power. Ambassador Miloš Veselý during the interview in February 1970 with member of the Central Committee of PCCh Orlando Millas, informed him, that the Czechoslovak side (as communicated by the Minister of the Education) “is not interested in participation in further cooperation” in the construction of technical education in Puente Alto. Ambassador conveyed the view of the Ministry that it “considers (...) matter closed and that it is possible to solve a commercial basis” (my italics). Millas replied, that Czechoslovak decision not to supply equipment to the school “will have very unpleasant Consequences” and even “may have political implications”, because other countries supplying equipment free of charge. According to Millas, “may be pointed out that the socialist countries are not helping to developing countries, but only carry a trade”.\textsuperscript{46}

After Allende took the office, officials repeated that is “urgent political task to study” how to broaden Chilean export to Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia did first step, nearly in the same time as USSR, in June 1971, by approving “The Conception of business and economic relations with Chile”, which was proposed early in the May that

\textsuperscript{43} AMZV, f. DTD Chile 1953–1989, Book No. 9, Dopis Dezidera Bukovinského (vedoucího 10. odboru Ministerstva zahraničního obchodu Stanislavu Svobodovi (vedoucímu 6. odboru Ministerstva zahraničních věcí), 27. 2. 1970, 1, 2.

\textsuperscript{44} AMFA, f. DTS Chile 1970–1974, Návrh koncepce rozvoje politických, hospodářských, obchodních a kulturních styků, 12. Cf. Archive of the Czechoslovak Trade Bank; AMFA and NA.


\textsuperscript{46} AMFA, f. DTD 1945–1979, Chile, Book No. 9, Rozhovor s členem předsednictva ÚV KSCH s. ORLANDO MILLASEM, Santiago, 12. 3. 1970, 1, 2. Millas argued that “the Soviets, Bulgarians and Hungarians have their own schools, which support.” These claims Veselý finally rejected as unfounded, since the “Czechoslovak side added to their costs throughout the school project and did everything it could under its current capabilities. Compliance with commercial lines might bring the project to the end.”
Nevertheless the principal economic initiatives in mutual relations, particularly in the later period, were on the demand of the Chilean government. It was Allende, who initiated visit of Chilean governmental delegation in European socialist countries in May 1971. And it was Chileans who encouraged 1st meeting of Czech-Chilean mixed commission in November 1972 in Prague and strived for some new loans for and even for credits during second half of 1972 and 1973.

Several weeks before the Allende took the office, staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) together with the staff of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade (FMFT) considered “the broader framework of possibilities of mutually beneficial exchange of goods”. In the year 1970, in which Allende assumed office, they expected that Czechoslovak export to Chile reached of amount of the amount of $ 2,000,000.

Czechoslovak officials shared almost the same traditional view of the economic relations as Soviet officials at this time. They intended to assess opportunities in the Chilean market, according to the speed, with which the government would implement its economic program, and secondly, according to a degree of possibility and determination to carry out all-round relations on the part of Chile.

“Conception” of mutual relations stressed the need to “preserve trade relations on the basis of free convertible currency, with reciprocal profitability”. According to Czechoslovak officials, it will allow “more operative and effective using of mutual trade balance to promote our [e.g. Czechoslovak] export and import interests” (my italics). Officials from Prague repeated that principle during the 1st meeting of the Czechoslovak-Chilean mixed commission, when Chilean economic situation was much worse than in

---

47 In the next text it will be referred only as “Conception”.
48 Text of the “Conception” (1971) stated, that had Allende’s government has “extraordinary interest” in the cooperation in economic area. AMFA, f. DTS Chile 1970–1974, Návrh koncepce rozvoje politických, hospodářských, obchodních a kulturních styků, 9, 9–10.
49 Národní archiv (National Archive, Prague) [hereafter NA], Archiv ÚV KSČ (Archive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) [hereafter ACCCPC], f. 1261/0/5, Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ 1966–1971 (Presidium CC CPC 1971–1976), Box 166, archivní jednotka (archive unit) [hereafter a.u.] 246/5, Návštěva a jednání chilské vládní delegace v ČSSR. Usnesení předsednictva ÚV KSČ, 12. květen 1971, 1; Důvodová zpráva, (…).
52 NA, f. FMFT, Department 11 DC, Box 8, Perspektivy československo-chilských hospodářských styků, 14. 1. 1971, (…).
On the contrary, Chilean officials stressed, for example during the visit of foreign secretary Bohuslav Chňoupek’s in Santiago in October 1972, that without “solidarity, support and help of socialist countries, especially USSR (…) would scarcely be solved serious situation of the country”.

As precedent for a new economic agreement was mentioned the contract of CTB with CORFO (1968). But if, as stated above, the relations should be mutually beneficial, the main objective of the new agreements was to support Czechoslovak export, to “create preconditions for broader Czechoslovak penetration into Latin America” (my italics).

Contracts concluded with Allende’s administration thus predominantly pursue this goal – be mutually beneficial and should generally ensure the purchase of Czechoslovak equipment and goods; naturally contracts had to be repaid by Chileans. The core of Czechoslovak loans consisted of three agreements between the CTB and the Banco Central de Chile on $3,000,000, $5,000,000 and $20,000,000 million. They allowed the purchase of consumer goods, chemicals, medications as well as machinery and substitute parts for the public and private sector. These contracts were concluded for a period of 1 or 5 – 8 years and the interest rate was generally low, between 3 – 6 %, at least compared with the rates provided by the United States, which ranged around 10 %.

The Czechoslovak side was not completely satisfied with the mutual cooperation, among other reasons, because of the postponed repayment on the side of Chile. Representatives of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia (SBCS) during April 1972, when negotiations on a contract extension with CORFO took place, suggested – against the

54 Czechoslovak officials “made it clear” to Chileans that “most appropriate” is to “maintain trade on the basis of free convertible currencies”. Cf. AMZV, f. DTD Chile 1953–1989, Book 13, Zpráva o výsledcích I. zasedání Smíšené československo-chilské komise, 1, 2, my italics.


57 NA, f. Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu (Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade) [hereafter FMFT], odbor (department) 11 Rozvojové země (Developing Countries) [hereafter Department 11 DC], Box 8, Instrukční dopis – CHILE, Federální ministerstvo zahraničního obchodu pro vedoucího obchodního oddělení, (…), 2.

58 (…). However, it should be noted that China provided to Chile some interest-free loans.
opinion of FMFA officials – that they will not support its extension. 59 Similar problems have been encountered during the negotiations of Chilean delegation with CSTB.

Principal tenets of Czechoslovak-Chilean trade were formulated in the mutual Commercial treaty, which was signed in November 1971 in Santiago, and the Treaty of technical assistance, which both represented the core document of the relations during Allende administration. 60 However it must be emphasized that the content of these agreements was essentially not different from contracts concluded at the same time with regimes ideologically much more distant, as was for example, contract with Bolivia’s military regime of Hugo Banzer (1971–1978) signed in September 1972 – except that Bolivia was not a member of GATT, the terms of such agreements were in principle the same. 61

Bilateral trade in the period before Allende reached its peak in 1968, when its turnover was (only) CSK 14,000,000. Although the volume during the Allende has risen, it was not a dramatic increase compared with the period of Frei’s presidency: in 1972 the turnover amounted to CSK 8,000,000, while in the last Allende’s year reached the level of CSK 22,000,000. If the Czechoslovak loans had to support mutual trade, credits had not helped too much to its growth. Allende’s administration had not fully utilized even the older credit agreement with CORFO (1968) and of the two subsequent smaller loans (on $ 3 million and $ 5 million) Chileans have drawn much less – less than $ 100,000 in both cases. 62

If the total amount of Czechoslovak loans to Chile in late 1973 reached to approximately $ 35 million (Soviets in the same borrowed to Chile an amount in the range between $ 183 and 261 million 63 ), the Chileans really have used only small part of it, around $ 9,000,000 and most of it remained unpaid. 64 Besides the countries of Latin America, the countries of so called Eastern bloc were a key provider of long-term loans

\[59\] NA, f. FMFT, Department 11 DC, Box 37, Prodloužení platnosti úvěrové dohody ČSOB – CORFO, Dopis Státní banky československé Federálnímu ministerstvu zahraničního obchodu, 18. 4. 1972, 1; other letter.

\[60\] (…); NA, ACC CPC, f. 1261/0/6, Presidium CC CPC 1971–1976, Box 79, a.u. 76/k info, Dojednanie Dohody o kulturnej a vedeckej spolupráci medzi vládou ČSSR a vládou Republiky Chile, 1.

\[61\] Cf. NA, ACC CPC, f. 1261/0/6, Presidium CC CPC 1971–1976, Box (…) a.u. (…), Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 29. března 1973 o schválení obchodní dohody s Bolívií a dohod o vedeckotechnické spolupráci s Bolívií a Kostarikou, (…)

\[62\] From the loan to CORFO Chileans have used approximately the sum of $ 3,800,000, less than 4/5 of the amount. NA, FMFT, Department 11 DC, Box 8, Obchodní styky s Chilskou republikou, 10. 2. 1976, 1.


\[64\] NA, FMFT, Department 11 DC, Box 8, Obchodní styky s Chilskou republikou, 1. (…). In the period after the onset of Pinochet dictatorship Czechoslovak debt became in the 1975–1976 and later subject of mutual negotiations and enforcement.
to Allende, which amounted to sum around $ 500 million. However, at the time of the
coup almost the entire sum has not been paid to Chile.65

**Conclusion. Czechoslovakia and Chile, internationalism, or selfishness?**

Czechoslovak policy towards Chile during the government of Salvador Allende (1970–
1973) is a special probe into Czechoslovak relations with so called “Third world” (if we
assign to it Latin American countries too). The specificity of this theme lies in the relative
uniqueness of the Chilean experience in the context of the time, and for example in
geographical distance of Chile from the countries of Eastern Bloc too.

First, it is necessary to ask questions about the role of the USSR (and Communist
Party of Soviet Union) in political preferences and choices of the countries/parties of
Eastern Bloc: this is one of the fundamental issues of the study of the Cold War history,
or more exactly of the 2nd half of the 20th century. In the agenda of many meetings of
the Presidium of the Central Committee of CPC were included information sent by the
Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU CC). In the
documents are recurring references to the fact that the Czechoslovak policy was “closely
consulted” with the USSR and other COMECON members.66 But actually was the
influence of the USSR so central and crucial, as is usually emphasized? What was the role
played by “minority” parties of Eastern Bloc, if the almost all central decisions were
collective of decision made at the meetings of communist parties or meetings of
COMECON countries?67 How influenced were the decisions of individual countries by
the fact, that especially in post-Khrushchev period, the parties began to behave in
economically pragmatic way and accepted common practice of economic policy?

This problem is linked to the second question, whether – despite the above
mentioned party consultations – is possible considered the policy of the countries of
Eastern bloc in relation to Chile uniform, or whether individual countries reflected a
different priorities and interests. I ask because I’m interested just in these specific
political differences and different preferences among socialist countries. These
differences can be found not only during the time of Allende’s government, but also in
the time after its overthrow. Czechoslovakia as most other (not all) member countries of

---

65 Alan Angel, “Chile since 1958,” in *Chile since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2003), 167.

66 AMFA, f. DTS Chile 1970–1974, Návrh koncepce rozvoje politických, hospodářských, obchodních a
kulturních styků, 16–17.

67 One of the key discussion of the late 60s and early 70s relating about the situation in the Third World
countries was meeting of the representatives of 45 Communist and workers’ parties in Budapest in
September 1970, which focused on current problems in the anti-imperialist struggle. Cf. also *Dokumenty
COMECON considerably restricted its trade and economic relations and completely terminate political relations with the country Chile after the coup. Still, the later for example appeared information, that the German Democratic Republic developing in Chile “substantial business activities”.  

Third, for some contemporary scholarly work perceive bilateral and multilateral relations of socialist countries with the countries of the Third World in the 2nd half of the 20th century, as I wrote elsewhere, according to “too neat” typology, in terms of “friend – enemy” distinction. Unfortunately, it obscures the real content of relationship for which it was often typical pragmatism or for example skepticism too. In the Chilean case, I consider crucial to separate the support and solidarity in the official statements of Czechoslovak regime and its representatives in the media and other public institutions, and content of the actual policy, as is reflected by some archive documents.

Fourth issue related to the very concept of the “Cold War”, as have been discussed in the beginning, was formulated for example by Halliday (on behalf of the Middle East), that despite the Cold War, “to a considerable degree the states and social movements of the region also pursued individual policies”. So we could ask about the extent, to which the policy of Latin American countries, namely Chile (and Unidad Popular coalition), retained its independent on the policy of the Great Powers?

The fifth and the last question is central theme of this text, and it is how to evaluate the Czechoslovak policy towards Allende’s Chile in terms of political internationalism, which was so often part of public proclamations of elites of the Eastern Bloc and its loyal mass media?

It can be assumed that, although the political support of Czechoslovakia and particularly its economic aid to Allende’s government was (as was the Soviet aid) significant in some respects, it was far from being adequate and really generous. This support was not quite adequate to the needs of Chile and more – it arrived late. Czechoslovak loans (as Soviet loans) were far from exhausted, or rather were used minimally. Soviet officials and many Czechoslovak officials supposed, that country is not

---


ready for full-scale revolution. Apart from recommendations to political moderation and cautious tactic (and to avoid alienation of middle class), they did little to help to survive of the allied regime. Could Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and other COMECON countries to do more for the survival of the socialist Chile? Could we call the Czechoslovak policy a truly internationalist?