The Chilean Catholic Church under Authoritarianism

A Study in Strategic Unity as Exemplified by Archbishop Silva

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Honor Code Upheld

Chile tiene una alma... Y en esta hora de acción de gracias por una herencia que nos enaltece, nos estremece también la esperanza.Chile, quiere seguir siendo Chile... Un formidable ímpetu de reencuentro y reconciliación surge y quisiera imponerse entre nosotros... *-Don Raul Silva Henriquez*

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Part I: Introduction

Archbishop Raul Silva Henriquez exemplifies the true catholicism of Catholicism. Conventional Chilean historiography refers to Chile's 'two churches' during Augusto Pinochet's authoritarian regime. It focuses on the division between the accommodating conservative elements in the upper level of the hierarchy and the social justice-oriented liberal elements in the lower levels of the hierarchy. However, not enough attention has been paid to the degree of universality that the Church was able to maintain. While there was a definite split in priorities within the Chilean church and a dangerously close division, unity was maintained. The Church would not have survived as an institution if it had not been for the fundamental degree of compromise underlying the political differences within Chilean Catholicism. Pinochet's violent dictatorship was a true test of the Church's claim to universality. A close analysis of Bishop Silva's careful strategy of compromise provides understanding, example, and metaphor for this test of the catholicism of Cathocism.

Faced with the difficult decision of whether to support the regime in power or stand up for the rights of the oppressed masses, the Chilean Church experienced a near split between conservative upper levels of the hierarchy and progressive lower levels of the hierarchy. Archbishop Silva served as a moderating force between the two factions and pursued a careful balance between protecting the Church's survival under the dictatorship and maintaining the Church's relevancy to oppressed Catholics. His diplomacy is a useful lens for understanding the choices made by the institutional Church during Chile's authoritarian regime.

Pinochet gained power in 1973 in a coup that followed a period of rapid democratization that had culminated in Salvador Allende's socialist democracy. In response to society's new focus on equality during this period, the Church developed a progressive social doctrine that sided with the oppressed masses who had gained power for the first time. When the military junta took power, the Church suddenly had to choose between its new democratic ideals and its historic Latin American strategy of siding with the group in power. Its indecision resulted in a painfully divided compromise between two clearly opposed sides of the Church hierarchy. The upper echelon of the hierarchy, by remaining generally cooperative with the military regime, ensured institutional

survival. The lower echelon of the hierarchy, by opposing the regime, kept the Church relevant to the masses that would someday regain power. The disunity within the Chilean hierarchy allowed for new and necessary flexibility that ensured both the Church's institutional and popular survival under authoritarian rule. However, it was the careful strategy of Archbishop Silva that maintained the necessary unity that allowed the Church to utilize its internal factionalization to survive both the aggression of the dictatorship and the needs of its congregation, and ultimately maintain a critical degree of unity.

Part II: Shifting Church Roles

For most of its history, the Catholic Church's institutional survival depended on its alliance with power elites. As the Chilean power structure evolved from the Spanish monarchy to a landowners' oligarchy to democracy, the Church adapted its political alliances in accordance with the changing political sphere, although there was always some internal dissonance. So long as Chile followed the expected pattern of transition from an authoritarian regime to an oligarchy to a democracy, the Church's role was clear. However, when its government suddenly regressed back to authoritarianism, the Church needed to reexamine its place in politics.

The dawn of the twentieth century saw the Chilean Church significantly weakened politically. Its previous centuries of being allied with the crown, and then with the ruling oligarchs, were drawing to a quick close. The Church's legal separation from government in the Constitution of 1925, combined with the rapid growth of democracy, necessitated a true revolution in the way the Church conceived of its political alliances. The Church was dependent on support and protection from civil and military authorities, along with the wealthy landowning class that had once controlled the Chilean government and economy. However, with industrialization in the 1930s came a stronger working class. The masses of Chile suddenly had many more opportunities and became much more assertive of their economic and political rights. They formed unions, organized themselves to elect progressive leaders, sought education, and, in short, posed

a very real threat to the old order of elite sectors.[1] It was clear that the very structure of Chile was changing, but the Church found itself in a highly compromised position, with one foot in the past and the other in the future.

As it became clear that the masses of Chile were organizing themselves to become the new national power structure, the Church's influence declined steadily along with that of conservative landowners. As peasants became more educated, they were exposed to alternatives to traditional political and religious ideologies. Marxism gained popularity after the Second World War, and Protestantism presented itself as a refreshing alternative to the elitist Catholic Church.[2] As the Church grew increasingly weaker through the 1940s and 1950s, the number of clergy also declined. By 1960, there was only one priest for every four thousand Catholics in Chile. Diocese became so large that it became very difficult for clergy to gather or attend to multiple parishes.[3] The Church's lessening influence, along with the growing alternatives to Catholicism, made it clear to the upper ecclesiastical echelon that its role needed to shift.

The Church's transition to an alliance with the masses was gradual. Its relationship with conservative elites grew more tenuous, but never completely ended. From the 1930s through the 1950s, progressive elements within the church gradually consolidated because of new Vatican policies, an influx of highly educated European priests, and an increase in lay Church involvement.

In 1939, the cardinal who would soon become Pope Pius XII wrote a letter to Chilean bishops declaring that any Catholic could support any party and that no party could speak for all Catholics. He encouraged a new separation of church and state and called for new Catholic Action programs that would promote lay understanding and commitment to changing social teachings. Although the Chilean hierarchy had previously been aligned with the Conservative party, in response to Roman pressures, Chilean bishops and cardinals also embraced the removal of the Church from politics and began

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[1] Bouvier, Virginia Marie. *Alliance or Compliance: Implications of the Chilean Experience for the Catholic Church in Latin America.* (Syracuse University: Foreign and Comparative Studies / Latin American Series, No. 3, 1983), 13.
[2] Bowers, Stephen R. "Pinochet's Plebescite and the Catholics: The Dual Role of the Chilean Church. *World Affairs.* Vol. 151, Issue 2. (Fall, 1988). 51.
[3] Bouvier, 13.

stressing ecclesiastical neutrality and the rights of individual voters' political opinions.[4] The Vatican stressed that social inequity was caused by greed and individualism, rather than capitalism itself, and called for the search for a "common good," rather than class struggle or socialism. The Vatican also began sending highly educated European clergy to Chile in response to the priest shortage. Many of those clergy were influenced by European secular liberalism. They spread progressive ideas through Catholic universities and set up new programs designed to educate the laity.[5] Lay people began forming their own religious organizations, many of which were highly focused on social justice and progressive politics.[6]

The formation of the Christian Democrats in 1942 marked the beginning of a new generation of Catholic intellectuals seeking a political movement to echo the new social doctrine of the church.[7] It was originally formed within the Conservative party by a group of Catholic university students because at that time, the Conservative party was the only legitimate Chilean Catholic party.[8] However, after a few years, it broke into an autonomous movement called the National Falange because of Conservative reluctance to push Catholic social justice through political action.[9] The Falange Nacional emphasized labor laws and economic reform. Lower level clergy in the party became very active in aiding rural farmers' unions in their fights for workers' rights and increases in wages. This precipitated the party's final break with the Conservative party, which was highly anti-union. Just as Rome and the Chilean episcopate embraced an official separation of church and state, Chilean lay people embraced their new political freedom and believed that changing social doctrines were a reason to increase Catholic political action.[10]

To understand the shifting political involvement and alliances of the Church, it is important to acknowledge the shift in the sources of the Chilean Church's concern. The Church's fear of liberals had changed to a deep-set fear of communism and socialism.

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[4] Ibid. 24.
[5] Lomnitz, Larissa Adler and Ana Melnick. *Chile's Political Culture and Parties.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000). 47-48.
[6] Scully, Timothy R. *Rethinking the Center: Party Politics in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Chile.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). 115.
[7] Ibid. 15
[8] Ibid. 115
[9] Lomnitz. 53-54.
[10] Bouvier. 24.

The Vatican considered communism to be the antithesis of Catholicism because of its focus on materialism instead of spirituality.[11] Cuba's communist revolutionary government's closing down of churches confirmed many clergy's worst fears. Some more radical Catholics were encouraged by the new alternative to capitalism for reducing poverty, but as a whole, the Church was officially very opposed to communism.[12]

As communism spread across Latin America, the poor masses of many countries leapt at the chance to support an alternative society. In 1955, at the first Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) in Rio de Janeiro, the growing popularity of Atheistic Communism was officially declared one of the top threats to Catholicism. The bishops sought to reinstate the cultural authority of the church, and re-Catholicize the people by creating a new sense of Catholic mission. It needed to make itself relevant to the poor masses, who were rapidly gaining democratic power and looking to change the very structure of Chilean society.[13] The Church, which was closely identified with the interests of private property because of its previous connections to the Conservative party, could not afford to be seen anti-social justice.[14]

To relate the masses, the Catholic Church needed to create an alternative to communism. At CELAM, the bishops officially created a social justice strategy that consisted of Christian trade unions, cooperatives, literacy campaigns, women's groups, peasant organizations, and Catholic centers for social research.[15] This came from the idea that if the conditions of inequality and poverty caused by capitalism could be eliminated, people would no longer be attracted to socialism. Capitalism was still considered to be a better option than socialism, but the hierarchy began highlighting the dangers of unrestrained industrialization.[16] Many factions of the Church also began supporting new leftist political parties based on Christian social teachings to provide a more Church-friendly alternative to the communist parties.[17]

The Christian Democrats rapidly gained popularity. Not only was the party Christian, and thus socially relatable to most of the Chilean electorate, but it was

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[11] Pius XI. "Quadragesimo Anno." Libreria Editrice Vaticana. (5/15/93).
[12] Bouvier. 15-16.
[13] Ibid. 15-16.
[14] Scully. 72.
[15] Bouvier 16.
[16] Pius XI.
[17] Bouvier. 16.

perceived as the only viable alternative to the growing Marxist parties.[18] Members did not want to be seen as one more divided offshoot of either the right of the left, but claimed that its ideology was an entirely new ideology in the middle ground, or a "third option," called Communitarian Socialism. They believed in promoting the reform of Chilean society while also retaining elements of conservative Christian social doctrine.[19] The Christian Democrats redefined the Chilean class struggle as a fight between marginality and integration, rather than as between workers and employers.[20] Instead of focusing on convincing members of other parties to join theirs, the Christian Democrats formed a primarily new electoral constituency by mobilizing rural and urban peasants who had never before voted.[21]

Although the upper levels of the hierarchy had declared official political neutrality, the Christian Democrats were very careful to develop an ideology that reflected the goals of the Chilean episcopate. Much of the party's ideology was based on old progressive Catholic encyclicals such as Pope Leo's XIII "Rerum Novarum" and Pius XI's "Quadragesimo Anno," as applied to the recent modernization of Chile.[22] These documents outlined the Church's response to industrialization and the spread of communism. They were critical of both capitalism, for putting the right of property over the importance of the common good, and socialism, for being oppressive to the individual.[23] They also recognized workers' rights to unionize, encouraged representative democracy, and rejected conflict and class struggle.[24]

By 1960, the Christian Democrats were popularly known to reflect the opinions of Chilean bishops and the party had a powerful Catholic following. This was helped by new progressive actions by the bishops, such as redistributing diocesan land in the Church's first official attempt at agrarian reform in 1961, and by the new creation of many Church institutions designed to organize the political action of the masses.[25] This

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[18] Scully. 147.
[19] Siavelis, Peter M. *The President and Congress in Postauthoritarian Chile.* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). 119.
[20] Lomnitz. 59.
[21] Scully. 148.
[22] Ibid. 148.
[23] Pius XI.
[24] Leo XIII. "Rerum Novarum." (The Vatican, 1891).
[25] Scully. 149.

may seem contrary to the Church's efforts to separate church from state and declare political neutrality, but the Church's stance on political action changed with its growing fear of the rapid spread of communism. In 1952, the socialist presidential candidate, Salvador Allende, had received just 5.4% of the vote, but in 1958, he lost by fewer than 35,000 votes. At this point, the panicked Vatican, along with the US government, began funneling a great deal of money to the Falange Nacional to support Catholic organizations of peasants, workers, women, and students in an effort to offset the growth of socialism.[26] The Church still wanted separation between church and state, but justified using its powerful influence in politics as a response to the great threat of atheistic Marxism.

It was this politically active Church that Raul Silva Henriquez inherited when he became Archbishop of Chile. He was chosen by Pope John XXIII, who was known for his progressive social justice teachings, call for Catholic activism, and focus on the rights of workers.[27] Silva was chosen as bishop of Valparaiso in 1959. In 1961, the pope declared him archbishop of Santiago, making him Primate of the Church in Chile, and by 1962, he was named a cardinal.[28] This rapid series of promotions was probably in large part because Silva's focus on social justice as the best combatant to communism was so in line with the pope's own teachings.[29]

John XXIII called the Second Vatican Council to be held from 1962-1965 in an effort to redefine the Church's role in the modern world and respond to the growth of communism. He died very soon after it began, but his successor, Paul VI, had a similar reformist vision. Vatican II was attended by more than 700 Latin American bishops, including Silva.[30] During the meetings of the upper levels of the Church hierarchy of each country, the Church developed a new strategy of social justice, openness, and democratization to address global causes of poverty and injustice. It determined that the Church needed to become more open to involvement in social issues in defense of the poor, encourage more than charity and resignation, facilitate lay movements, allow a greater diversity of opinions in the church, enter into greater dialogue with non-Catholics,

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[26] Bouvier. 26.
[27] John XXIII. "Pacem in Terris." (Rome: The Vatican. 1963).
[28] "Latin America: A New Spirit in the Church." *Time.* (1963).
[29] John XXIII.
[30] "Latin America: A New Spirit in the Church."

and give more autonomy and flexibility to lower levels of the hierarchy.[31] To find its new role in the globalized world, the Vatican also decentralized its power to a great extent and gave more power to international and national bishops conferences.[32]

Most importantly perhaps, the Council marked the official end of Catholic desire for union between Church and state and instead defined its role as a judge and voice for morality in government. Most Church scholars mark the Council as the turning point from The Church's legitimizing the status quo to promoting human rights. Second Vatican Council can be viewed as the Church's foremost effort at modernization.[33]

Some important challenges were immediately raised in the aftermath of Second Vatican Council. Because the Church is based on old dogmas and tradition, many Church leaders feared that if the hierarchy was weakened and laity had more power, the very foundation of the Church could be threatened. Also, because Catholics are so variable in their involvement, belief structure, political opinions, and morality, any opinion the Church might take officially could cost it members and support.[34] There was also the question of whether it was actually possible for the Church to extricate itself from its old alliances with elites in all nations.[35] The Church entered into an experimental phase that differed from region to region, with local bishops, priests, and laity testing the waters of this new, 'modern' Church.

In the midst of Second Vatican Council, Silva and the National Bishops Conference of Chile began pushing for social changes including agrarian reform and more equal income distribution. Silva promoted land reform very practically by giving away church land to the poor.[36] The Chilean church also began creating Christian cooperatives, trade unions, technical assistance programs, and base communities to increase the participation of laity.[37]

Along with hierarchical changes, lay people were also shifting toward a more progressive stance. In 1958, most practicing Chilean Catholics identified themselves with the Conservative Party, and by 1964, three fifths of practicing Catholics identified as

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[31] Bouvier. 28.
[32] Ibid. 26.
[33] Smith, Brian H. *The Church and Politics in Chile.* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1982). 5.
[34] Ibid. 5-6
[35] Ibid. 11
[36] "Raul Silva Henriquez." *The Economist.* (1999).
[37] Bouvier 27.

Christian Democrats. The Chilean Church had officially moved from the right to the center, with various parts of the hierarchy veering towards more progressive and conservative sides.[38] Individual clergy opinions had a great deal to do with where they were working. Priests and nuns working in shanty towns often became radicalized by the living conditions they witnessed and became more involved in protests and illegal activism, while clergy serving wealthier people were often more conservative..[39]

In 1968, the Second Conference of Latin American Bishops was held in Medellin to clarify what the Church's official stance regarding social justice should be specifically in Latin America. It was based on the idea of social, political, and economic injustice as 'institutionalized violence.' The bishops attending officially supported liberation theology, which was the new name for the increasingly popular radical social justice teaching based on Catholic responsibility to create a preferential option for the poor. Liberation theology's Marxist undertones had been concerning conservative forces in the Vatican throughout Vatican II, so the bishops in CELAM II were pushing the boundaries of their superiors by officially sanctioning it.

In their Documents on Peace and Justice, the Latin American bishops wrote, "People should be the agents of their own history . . . justice, and therefore peace are won through the dynamic action of the awakening and organization of the popular sects of society which are capable of pressing action by public officials who are often impotent in the carrying out of their social projects without popular support." The Conference marked the most leftist, pro-liberation theology moment of Church history.[40] In fact, the Conference even used some Marxist analyses in its interpretation of social problems. The bishops renewed the Latin American Church's commitment to social justice called for by Second Vatican Council and acknowledged that Christian charity was no longer enough. Action was considered necessary for the radical change that was critical for a true end to institutional violence. CELAM II marked the first official announcement of the Church's moral obligation to the poor. It endorsed many rising Christian groups in Latin America

[38] Scully 150.
[39] Bouvier 25, 27.
[40] Bouvier 17.

including some liberation theology movements, Christian base communities, and socialist Christian groups.[41]

It is important to note that although Silva and the Chilean bishops were active in CELAM II, they were, collectively, much less pro-liberation theology than most of the other Latin American bishops. Silva pushed for social justice but did not see the need for radical political involvement, because despite the nation's inequality, Chile was a stable democracy.[42] In response to CELAM II, many new aid organizations were founded in Chile to provide the poor with alternatives to communism.[43] The Conference, along with Second Vatican Council, marked a new Church acceptance and careful encouragement of Catholic leftist thought, along with a cautious step back into the political arena. Shifting political ideologies would lead the Chilean Church to a new state of political disunity that would appear detrimental but actually ensure its survival under Pinochet's authoritarian regime.

In 1964, Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei was elected the new president of Chile. His victory is in good part attributed to widespread Church support, along with 2.6 million American dollars in financial aid from the CIA, which was concerned about growing socialism in Chile. Many American multinationals, along with the Vatican, supported him because he claimed to want to stop communism. His policies were closely in line with progressive Catholic thought and the Second Vatican Council's calls for reform.[44] He was elected on the promise to find an alternative to socialism and capitalism that he called "a third way."[45] He won the election with an unusually high vote of 56.1%. His supporters were made up of 92% of all practicing white-collar Catholics and 77% of all practicing blue collar Catholics. His election was in great part due to the growing importance of peasantry in elections and his success in appealing to the newly available poor rural electorate, who had become more educated and better able to access the polls because of improved systems of transportation.[46]

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[41] Ibid. 18.
[42] "Raul Silva Henriquez."
[43] Lomnitz 60.
[44] Bouvier 28-29.
[45] Siavelis 119.
[46] Scully 151, 153.

Frei's efforts at being both capitalist and reformist failed, weakening the popularity of the Christian Democrats. He was too moderate and capitalistic for socialists and too radically progressive for conservatives. Many clergy resigned from the party in protest against his failure to improve conditions for the poor Chilean masses.[47] Silva had dinner with Frei regularly, keeping up friendly relations with the government despite widespread Catholic discontent with the president.[48] The Christian Democrats' attempts at building bridges between the increasingly polarized Chilean political system failed miserably and only encouraged further division.[49]

In 1969, many disgruntled Catholics left the Christian Democrat Party and formed a new group called MAPU, or Movement of Unified Popular Action, which would later become part of the Popular Unity Coalition.[50] By 1970, the politics of Chilean Catholics could be divided into four main schools of thought: Catholic popular religiosity, Catholic integralism, liberal progressivism, and liberation theology. Catholic popular religiosity was a syncretization between indigenous and Catholic practices. Catholic integralism refers to right-wing Catholics who favored capitalism, were highly nationalistic, tried to maintain the status quo, opposed agrarian reforms, and received support from the US and Chilean military. Catholic liberal progressives based their political stances on Catholic social doctrines and desired enough reform to avoid a revolution. It was the majority belief of Chilean Catholics and also that of most clergy in the upper levels of the hierarchy. Liberation theology used a Marxist analysis of Latin American history to work from the grass roots to try to replace capitalism with a radical socialist order.[51] Silva was a liberal progressive because he worked for social justice and reform, but was anti-Marxist and not as radical as liberation theologians.

The Church hierarchy struggled to balance this diversity of political opinions within the Church as conflict increased among the opposing factions. The first political action of the new Christian left was a 1968 protest and occupation of the cathedral in Santiago by nine priests and 200 laypeople to denounce Church inaction against social injustice. The leaders of the occupation formed a new liberation theology group called the

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[47] Bouvier 29-30.
[48] "Raul Silva Hernandez."
[49] Siavelis 120.
[50] Bouvier 31.
[51] Ibid. 33-34.

Young Church Movement and wrote a document called, "Christians and the Latin American Revolution." The letter called the Church to action and threatened that leftist Christians were tempted by Church inaction to separate themselves from the church, because of, "Two churches, coexisting but ignoring each other in practice. As laypersons, priests, monks, and nuns, we often have the impression of living in a Christian community behind the back of the hierarchy." The priests were promptly suspended, and later invited to return after a mass of reconciliation, but the growing division between upper levels of the hierarchy and leftist groups in the lower levels foreshadowed coming conflicts.[52]

In the 1970 presidential election, the Popular Unity candidate was an outspoken Marxist named Salvador Allende. The divided Catholic constituency, many of whom were frustrated with the Christian Democrats and some of whom had actually joined Popular Unity, supported Allende instead of the Christian Democrat candidate. Allende became the first democratically elected socialist in Latin America, much to the disappointment of the upper echelon of the Chilean Church hierarchy. [53]

President Nixon was especially concerned with this new popular socialist, and ordered a CIA-instigated military coup within a few weeks of Allende's election.[54] Rumors spread around the country that an overthrow was about to occur. However, the Chilean Church helped prevent this original coup attempt by quickly publishing a statement reinforcing the importance of supporting the Chilean democratic process, regardless of who was elected. The document also expressed Church concern with atheistic Marxism, but the Church recognized the Popular Unity government as legitimate because it had been chosen freely by voters. CIA pressure and multinational companies' bribes were unsuccessful in convincing the military to overthrow Allende at the time of his election. [55] This was probably in part due to the influence of the Church's quick action in enforcing democracy despite concerns with socialism.

The Church acted as a stabilizing force in the aftermath of Allende's election. Chilean leaders in the hierarchy recognized the importance of coexistence and maintained

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[52] Ibid. 32-33
[53] Ibid. 32, 34.
[54] Central Intelligence Agency. "CIA Activities in Chile." (Central Intelligence Agency Reports 2000).
[55] Bouvier 35.

a cordial relationship with the new Marxist government. Leaders who emphasized dialogue were very aware of the popularity of the Popular Unity with the masses of people who had abandoned the Christian Democrats. Silva, although he was deeply opposed to Marxism, shared meals with Allende regularly to talk about strategies for aiding the poor. He disagreed with Allende ideologically, but acknowledged their common ground and the legitimacy of his election.[56]

The Chilean Church was not simply accepting of the new socialist government, but began a whole new policy of cautious openness towards Marxism. The bishops of Latin America held a course on Marxism in Santiago in 1971.[57] At the urging of the pope, the Chilean cardinals attended May Day parades and gave audiences to not only Allende, but also Fidel Castro when he came to visit Allende.[58] Silva appeared at so many public events with Allende that the Chilean press gave him the nickname of "The Red Cardinal."[59] The official Church policy was one of cautious cooperation with its democratically elected Marxist government, but remained staunch in its stance against Marxism as a principle.

However, this official Catholic position by the leaders of the Chilean Church was not universal. The first signs of a major division within the hierarchy began, with Church leaders struggling for moderation. Traditional conservative Catholics heavily criticized the hierarchy, and especially Silva, for being so cooperative with a government that stood for an ideology that the Vatican had declared was not only incompatible with, but antithetical to all Christian values.[60]

Radically progressive Catholics criticized the hierarchy for not being more open to the ideals of socialism. They called for Silva's support of Christian socialist groups.[61] In 1971, a group of leftist priests formed a group called "The Eighty," which worked to promote socialism in Chile. They soon had to change their name to "The Two Hundred." However, the hierarchy balked at clergy taking such a degree of blatant political involvement. In response to this group, in 1971, the Church officially prohibited priests

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[56] "Raul Silva Hernandez."
[57] Bouvier 35.
[58] "Raul Silva Hernandez."
[59] Aguilar, Mario I. "Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, the Catholic Church, and the Pinochet Regime, 1973-1980: Public Responses to a National Security State." (*Catholic Historical Review.* 2003). 2.
[60] Bouvier 42.
[61] Aguilar 2.

from taking public partisan positions. The Two Hundred shifted into a lay Catholic movement called Christians for Socialism that focused on internal Church reform and pressuring higher levels of Church leadership to take more direct political action. In response, the bishops explicitly ordered that priests could not participate in Christians for Socialism. Meanwhile, MAPU became a part of Popular Unity, providing a new, powerful way for Marxist Catholics to take political action from within the established power group, rather than creating new fringe movements.[62]

As Church leadership struggled to accommodate and control all of its factions, Allende also struggled to serve both the left and the right. Although his policies were more radical and clearly socialist than Frei's had been, like Frei, he could not enact them quickly enough to avoid conflict. This was primarily because of his commitment to following the democratic constitution and his refusal to simply form a new government with a more socialist constitution as more successful socialist leaders generally did. When his government redistributed income, more people were able to buy food, resulting in a huge food shortage that caused widespread panic and an anarchical black market. When the government expropriated large farms and estates, many workers tried to gain larger shares by illegally occupying the farms and homes of recently ousted landlords. Allende, as a populist progressive, refused to have police violently force squatters off of private property, which only encouraged more peasants to mobilize and seize land for themselves.[63] The deepest fears of property owners and the military were confirmed and political differences became increasingly aggressive and violent. The US exacerbated the lack of stability by declaring an economic embargo on Chile, providing huge funds to the military and right-wing organizations, and initiating a CIA-supported trucker strike to immobilize the countryside.[64]

As class warfare erupted and political tumult became more violent, Archbishop Silva acted as a mediator between leaders of the left and right. He hoped that by bringing together leaders in his home, a non-violent solution might be reached, but national

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[62] Bouvier 45.
[63] Ibid. 49.
[64] Central Intelligence Agency.

turmoil had reached too high of a level and his mediated meetings failed.[65] It was becoming clear that a peaceful solution to the nation's class warfare was no longer a realistic option. In fact, chaos had reached such a level that many in the Church hierarchy were relieved when Allende was overthrown.[66]

Part III: Initial Church Reactions to Authoritarianism

When the military dictatorship took over Chile, the pattern of evolving social structures was disrupted, leaving the Church at a loss of what to do. The Church had closely followed Chile's evolution from a monarchy, to an oligarchy, to a democracy, gradually changing its political stances to create alliances with different groups that came into power. However, with the advent of the junta, Chile's traditional pattern was radically reversed. Overnight, the democratic nation found itself back in what was essentially a monarchy. As it became clear that authoritarian rule was not a mere transitional measure but a long term situation, the Church found itself in a dangerous predicament. It could, despite the new power structure, continue standing by the oppressed masses in the hope that democracy would eventually return, or it could change its policies to support the military regime in power. The Church hierarchy divided into two conflicting ideologies, with the Vatican and international hierarchy calling for cooperation with the regime in power, clergy and lay people becoming activists against the regime, and the upper levels of the Chilean episcopate in deep conflict and compromise. Silva viewed the division as a serious danger to the integrity of the hierarchy. Through careful diplomacy, he worked to enforce unity, but it was the disunity remaining within his tenuous unity that, in fact, that allowed the Chilean Church to survive.

Augusto Pinochet's military takeover is considered to be the bloodiest coup in the history of Latin America. On September 11, 1973, the military began a consistent and systematic series of human rights violations including mass murder, torture, and

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[65] Policzer, Pablo. *The Rise & Fall of Repression in Chile.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009). 55.
[66] Bouvier 39.

repression.[67] On the day of the coup, Pinochet's forces killed Allende in his palace, bombed slums and factories in an effort to intimidate workers, arrested many members of leftist groups, and killed citizens caught breaking their radio-announced 24-hour curfew. The new government claimed in its initial radio statement that such severe actions were necessary and justified because the presidency was so weak and class warfare had reached such an anarchic level that authoritarianism was necessary to restore order and prevent a civil war.[68]

The coup had been encouraged and partially organized by the CIA, which had been urging a right-wing takeover ever since Chile first elected a leftist president.[69] President Nixon's National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, said that such policies were necessary because the US could not simply stand by and do nothing while a country turned Marxist due to "The irresponsibility of its own people."[70] The CIA provided funding, training, and the timely murder of General Schneider, the commander in chief of Chilean armed forces who had previously refused to declare a coup.[71] Students and working-class leaders were arrested in raids on factories and neighborhoods.[72] In the first week of the coup alone, many Chileans were killed in their homes or in soccer stadiums turned detention centers. There are no records of exactly how many civilians were killed in that first week, but Pinochet claimed that the number was 100, the CIA estimated 11,000, the US State Department counted 20,000, and international organizations claimed that 30,000 people were killed in a single week.[73]

Like most Chilean leaders, the majority of Chilean Church leaders privately believed that a military coup was necessary to prevent anarchy or civil war brought about by Allende's weak government. Also, because the coup was military-led, there was an expectation that the army's traditional respect for constitutionalism would ensure that the junta would be a brief transition period back to democracy.[74]

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[67] Aguilar 3.
[68] Bouvier 43.
[69] Central Intelligence Agency.
[70] Policzer 43.
[71] Central Intelligence Agency.
[72] Smith, Brian H. *The Church and Politics in Chile.*(Princeton: Princeton University, 1982). 288.
[73] Bowers, Stephen R. "Pinochet's Plebiscite and the Catholics: The Dual Role of the Catholic Church. *World Affairs.* 1988). 52.
[74] Smith 287

At first, the official position of the shocked Chilean episcopate was cautious acceptance. On the day of the coup, several individual bishops issued public statements and prayers that thanked the military for saving the nation from Marxism. These came especially from the most conservative, anti-communist bishops, who declared the revolution 'just' because Allende's government had been 'illegitimate.' Some bishops did not know about the gross human rights violations occurring in these early days because as members of the highest class, they did not associate with those being most persecuted. Others stated frankly that sometimes bloodshed was necessary to preserve the greater good. It is also probable that some bishops were acting politically, because the government-controlled media rewarded bishops who justified the morality of the coup with lengthy and far-spread media coverage.[75] Silva was against the violent coup but was careful not to speak out right away. He had known the Pinochet family for years, so he was optimistic that if he maintained his friendly relationship with the new dictator, he could help moderate the junta.[76]

Two days after the junta, Archbishop Silva, together with the Permanent Committee of the Episcopal Conference, issued a statement condemning the bloodshed and calling for moderation by the military, but also asking the populace to cooperate with the regime and trust the military's good intentions. The Church did not condemn the take-over, but did speak out against the high level of violence. Silva also asked that the memory of all the dead be respected, specifically that of Allende.[77] This was significant both because he was defending the memory of a socialist leader, and also because this defense re-enforced Silva's previous statements defending Allende's democratic legitimacy.

Relationships between church and state started out tense but cordial because despite the Church's acceptance of the junta, some bishops explicitly publicized and criticized the junta's human rights abuses.[78] However, despite the Church's clear condemnation of violence, Silva's official letter was primarily very supportive of the regime, especially when compared to its previous statements when the CIA tried

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[75] Smith 292-293.
[76] "Raul Silva Hernandez.
[77] Aguliar 3.
[78] Ibid 4.

instigating a coup against Frei, and later Allende. Previously, the bishops had publicly defended the democratic process, but in the aftermath of the coup, the Church implored Chileans to cooperate with authoritarian measures.[79] This could be viewed as the Church's simply adapting its policies because there was a new power structure, but if viewed more complexly, spoke to new compromise resulting from confusion and caution.

As news of the violence spread and progressive Catholic laypersons and priests were arrested and killed, the tone of the bishops quickly changed. The left-leaning elements of the Chilean Church faced a great deal of violence during the junta, especially during the first couple of weeks. Many Catholic priests and laypersons were among those arrested and killed. The upper level put political differences aside as bishops on both sides quickly helped 150 priests associated with Christians for Socialism flee the country.[80]

Despite the Church's acceptance of the temporary military government, the Chilean Church refused to formally legitimize the junta. The Chilean Independence Day fell the week after the takeover on September 18. Normally, the archbishop would preside over a special Te Deum prayer for Chile at the national cathedral. Utilizing the government's strained yet cordial relationship with Silva, Pinochet demanded that the archbishop conduct the traditional service, but at the military academy instead of at the usual cathedral.[81]

At first, Silva tried to refuse to preside over the service in protest against the violence. However, as Pinochet increased pressure against him, he agreed to a compromise that he would lead the Te Deum prayer at a national monument. To many Chileans, this seemed like a betrayal by the Church, but Silva managed to send secret signals to Church leaders throughout the service with the help of his vestments and speech.[82]

Most Catholic laypeople pay little attention to the symbolism of a priest's garments, which change according to the ceremony and season, but clergy and lay religious leaders are trained to know the appropriate colors to wear for different religious

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[79] Bouvier 45.
[80] Bouvier 44.
[81] Aguilar 6.
[82] Ibid 6.

events. At Pinochet's Te Deum, Archbishop Silva wore robes of purple, which is the color of mourning or penitence in Catholic rituals. Even as he outwardly appeared to concede to Pinochet, the color of his robes spoke more to a funeral than to a celebration. Involved Catholics, and especially the clergy, knew that his support was strategic only, and that the Church was in fact mourning for the junta's victims.

Silva also ironically used identical paragraphs from his speech inaugurating Allende in his sermon, making them apply to Pinochet but also showcasing his disapproval in a borderline facetious manner. He was also careful to only refer to junta leaders as chiefs of the armed forces, never calling them heads of state, and did not exchange the customary presidential hand shake with them at the end of the Mass. However, it is important to note that in his homily, Silva explicitly offered the Church's "impartial collaboration to those who at a difficult time have taken upon their shoulders the very heavy responsibility of guiding our destiny."[83] Silva challenged the violence of the coup and made it clear that the Church wanted the junta to eventually step down, but offered the Church's cooperation with the temporary situation.

Silva, as the leader of the Chilean Church, was forced to walk a dangerous line. As murders and arrests increased, it became increasingly clear that if the Church wanted to remain loyal to the masses, it could not side with Pinochet. However, the Church also had a very rare opportunity in Chile because it was the only social organization that was not immediately banned or placed under intense government surveillance.[84] If the Church stood against Pinochet, it would be shut down like every other non-government institution and not be able to have any voice. However, if the Church sided with Pinochet, it would abandon not only its constituency, but its very principles, especially with the recent advent of Catholic social justice theory. The Church needed to accommodate Pinochet enough so that it might survive and have some positive influence over his regime, but challenge him enough so that the Church might remain relevant to the masses. In his personal memoirs, Silva concluded after the Te Deum ceremony that because of the degree of human rights abuses, the Church needed to side with all victims,

[83] Smith 289.
[84] Smith 285.

regardless of politics.[85] The growth of democracy and resulting shift in Church policy towards supporting the masses had created a new consciousness of human rights and social justice within the Church. Even with the return of authoritarianism, the Church could not simply revert back to its old ways. Regression is much rarer than evolution.

At first, the Chilean episcopate treaded this line cautiously and subtly. The month of the coup, Bishop Fernando Aristia, who was the second in command of the Chilean Church, wrote a carefully worded letter to Pinochet. He detailed evidence that the bodies floating down the Mapoche River included many identified as the same people who had been arrested and interrogated in the National Stadium and appeared to have died of torture. He was careful not be directly accusatory, but clearly told Pinochet that the president should be aware of and put an end to such violence.[86]

Soon after Aristia's letter was sent, on September 24, 1973, Silva insisted on visiting the National Stadium. He was not allowed to visit the rooms where the prisoners were kept, but was able to pray for the prisoners on a microphone, saying that he represented, "A Church that is a servant of all, especially of those who are suffering."[87] He implored them to keep their faith strong. Later, he would learn that most of the thousands of prisoners he had spoken to were killed in the months that followed.[88]

Within a few days of Silva's visit to the stadium, hundreds of families of arrested people appeared at his office begging for help. In response, he hired several lawyers and social workers to assist them.[89] Soon he declared his small group of eight lawyers the Committee for the Cooperation for Peace in Chile, or COPACHI, and invited Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish religious leaders to become part of an interfaith legal aid group for victims of the junta. They provided resources for those who had lost their incomes due to political firings, legal advice for the families of the detained, and assistance to people preparing to flee the country. He volunteered a Catholic building to serve as COPACHI's headquarters. COPACHI leaders met with the Minister of the Interior to assure the

[85] Aguilar 7.
[86] Bouvier 60.
[87] Aguilar 7.
[88] "Raul Silva Hernandez."
[89] Aguilar 7.

government that the group had no political objectives, but was an aid organization helping people who had been fired from their jobs or expelled from their universities.[90]

In early October, at a meeting between Silva and junta leaders, they made a formal agreement that the Church would accept the legitimacy of the government in return for the government's promise not to curb the Church's freedom to conduct pastoral and human activities. Silva promised Pinochet the same cooperation from the Church that Allende had received and announced in a press conference that it was not the Church's role to give or withhold recognition of governments. It was for this reason that the Church never condemned specific actions or people but only spoke out against vague 'bloodshed' and 'violence.'[91]

Repression became even more severe in the following months. Sympathizers of the former government were no longer allowed to keep their jobs. Social services to poor neighborhoods were dramatically reduced. Cooperative farms were broken up. Wages were reduced. Disappearances, torture, and executions spread to smaller cities and the countryside. The Episcopate Conference stayed silent, hoping that the actions were drastic and short-term.[92] However, as the violence increased, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the Church to remain silent.

The government responded to the Church's downplayed disapproval with indirect violence. At the end of the summer, Silva's office and home were ransacked by soldiers who claimed that they were searching for a plastic object that had fallen from a plane.[93] Violence against parishes, Catholic schools, and convents became excessive and pointed. By December of 1973, three priests had been murdered, forty-five priests had been arrested, and many more were deported. The Catholic university was taken over by the state and turned into a training center for army officers.[94] In December, two individual bishops released public letters condemning torture, preventative detentions, and other

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[90] Fruhling, Hugo. "Stages of Repression and Legal Strategy for the Defense of Human Rights in Chile: 1973-1980." *Human Rights Quarterly.* (1983).
[91] Smith 290-291.
[92] Ibid 291, 294.
[93] Aguilar 7.
[94] Ibid 8.

forms of repression, although they still did not explicitly condemn the government itself.[95]

Despite the clear strain between Church and government, Pinochet appointed a retired army general to be an official intermediary between himself and Silva, clearly showing the priority he placed on having some degree of cooperation with his nation's primary religion. He did not underestimate the social power of Catholicism. Silva responded in turn. Despite working against the junta by providing aid to its victims, the archbishop became a moderating force in the Church's response.

When bishops suggested a public denunciation of human rights abuses, Silva called for caution. When Pope Paul VI sent the Chilean bishops a draft of a letter to the junta expressing sorrow and concern for Chile in the aftermath of the coup that he expected to publish in international media, Silva responded with a letter pleading that the pope not to publish the letter so as to avoid a total breakdown in relations between the government and Church. The pope took Silva's advice and the letter remained private.[96] It was Silva's actions like these that frustrated many progressive elements of the Church who accused him of facilitating the junta.

Although Pinochet was very careful to maintain a civil relationship with Church leadership, the government also made it clear that there was to be no tolerance of Catholic political parties. When the junta first occurred, the anti-communist Christian Democrats sought common ground with the junta. They met with several commanders to offer their thanks for the junta's legitimate reaction to the socialist government and to discuss how best to transfer back to a democracy. They offered their party's cooperation, but the junta's negotiator literally placed a revolver on the table, blamed the Christian Democrats for facilitating Allende, and declared that there would be no future discussions.[97] Later that month, all parties, unions, and independent media were outlawed.[98]

By 1974, the junta had lost patience with the Church's involvement in COPACHI and other efforts to provide legal care to the families of those arrested. The director of

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[95] Smith 293.
[96] Aguilar 8.
[97] Policzer 55.
[98] Bouvier 46.

DINA, Pinochet's secret police force, informed the archbishop that his safety would be at risk if the Church insisted on interfering with politically sensitive matters. He did not threaten him explicitly, but attempted to force Silva to agree to accept a group of DINA agents as bodyguards to 'protect' him. After Silva's refusal, he began receiving anonymous death threats and was followed by DINA cars whenever he left his home.

In August, Pinochet attempted a softer method to influence the Church by writing Silva a private letter expressing the government's concerns that Communists were involved in working class parishes in Santiago. Silva waited to respond on September fourth, which had formerly been Chile's election day, to respond that COPACHI had the full support of the Church and that the only reason it existed was because of the military government's terrible policies. In the letter, he also accused the government of damaging the reputation of the armed forces and angrily refused to preside over Pinochet's planned mass of thanksgiving for the first anniversary of the coup. Pinochet was furious and relations with the Church began to dissolve.[99]

In 1975, the Church and Pinochet's public relations finally broke down. COPACHI, which had grown from eight employees to over one hundred, had been explicitly threatening the junta by sending reports of human rights abuses to international newspapers. The government's discovery of well-documented legal cases involving torture by DINA officials in a Mexican newspaper changed their view of COPACHI from being a threat to being an enemy.[100]

The tipping point came because of the Church's refusal to give up its policy of sanctuary. When fugitives or escaped prisoners sought refuge in a Church, clergy would hide them, find them medical attention, and smuggle them into foreign embassies. This was in large part due to Silva's insistence that regardless of politics, Catholic loyalty must always be to victims.[101] He once declared that he would sooner hide a dissident under his own bed than let the secret police capture him.[102] With the Church's insistence

[99] Aguilar 9.
[100] Fruhling.
[101] Aguilar 10.
[102] "Raul Silva Hernandez."

on sanctuary, Pinochet lost patience and officially forced the shut down of COPACHI in December of 1975.[103]

Because COPACHI had been one of the regime's main arguments that the Church had sympathy for Marxism, Silva disbanded it in the hope of alleviating some political pressure. However, the 130 members of the Committee wrote a public letter to Silva objecting to his decision and defending their work. The families of 1,025 political prisoners who had been aided by the organizers also published an open letter defending all of the good done by lower levels of Church leadership, including economic assistance, medical aid, and feeding centers. Both letters focused on the gospel's clear call for justice and defending human rights, insisted that the COPACHI's work was not political, and accused the upper levels of leadership of bowing to government pressures. Most importantly, the public letter from the families demanded that the Church make a "definite, clear, and precise statement" in response to the violations of Christian principles by the state.[104] The Catholic masses were making it clear to their leaders that if they wanted to remain relevant, they needed to take a stronger stance. Silva's efforts to ensure the Church's survival under direct pressure from the government threatened the very unity of his Church.

Silva compromised between these contrary demands by replacing COPACHI with the Vicariate of Solidarity in 1976. He hoped that this new group would be more of a long-term program, instead of an emergency response to the coup.[105] The Vicariate would do the same thing as the Committee, but with new leadership more closely tied to the Church. Instead of being ecumenical and interfaith, it would be a specifically Catholic pastoral office directly under the archbishop's jurisdiction and thus more difficult for Pinochet to attack directly. He purposely housed the Vicariate in the main cathedral of Santiago, the most conspicuously Catholic building in the city.[106] Pinochet could not shut down the Vicariate without explicitly attacking the Church. In addition to COPACHI's former efforts, it also began providing financial aid for university students, trying to locate disappeared people, and publishing a free biweekly newspaper called *Solidaridad*,

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[103] Aguilar 10.
[104] Ibid 62-64.
[105] "Raul Silva Hernandez.
[106] "Raul Silva Hernandez.

which collected and published statistics on malnutrition, unemployment, disappearances, and arrests.[107] The Vicariate's official primary purpose was to educate Catholics about social justice doctrine, but it also created or expanded many programs to continue the work of COPACHI through health, food, education, and community projects.[108] Silva turned an office building on the cathedral grounds into a house for the widows and children of political prisoners.[109] Even as the upper levels of the Church tried to back away from direct confrontation, the lower levels of the Church pulled it into at least helping with forms of aid, and consistently pressuring leaders to take a stronger political stance.

Part IV: Growing Disunity within the Hierarchy

Despite Silva's active role in advocating for the victims of the junta, his testy letters, his refusals to take part in certain ceremonies, and his public condemnations of specific actions, the fact remains that officially, the Church never actually stood up against the junta. In fact, in many of the Episcopal Conference's statements calling for more peaceful government policies, the bishops simultaneously explicitly accepted the junta. Many lower level priests insisted that the Church's aid programs, subtle jabs at the coup, and denial of religious legitimacy meant little when compared to its political collaboration.[110] The Church leadership's accommodation of the junta was for many reasons, including the need to appear unified, the expectation that the military would restore order to society, a desire to preserve Church independence, and confidence in its own influence.

The Chilean Church had been struggling with disunity long before the coup. During Chile's rise to democracy, there had already been a great deal of division between the upper and lower levels of the hierarchy and between liberal and conservative Catholic constituents. In the first days after the coup, several senior Chilean bishops immediately expressed their praise of the coup, so many progressive younger bishops who had felt

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[107] Ibid. 64.
[108] Aguilar 10.
[109] "Raul Silva Hernandez."
[110] Bouvier 47, 51.

opposed to such drastic violence did not speak up because they did not want to seem to challenge the authority of the Church. The Episcopal Conference was also determined to avoid showing any inward divisions because it knew that the government media would exaggerate internal conflict and discredit or attack individual bishops instead of viewing the Church as one formidable force.[111] With so much internal disagreement within the Church over the junta, Silva sought the most moderate policies possible in an attempt to keep the Church from breaking into factions.

Especially in the beginning of the junta, many bishops supported the military government because they honestly believed that the coup was necessary. The degree of class warfare, civil strife, and anarchic behavior under Allende, combined with Church leadership's deep-set fear of communism, meant that many upper class Catholics received the news of a conservative takeover with some degree of relief. Many property-owning Chileans, especially within the Church, saw such drastic action as a necessary temporary resort. They believed that the harsh authoritarian measures were short-term and not worth burning bridges with important military allies.[112] Many Church leaders immediately publicized their support of the junta because they believed it was necessary, short-term, and were not aware of the full extent of the violence.

Like any other political institution, the Church was, as a body, concerned first and foremost with its own survival. This view is not cynical or accusatory, nor true for all Catholic individuals, but is a legitimate and understandable fact about the leaders of the political Church. Under Pinochet's rule, every social organization besides the Church was made illegal. The Church was afforded some degree of protection because of its historical, cultural, and social importance to the conservative elements of Chile, but high level Catholic leaders could not afford to give the government any reason to shut down the Church. Persecution against foreigners, clergy, and lay leaders, especially those who had been involved with Christians for Socialism, was not only threatening in principle, but threatened the Church's very existence in Chile. Sixty percent of all Chilean clergy were foreign-born, and many of the most innovative projects for the poor were organized and supported by non-nationals, so as the military deported foreigners, the institutional

[111] Ibid. 50-51.
[112] Ibid. 51.

structure of the Church was threatened. Within two years of the coup, 314 of Chile's foreign priests had been killed, arrested, or expelled. The responsibility and leadership of nuns and laity were increased, but in an institution so dependent on a specifically selected and trained group of men, the Church was weakened with every decline in priests. The Church had also grown accustomed to state funding for Catholic schools, and 90% Catholic university funding by Frei and Allende. When Pinochet took control of the schooling system and cut all funding for the Church, the Church's influence was further weakened and leaders were not sure they could handle much more persecution.[113]

Finally, many Church leaders were actually very confident in their own influence. Because of its long-standing alliance with conservative elements and because of its social influence over most Chileans, Silva knew that despite the Church's weakness, it was too potentially useful to the government for the junta to risk alienating it completely. The religious Church held the hearts and minds of many people, and political powers had much to gain from compromising with such a powerful force. Upper hierarchy leaders also knew that Chile had nothing to gain from the martyrdom that would result from outspoken resistance to Pinochet. However, the Chilean people had much to gain from a strategic use of Church influence. Bishops truly believed that injustices would end if only they initiated an ongoing fair dialogue with Pinochet. In the early years of the junta, priests and bishops continually met with local and national authorities when parishioners were tortured or murdered, trusting in promises that such behaviors would be corrected. One bishop explained, "Dinners, private letters or conversations are more effective than public denunciations . . . we have to live in this country."[114] Silva believed that some degree of cooperation with the regime was justified because it allowed the Church to better minister to victims of the regime.

Many individuals in the lower levels of the Church hierarchy encouraged a much stronger stance against the military regime, precariously working with and against more moderate voices in the upper level. Many priests, nuns, and lay leaders who worked with working class Catholics were exposed to a degree of violence that the higher levels did not experience in their upper class capacities. This violence mobilized and even

[113] Bouvier 53-54.
[114] Ibid 52.

radicalized many lower level leaders.[115] Some younger clergy even spoke of taking up arms as priests in other Latin American regimes had done.[116]

Lower level Church leaders worked within the structures set up by the upper levels through existing organizations and information gathering. Although Archbishop Silva officially led the National Committee to Aid Refugees, an interfaith organization that worked with the United Nations to help five thousand leftist foreigners escape Chile, it was lower level clergy and laity who actually risked their lives organizing the escapes of all those people. It was also lower level leaders who served COPACHI, finding legal help for 7,000 detainees and jobs for people unemployed for political reasons. Many Catholic individuals also set up soup kitchens, health clinics, and cooperatives for victims at a parish level. They collected a great deal of information about tortures and disappearances which they passed on to bishops, who later used these statistics when they finally denounced the junta.[117] The lower levels of the hierarchy, despite their calls for greater action, usually worked within the structure of Church leadership to instigate some of the changes they desired. Silva set up safe structures within the confines of the Church, which lower levels of the hierarchy utilized to take some level of the action they considered to be called for.

Lower level Catholics also challenged the authority of the hierarchy through base communities and activism. In addition to revitalizing existing Church structures, many lower level Church leaders set up new Christian base communities. These communities were usually led by lay people in poor neighborhoods, where a looser and more progressive interpretation of Scripture was encouraged. These communities were soon one of the only outlets for discussing the problems of Chile, because they were technically under the protection of the Church, while all other social organizations had been shut down. However, the base communities were extraordinarily free from the influence of upper levels of the hierarchy and were very independent. Many new ideas about liberation theology and political activism arose from these communities.[118]

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[115] Ibid 48.
[116] "Raul Silva Henriquez."
[117] Bouvier 42
[118] Ibid 49.

Priests and nuns also became increasingly involved in lay activism, helping behind the scenes to organize movements although they were forbidden from actually taking part in them. Clergy who became too radical were generally asked to leave the Church. Stripped of their religious titles, they often maintained their reputations and roles as religious leaders, but the hierarchy could not allow them to officially remain clergy lest they be perceived of as speaking for the hierarchy as a whole.[119] Also, many oppositional elements not officially part of Church leadership also tried to use the influence of the Church to gather support for their movements. They would quote Bible passages and adapt Catholic social justice teaching to inspire people, although they had no actual credentials.[120]

Lower levels of the hierarchy also took direct action to influence the upper levels through letter writing and continuous meetings. One of the most direct examples of lower level clergy taking action against upper level accommodation of the regime was after Silva advised the pope to withdraw his statement condemning the violence of the regime. Over one hundred priests and nuns wrote personal letters to the pope asking him not to follow Silva's advice, giving personal witness to the oppression, and calling for a public denouncement.[121] Because of the hierarchical nature of the Church, the pope went with Silva's judgment, but it was clear to all levels of leadership that there was a growing factionalization within the Chilean hierarchy.

The hierarchical division in the Church was largely a result of differentiating roles and priorities within Church leadership. Leaders in the upper level of the hierarchy are responsible for a very large number of people. Bishops are generally responsible for entire cities or many towns, while archbishops make decisions for very large regions or entire countries. This wide spread of responsibility led to a definitive priority of promoting the common good by protecting the institutional survival of the Church above all else, so that through the Church, the common good might be enforced. For upper level leaders, the survival of the Church depended on preserving and transmitting unchangeable religious doctrines and making any changes to those doctrines very slowly

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[119] Ibid 50.
[120] Ryan, Jerry. "A Chilean Champion of the Poor." *National Catholic Reporter.* (2009). 16.
[121] Bouvier 48, 57.

and carefully with a wide consensus that change was absolutely necessary.[122] Unity was absolutely key so that the greatest number of Catholics possible may be part of and ministered to by a highly organized religious body.

At lower levels of leadership, priests, nuns, and laity were usually responsible for a small town, part of a city, or smaller communities or charities. In these smaller settings, leaders experienced how oppression affected individuals very personally. Their leadership decisions were often very focused on individuals and they allowed more flexible interpretation of religious doctrine. Most leaders saw the members of their faith communities as more important than the institution of the Church and believed that Church policies should adapt to serve the weakest parts of its body above all else. Unity was not as important to lower level leaders as relevancy. They believed that the Church must be relevant to the concerns of people above all else. Normally, this difference in principle between levels of the hierarchy was a strength, ensuring compromise that resulted in both relevancy and unity, but under Pinochet's dictatorship, the two seemed to be becoming mutually exclusive. As conditions grew worse and lower levels became more radicalized, it became clear that there would either be a schism or one level would need to give in.

Part V: Increased Church Action & Improved Unity

The military rule rapidly became so oppressive that upper levels of the hierarchy could no longer deny its human rights abuses. Tortures, disappearances, and denials of elections continued and were condemned by the Red Cross and Amnesty International. An economic crisis arose with wage reduction and domestic business collapse, which exacerbated oppression by adding economic hardships.[123] The state also began taking complete advantage of its civil relationship with the Church by claiming that the relationship was even stronger than it was.

When the regime published statements explaining that its leaders' justification for repression was in the name of the common good, it referenced conservative Catholic

[122] Ibid. 50.
[123] Bouvier 55-56.

teachings.[124] When Pinochet claimed that his violence was justified by Catholicism, he finally crossed a line that forced upper levels of the episcopate into action. The Chilean Church could not allow its reputation to be tarnished so explicitly. This, along with the increase in public and lower level pressure caused by added economic oppression, meant that if the upper levels of the hierarchy wanted to preserve any kind of unity and relevancy with its members, its political policies would have to change. By the end of 1974, pressure from the lower levels of Church hierarchy finally convinced Chilean Church leaders that they needed to choose between their followers and the regime. Unity could only be maintained with relevancy.

There were many reasons for Silva's decision to take a stronger stance of opposition to the regime. To maintain the Church's alliance with the masses, who were the previous and probable future power structure of a democratic Chile, the Church needed to abandon its alliance with the masses' oppressor. To maintain unity within the hierarchy and avoid further liberal radicalization, upper levels needed to bend to some of the demands of lower level leadership.

Moreover, the Church was being increasingly directly attacked by the regime as clergy were expelled or arrested and property was seized. The Church had also lost any form of financial or political state support, other than being allowed to survive, and thus had less to lose than it had in the regime's earlier, more Catholic-friendly days. The Church was an ideal place for subtle resistance because it was protected by tradition. It was the only place where people could legally gather and was the only institution with enough influence to speak out against the regime to any extent.[125] Because the Catholic Church was such a large international organization, it had contacts with international organizations and aid groups that could provide it with additional protection. With all of these reasons to take a stronger stance, the Church still needed to maintain civility, but could take on the stronger role of an opposition party in a circumstance where there were no true parties.[126]

The episcopate's first strong stance against Pinochet was a controversial document called "Reconciliation in Chile," published in April of 1974. In it, Silva and the

[124] Ibid 55.
[125] Ibid 19.
[126] Aguilar 1-2.

bishops specifically criticized the regime's lack of human dignity, absence of the due process of law, and harsh economic policies. It also called for a return to a constitutional state.[127] It appealed to the moral conscience of the regime, especially because the military identified strongly as Catholic. However, within the upper level of the hierarchy there was a great deal of dissent. Four bishops voted against it before it was published. After its publication, two archbishops publicly spoke against it and claimed that Marxists in the clergy were responsible. This action greatly damaged the Church's image because the state not only became extremely hostile, but began claiming that the hierarchy was infiltrated by communists, was disorganized and disunified, and that Catholicism had become a vehicle for Marxism. After this initial attempt at taking a stronger stance, the upper level balked at the level of disunity within its own leadership and, fearful of a government reaction, did not issue a joint statement for another year and a half. During that time, Silva made carefully vague statements about the need for justice, but was careful not directly attack the government. He prioritized unity within the Church over action against the regime. In 1975, the Church finally published a highly watered down document called "Evangelio y Paz" that both thanked the junta for fighting socialism, but politely requested that the government beware of extremism or terror tactics that could make people turn to Marxism.[128] The Church seemed to have returned to its old strategy of little direct action.

Over the next several years, partially in response to "Reconciliation in Chile," government pressure against the Church increased. This was also in great part due to the division within the hierarchy, because of the actions by lower level elements. Pinochet's justification for many actions against the Church was the Vicariate of Solidarity, which he called, "More communistic than the communists."[129] However, now that the Vicariate was a direct part of the Catholic Church, the hierarchy saw any attacks against the Vicariate as direct attacks on the Church itself.[130]

Direct violence increased with Pinochet's frustrations. Many priests and church workers were murdered during police raids of Santiago's slums. There was a renewed

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[127] "Chronology 1973-1977." (Derechos Chile).
[128] Bouvier 58-60.
[129] Bowers 52.
[130] Bouvier 65.

barrage of anonymous attacks on Church buildings and employees. Church workers were threatened, kidnapped, beaten, and bombed. The government consistently tried to shut down the Catholic *Analisis*, a monthly political journal published by the Academy of Christian Humanism and one of the only non-government media sources in Chile.[131] At first, these rising attacks against lower levels of the hierarchy pressured the Chilean Church to take stronger action, but they were not enough for Silva to risk what he considered to be the survival of his Church. However, the government crossed a line and pushed the Church towards more action when officials attacked upper levels of the hierarchy.

The junta's attacks against a bishop named Camus and archbishop Silva sealed the Church's new active role. An interview tape with Camus, who was outspokenly against the regime, was edited by the government media to prove that he, along with COPACHI, was Marxist. The military demanded his resignation, and at first conservative bishops agreed, but when the episcopate gained a copy of the unedited interview, they realized that the accusations were a ploy and rallied in his defense.

In late 1975, when several priests were arrested and three nuns were deported for giving medical assistance and refuge to leftist revolutionaries fleeing the secret police, Silva came to their aid and approved their actions, which he called, "indiscriminating mercy." The chief legal advisor lashed back at the cardinal, not only restating that it was the duty of all civilians to turn in political refuges, but actually attacked his authority as archbishop and his interpretation of the Gospel. Silva demanded that the legal advisor retract his statements, using the threat of excommunication for the first time since the coup. The statement was withdrawn.[132] When the regime began directly attacking the Church, the Church could no longer remain neutral.

From 1976 to 1977, official Church opinion changed from criticizing specific actions by the regime to actually condemning the regime as an institution. With each public statement by the Church, the state retaliated with harsher measures. In 1977, armed forces raided the retreat house of the Archdiocese of Santiago in response to criticisms from the Vicariate of Solidarity. In 1978, 27 churches organized a 17-day

[131] Bowers 52-54.
[132] Bouvier 62.

hunger strike for the families and friends of disappeared persons. The strike was organized by lower level pastors, but the Episcopate Conference gave public support. Silva was conveniently abroad at the beginning of the strike, but upon his return, he acted as a mediator between the demonstrators and officials.[133]

Silva's work as a mediator and peace activist did not go unnoticed on the global scale. In 1978, the United Nations granted the Chilean Church the prize for human rights.[134] Silva also won a personal Human Rights Prize from the United Nations, along with a Bruno Kreisky Human Rights Prize in 1979.[135]

The Permanent Committee wrote a letter in 1979 to the campesinos that, "We have to disarm – without violence or hate but with firmness – the sinful structures that imprison us, and construct together a social order in which people are free." Perhaps in response to this, the military pressured Silva to cancel the Labor Day mass in honor of St. Joseph, the patron of workers, for the first time since the beginning of the regime.[136] The Church and military seemed locked in a tit for tat battle in which each escalated aggression in response to each other's actions.

Part VI: No Politics is Good Politics: The Church Withdraws

1980 marked the turning point in the upper level of Church leadership's brief efforts at political action. With the cost of resistance escalating ever further, the Chilean Church finally turned away from any kind of political action and insisted on taking a pastoral role only. This was in large part because of John Paul II's rise to the papacy in 1978. He was very conservative and anti-communist.

This change was reflected by the 1979 Third Conference of Latin American Bishops, which was extremely conservative. Church leaders were frightened by the extremism derived from liberation theology in many Latin American countries and by the harsh reactions to Church action by many governments. They were also fearful of alienating traditional Catholics. The Conference resulted in a decision to stop

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[133] Ibid 66.
[134] Aguilar 2.
[135] "A New Spirit Within the Church."
[136] Bouvier 66-67.

emphasizing Christian social justice and encourage priests to focus on spiritual matters instead.[137] Silva, who had always followed the directives of Second Vatican Council and the Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellin extremely carefully, was required to change strategies once again. He had walked a very careful line between his belief that the Church needed to be involved in the material world by serving the suffering and persecuted and with his careful avoidance of politics whenever possible, angering both conservatives for his involvement and liberals for his inaction, yet managing to keep them united.[138] In response to the new Church orders, Silva presided over Pinochet's Te Deum inauguration mass after a staged election, despite the protests of many bishops.[139]

On May 3, 1983, after 21 years in the position, Silva stepped down from his position of archbishop. However, it is widely understood that he was asked to step down by John Paul II.[140] A much more conservative bishop took his place.[141]

The Vicariate of Solidarity continued as a refuge for liberal elements of the Chilean Church, but had very little upper level support from the bishops who advocated a return to a more "pastoral mission." In fact, the conference of bishops actually passed a new rule forbidding priests from engaging in any kind of protest against the government. When lay people approached a bishop named Moreno to describe a brutal military raid in their neighborhood, the bishop responded that the police were "only doing their duty." In 1986, a large sector of clergy and laity called for a cancellation of the Independence Day Te Deum, but the upper level leadership insisted that a 200 year old tradition should not be broken because of passing political controversies.[142] The hierarchy of the Church was once again divided, but this time the upper levels of the Church would not back down from their refusal to engage Pinochet.

In 1987, Pope John Paul II visited Chile and confirmed the official Church's decision to not take sides politically. His visit was highly controversial, with many leftist Catholics either saying that he should refuse to meet with the regime or publicly rebuke

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[137] Ibid. 20.
[138] Aguilar 2.
[139] Bouvier 67.
[140] Reynolds, James. "Chile mourns Cardinal Henriquez." *BBC Online Network*. (1999).
[141] Aguilar 1.
[142] Bowers 53, 55.

Pinochet.[143] The Pope reflected the diplomatic stance of the upper levels of the hierarchy, showing support for both the regime and the opposition. He met with opposition leaders, called for an assertive Church, publicly demanded greater popular participation in politics, and recognized the Vicariate of Solidarity for its "devotion on behalf of human rights." However, he also prayed publicly with Pinochet and his family, and cautioned grassroots church organizations at a mass rally to avoid taking direct political positions. The Pope's visit clearly illustrated the split within the Church and his criticisms of opposition groups made many parts of the Church more cautious in their political stances.[144] However, even though the Pope's actions seemed contrarian, he was carefully continuing to maintain the unity that Silva had protected.

As the 1988 plebiscite approached, tension mounted in all sectors of Chilean society. With the upper levels of the hierarchy safely removed from the political sphere, the state was able to more directly attack liberal elements of the Church. Violence increased from both police and right-wing domestic terrorist groups. The interior minister of Chile publicly named the Church one of the three greatest obstacles to peace in the country. Directors, editors, and authors from Catholic magazines were arrested on charges of "offending" president Pinochet. Sponsors of and speakers on Catholic radio stations received death threats and had their property blown up for continuing to support "traitors." As violence escalated, the upper levels of the Church protested that for the plebiscite to be fair, opposition groups must be given access to the media and people must be allowed to debate freely without fear of arrest for being anti-regime. The Church also expressed concerns that soldiers would be managing the electoral machinery.[145] Despite the Church's desire to stay out of politics, it could not simply allow its members to be attacked so directly.

Individual members of the Church hierarchy who had stepped down from power under the new conservative pope's rule continued to use the Church's influence to speak out against specific actions by the regime, although its official position was neutral. When Pinochet publicly announced that he would "overwhelm" his opponents in the election, the former secretary-general of the Episcopate Conference, Bishop Camus,

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[143] Boadle, Anthony. "Pope's Visit to Chile Sparks Controversy." *Sun Sentinal.*
[144] Bowers 53.
[145] Ibid. 51, 55.

asked, "What is he going to overwhelm them with, I wonder? Will it be with votes or with machine guns?" The retired archbishop Silva, who was already in trouble for not sending Christmas greetings to Pinochet and instead sending formal Christmas messages to the relatives of five disappeared youths, also expressed concerns that even if Pinochet lost the election, he would not step down from power. In response, the Chilean Foreign Ministry filed a formal complaint against the cardinal with the Vatican and terrorist groups renewed death threats against him. Political kidnappings, arrests, and tortures of Chilean laypeople were increased with the nearing of the plebiscite and the Santiago Archbishops Office charged that the repressive tactics of the early junta years were being revived in order to influence the plebiscite. The Office also stressed that finding the missing should be one of the highest public priorities and that the Church could not remain indifferent to such atrocities. In response, priests were arrested and bishops' homes vandalized.[146] Despite the Church's best efforts at neutrality, it could not remain silent under such blatant attacks.

Despite the tension between the junta and important elements of the Church, the junta could not deny its need for Catholic support in the upcoming election. Likewise, the Church continued to seek a way to step out of political involvement so that its role would not be damaged by the results of the plebiscite.[147] The state arranged a meeting between the director of Chile's Voting Services and the president of the Episcopal Conference so that the Church might review the preparation measures being taken by the government. The president of the conference publicly declared his favorable impression with the organization and security of the electoral process. Part of this change in Church stance was because the Bishops Council, which had previously been dominated by regime critics, was then half liberal and half conservative. [148] Silva also played an important role in this transition. For several years, as it became clear that Pinochet would need to step down from power, or at least hold a plebiscite, because of international pressures, he had been meeting with him in his retired archbishop status. He helped Pinochet set up a

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[146] Ibid. 51, 56.
[147] Bowers 51.
[148] Siavelis Peter M. *The President and Congress in Postauthoritarian Chile.* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). xiii.

political structure so that when the country was restored to democratic rule, it would not be thrown into chaos.[149]

Pinochet was defeated in the 1988 plebiscite and a new democratic governing collation navigated a democratic transition.[150] Pinochet stepped down from power, after ensuring his immunity from prosecution.[151] A Christian Democrat named Patricio Azocar became Chile's new president and the moderate Christian Democrat party was the most popular party in Chile for the next decade.[152] Interestingly, when the plebiscite had been announced, there had been a large public outcry that Silva run for president. Even non-Catholics admired his leadership and actively called for his candidacy. However, Silva declined the popular request, saying that he would rather keep his capacity as mediator in the new democratic government.[153]

Two years later, another Conference of Latin American Bishops was held in 1992 presided over by a very conservative pope-appointed bishop. Liberation theology was not discussed. With Chile's return to democracy, the Church quickly withdrew from the political sphere. The pope slowly replaced its cardinals with very traditional and conservative clergy.[154] Despite the Church's sudden reluctance to be politically involved, church attendance and vocations rose tremendously in Chile as compared to most other countries. Most scholars attribute this to the bishops' unusually strong voice against human rights abuses because similar jumps in Catholicism were experienced after the authoritarian rules in Brazil and in Paraguay.[155] By allowing itself to become disunified, the Chilean Church was able to both survive Pinochet's rule and prove itself the ally of the new group in power: the populace of democratic Chile.

In post-authoritarian Chile, Silva withdrew from the public sphere. In the early 1990s, he assisted organizations with their reconciliation reports because he had collected a large amount of documented human rights abuses both through his priests, and through his own interactions with political prisoners. When Silva died in 1999, the Chilean

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[149] "Raul Silva Hernandez."
[150] Siavelis Peter M. *The President and Congress in Postauthoritarian Chile.* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000). xiii.
[151] Allen, John L. "These Paths Lead to Rome." *National Catholic Reporter.* (2000). 2.
[152] Siavelis xi.
[153] "Raul Silva Hernadez."
[154] Allen 2.
[155] Bouvier 73.

government declared five days of national mourning. This formerly controversial figure is now remembered by many as not only a leader, but as a hero.[156]

Part VII: Conclusion

The greatest threat faced by the Chilean Church during Pinochet's regime was not simply external violence, but actually came from within the Church itself. The internal divisions between progressive and conservative elements, upper and lower levels of the hierarchy, clergy and laity, marked a turning point that could have destroyed or changed the Church forever. It cannot be emphasized how important or how difficult it was for Silva to maintain unity between these warring factions.

In the Church of the twenty-first century, acting in the best interest of the Church was synonymous with acting in the best interest of the people. In the case of Pinochet's regime, there was a great deal of debate as to whether the people could most benefit from outspoken but oppressed opposition or sympathy from elements of the power structure. Silva found a careful middle ground where he managed to retain much of the Catholic Church's influence and prestige to both survive and speak out on behalf of its oppressed people.

Silva was Janis-faced, looking to both the absolute and to the ordinary, striving for the ideal, but recognizing the need to survive in the real. The Chilean Church was not a church of the catacombs, made up of heroes and martyrs, but a church that walked the line to respond to both church practice and human needs. Many people are uncomfortable with the idea of lukewarm heroes, but it is the lukewarm compromisers who compliment the saints and martyrs by creating a space and structure for the rest of the people to survive. Silva's pastoral dedication to unity in social justice enabled the Church's survival and leadership under the authoritarian period of Chile.

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[156] Reynolds.

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