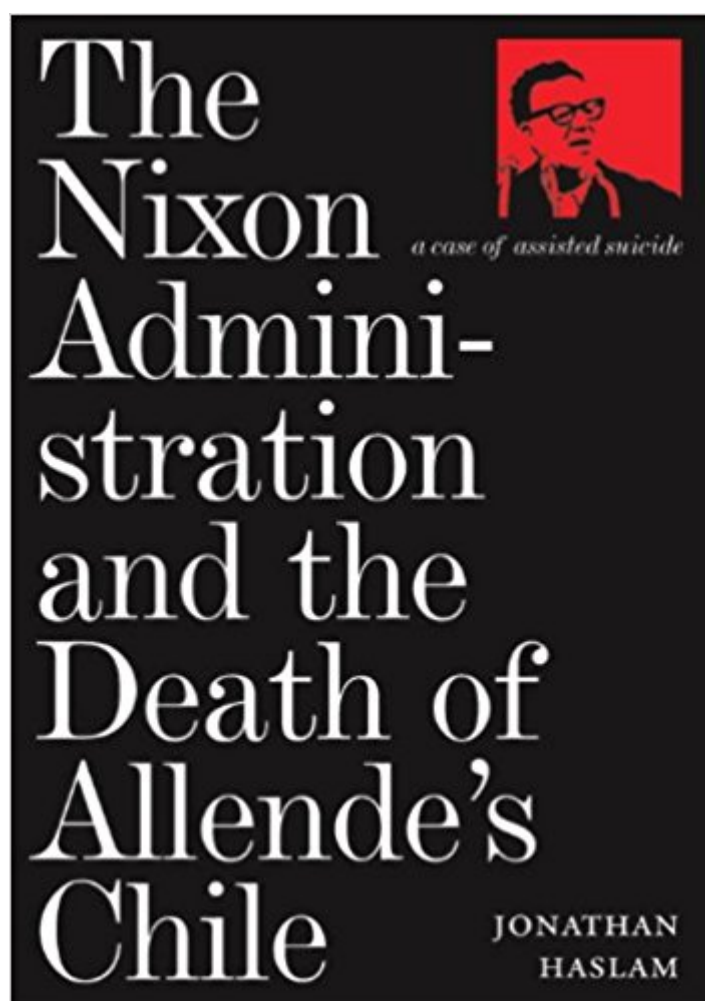


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The Nixon Administration And The Death Of Allende's Chile: A Case Of Assisted Suicide



Synopsis

In this revealing history of Allende's Chile, Jonathan Haslam uncovers the actual involvement of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the CIA in that country's struggle for political and economic stability. The story begins by tracing the trajectory of the communist and socialist parties from the pre-war period through to the dramatic election of Salvador Allende as president of Chile in 1970, in a country long accustomed to political democracy but divided by great inequality of income. It weaves in an account of a new force linked to Castro's Cuba, and elucidates the longstanding politicization of the Chilean armed forces through mere talk of action in the early 1960s to the attempted coup d'état of 1969 and the coup of 1973. It highlights the personal profile of Allende and his close ties to Cuba, and shows Soviet indifference to the fate of the regime during a period of emerging detente with the United States, which meant enduring isolation for this precarious socialist experiment. In this tragic tale of assisted suicide, *The Nixon Administration and the Death of Allende's Chile* underlines the chronic mismanagement of the economy in the drive to socialism on the back of a minority franchise. It deepens our understanding of close US involvement in attempts to block the formation of the Unidad Popular government, and how it then attempted to bring down the regime by massive subsidies to nationwide strikes, engineering a coup led by the navy behind the back even of CIA stations in Santiago.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

His book will probably remain Carr's definitive biography.

Jonathan Haslam is the George F. Kennan Professor in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. He is also a fellow of the British Academy, a fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Professor Emeritus in the History of International Relations at Cambridge University.

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Professor Jonathan Haslam has produced a critique of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity (UP) government and the reasons for - as Professor Haslam believes - its inevitable climax. He has done a very good job of reconstructing Allende's career and Chilean politics. Nor does he minimize the due role of the United States in facilitating this "inevitable" outcome. Yet it is his conclusions which are disappointing - understandably, as this is one of the most contentious events in Western Hemisphere history and will remain so for some time. No one will ever, in all likelihood, have the final word. While "the US government was the architect of the coup, whatever Dr. Kissinger claims," he writes in summation, "yet it could scarcely have succeeded but for the failings of the UP regime." This is trying to walk the path two ways at once. It's just as realistic to hold that whatever the real failings of Allende and the UP, the coup could scarcely have succeeded without the US government and the Nixon/Kissinger determination to create it. It's a chicken-and-egg argument which Professor Haslam, for all his book-length analysis and historical tour, does not finally resolve. It's quite possible there is no resolution there, any more than for Allende. Professor Haslam shows how Allende was trapped by the sense of Chilean exceptionalism, that Chile's democratic foundations were strong enough to endure an extreme structural makeover. Haslam also describes how this was not the case in both government and economy; that the Chilean house of state was in hock to financial institutions which did not approve the remodeling, called in their loans, and sent the Chilean military to collect. The question will always remain what Allende could have done differently. Haslam says nothing, given Allende's personality and attitudes, and the lack of foreign and middle class support for his program. In this he's right. In the inevitability of the UP's fall and success of the coup, I feel he's wrong. Monday-morning analysis comes easy; but a leader other than Allende could have broken relations with the US when the CIA's hand became apparent in domestic unrest. Cultivation of the 50% of the population below the poverty line, through mass organizations and an armed popular militia, would have considerably raised the stakes for coup plotters - more so than cultivating the Christian Democrats. A quick exit for the frustrated middle class (as per Cuba) would have led to no more brain-drain dislocation than did occur after Pinochet. All of these are hard

revolutionary options, but also basic realpolitik that Allende, in the last analysis, was unwilling to undertake. Professor Haslam's summation gives the conventional view that Allende ultimately brought his downfall on himself and that Chilean socialism was bound to fail, despite the US assistance in its demise. He does not explore the equal naivete of Chilean Christian Democrats and the American Embassy: how constitutional democracy could be salvaged by a military operation against what was, after all, the elected president and government of the Chilean Republic. If Professor Haslam or some other scholar could analyze *that*, he'd be doing Chilean scholarship a great service indeed.

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