RÊVE / CAUCHEMAR: Allende’s Chile and the Polarization of the Québec Left, 1968-1974

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ABSTRACT

Chile’s ill-fated attempt to build a democratic socialism (1970-1973) was a defining moment for the global New Left. Nowhere was this truer than in Québec. During the Allende years and after, Chile exercised a decisive influence on the political imagination of Québécois radicals, as they searched for a path to socialisme et indépendance. Prior to the 11 September 1973 coup d’état, countless activists travelled to the South American nation to witness – and to learn from – the “Chilean road to socialism.” Arguments about Allende’s socialist government and the subsequent U.S.-backed coup that overthrew him were woven into left political discourse in the province, influencing labour movement debates over the formation of a parti des travailleurs, colouring campaign rhetoric during the October 1973 provincial elections, and serving as a trump card in post-election struggles within the Parti québécois (PQ) over the strategy of étapisme. Allende’s fate even lingered on in the minds of René Lévesque and many other party leaders after the election of the first PQ government in 1976. The Québec left’s deep engagement with Chile was a major factor in the rise of the Marxist-Leninist movement, convincing many activists that attaining socialism by parliamentary means was impossible in a U.S.-dominated world. Allende’s rise and tragic fall was key to the process of polarization that occurred on the Québec left from 1968 to 1974. As this thesis demonstrates, our understanding of Québec’s politics in these years is enriched greatly through a combined transnational and imperial approach.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Comité d’action politique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEQ</td>
<td>Corporation des enseignants du Québec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSNM</td>
<td>Conseil central des syndicats nationaux de Montréal</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFP</td>
<td>Centre de formation populaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDOC</td>
<td>Centro Intercultural de Documentación</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSN</td>
<td>Confédération des syndicats nationaux</td>
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<tr>
<td>CQC</td>
<td>Comité Québec-Chili</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUT</td>
<td>Central Unica de Trabajadores</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLASCO</td>
<td>Facultad Latino americana de Ciencias Sociales</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLQ</td>
<td>Front de libération du Québec</td>
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<td>FRAP</td>
<td>Front d’action politique des salariés</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTQ</td>
<td>Fédération des travailleurs du Québec</td>
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<tr>
<td>GMR</td>
<td>Groupe Marxiste Révolutionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITT</td>
<td>International Telephone and Telegraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOC</td>
<td>Jeunesse ouvrière catholique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPU</td>
<td>Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIR</td>
<td>Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNA</td>
<td>Member of the National Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSA</td>
<td>Mouvement Souveraineté-Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTC</td>
<td>Mouvement des travailleurs chrétiens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCI</td>
<td>Partido Comunista d’Italia</td>
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<tr>
<td>PQ</td>
<td>Parti québécois</td>
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<tr>
<td>RIN</td>
<td>Rassemblement pour l’indépendance nationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Ralliement national</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>Union nationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Unidad Popular</td>
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INTRODUCTION

RÊVE/CAUCHEMAR: Allende's Chile and the Polarization of the Québec Left, 1968-1974

The Popular Unity government and the coup that overthrew it were defining events of the early 1970s, and most political people alive at the time know something about the coup and have their opinions about why it came about.

- Victor Figueroa Clark

In *The Empire Within*, Sean Mills demonstrates how over the course of the 1960s, diverse Montréal leftists developed an understanding of the plight of poor and working-class people as symptomatic of Québec’s colonial condition. Drawing on Frantz Fanon, Aimé Cesaire, Albert Memmi and other anti-colonial theorists, leftists recast the province’s popular struggles as strands of a larger, global fight against colonialism and imperialism. Québécois were the “white niggers of America,” dominated politically and culturally by a conquering power (the Canadian state) and exploited economically by foreign interests (U.S. imperialism). By the late 1960s, these ideas had become hegemonic on the left and were spilling over into the city’s rapidly radicalizing labour movement. The Québec left, perhaps more than any New Left movement of the industrialized countries, epitomized the oppositional, Third World-oriented “global consciousness” spawned by the sixties.

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Yet, as Mills notes in his conclusion, the hegemonic moment lasted only a few brief years. Québec’s diverse, broad-based but loosely-organized movement for national liberation rapidly bifurcated in the early 1970s, its anti-colonial “grammar of dissent” decomposing into two competing, mutually incomprehensible towers of Babel. Comrades once united by the cry of ‘socialisme et indépendance!’ increasingly parted ways and chose one of two hostile camps, each of which sought to represent only one pole of the slogan. The landscape of the Québec left was soon starkly divided between a dominant Parti québécois (PQ) increasingly distant from the socialist ideals of many of its members and a subaltern galaxy of Marxist-Leninist groups, whose activists renounced their former commitment to independence and instead embraced the dictatorship of the proletariat. With the PQ exercising political leadership over the tamed “social democratic” parliamentary left and the Marxist-Leninist movement over the more radical socialist and communist extra-parliamentary left, the 1970s have been aptly described as marked by a “PQ/ML double hegemony.”

The short-lived socialist government of Salvador Allende (1970-1973) in Chile was key to this polarization of the Québec left. The novelty of the world’s first democratically-elected Marxist president naturally aroused interest, not only in Québec, but all around the world. “Chile provided a laboratory test,” Thomas Wright and Rody Oñate explain, “for a question that heretofore had remained hypothetical: Is there a peaceful road to socialism?” The political conjuncture of the early 1970s made Chile the object of a particularly close scrutiny, at a time when much of the left globally was seeking new roads to socialism after the upheavals of 1968. This was true of the global New Left, as it searched for an alternative to the grey bureaucracy of

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5 Pierre Vallières, *Paroles d’un nègre blanc*, ed. Jacques Jourdain and Mélanie Mailhot (Montréal: VLB Éditeur, 2002), 141. In this and all future cases, unless otherwise identified, translations from French-language sources are by the author.
“obsolete Communism” and reformist social democracy and looked to the Third World for political inspiration. This was true even of Western European Communist Parties, which were trying to rethink socialist strategy and objectives as they distanced themselves from the Soviet Bloc in the wake of the crushing of Prague Spring. The “Chilean experiment” launched by Allende’s 4 September 1970 election and the U.S.-backed coup d’état that ended it in 1973 were defining events for the post-1968 left. Nowhere was this truer than in Québec.

For a left that was so resolutely internationalist, that went to such great lengths to situate Québec’s social and political struggles in the wider context of a world marked by national liberation movements and U.S. imperialism, Chile’s attempt to realize a ‘second independence’ and build a democratic socialism could not but have a tremendous impact. The pages of Québec’s labour newspapers, progressive Catholic and indépendantiste magazines, felquistes broadsheets, and Marxist-Leninist journals overflowed with news and commentary about Chile. Many Québécois radicals were not content merely to admire and theorize about the “Chilean road to socialism” from afar. Assisted by a network of Québécois missionaries sympathetic to Allende’s Unidad Popular (UP) government, a growing number of activists traveled to Chile in order to study firsthand this new revolutionary model.

Inspired by Allende’s victory, much of the Québec left embraced the dream of a peaceful, parliamentary path to socialism. Left-wing supporters of the PQ capitalized on this sentiment, helping to cement the hegemony of the PQ over almost all of the left in the early 1970s. At a time when Québécois leftists were trying to elaborate their own paths to socialism, the initial successes of Allende’s UP administration gave added credibility to the political strategy of left-wing indépendantistes, progressive Catholics and reformist trade union leaders working for

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socialism and independence through the Parti québécois. Many Québécois leftists in the PQ felt the Chilean path so closely resembled their own that it provided a kind of “sneak preview,” a vision of the future for Québec.

On 11 September 1973, the tremendous hopes raised by the Chilean experiment were crushed. Allende’s government was overthrown in a U.S.-backed coup d’état, transforming the Chilean dream into a nightmare that weighed on the minds of many Québécois leftists. The savage repression of the Chilean left by the Pinochet regime seemed to underline the fact that there was no middle path between reformism and violent revolution, and that in a U.S.-dominated world order, radical social and economic changes could not be effected through parliamentary means.

For the PQ left, which had seen its aspirations and its approach so closely reflected in Allende’s political project, the coup raised serious questions about the political realism of its strategy. What would the reaction of the U.S. state (and its multinationals) be if a PQ government were to forge ahead towards socialism and independence? Would Québec come to “know the agony of Chile” under a PQ government seeking to radically break with the U.S.-dominated world order, as opponents of independence had claimed during (and after) the October 1973 provincial election campaign? For René Lévesque and the technocratic wing of the PQ leadership, the Chilean coup dramatized the geopolitical risks of the radical project proposed by the PQ left. At the November 1974 party congress, Lévesque swept the PQ left’s representatives from the executive, breaking the influence of the “extremists” and setting the party on a decidedly more moderate path. With the crucial help of Claude Morin, Lévesque also persuaded the party to dilute its commitment to independence with the promise of an obligatory referendum. Key to this étapisme were Morin’s “Chilean arguments” about the geopolitical
necessity of a referendum, arguments to which the PQ left had no reply. The advent of *étapisme* sounded the death knell of the PQ left’s influence in the party.

Québec’s Marxist-Leninists, on the other hand, were vindicated by the tragic end of the “Chilean road to socialism.” The emerging Marxist-Leninist movement[^8] had been sceptical from the outset about Allende’s unorthodox revolutionary strategy. In community organizations, Comités d’action politique (CAPs), unions and student groups, Marxist-Leninists tirelessly worked to dispel popular illusions about “bourgeois democracy,” a task made more difficult initially by Allende’s apparent success. Yet the willingness of the Chilean bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism to dispense with the rules of democracy when they no longer suited them spectacularly confirmed the predictions of the “M-Ls.” Moreover, the refusal of Allende and the UP to arm the workers, in spite of obvious signs of the approaching coup, dramatized the dangers of reformism and the correctness of the strategic orientations of Marxism-Leninism, far better than could any quote from Chairman Mao. In an environment of increasingly bitter strikes and a generalized disillusionment with Québec’s political system, Marxist-Leninist organizations grew rapidly after the Chilean coup, extending their influence over nearly the entire non-PQ left. For many Québécois activists, Allende’s overthrow was the decisive push that sent them down the path of Marxism-Leninism.

In the wake of Chile’s coup, an ever-widening chasm opened up between a PQ left that was demobilized, demoralized and willing to set its sights ever lower under the *étapiste* leadership of René Lévesque and Claude Morin and a non-PQ left (“*la gauche ‘après PQ’*” as

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[^8]: Throughout this thesis, the term “Marxist-Leninist movement” is understood to include the Groupe Marxist Révolutionnaire, a Trotskyist organization. Although the term “M-L” usually applies exclusively to Maoists, who were the dominant force within the party-building left, Trotskyists played an important role in the Chile solidarity movement.
Serge Mongeau called it\(^9\) disabused, if not outright contemptuous, of bourgeois democracy and its sham freedoms and liberties. It was only in such an ideological and political context that the Marxist-Leninist movement could have gained such a powerful presence on the Québec left. The Chilean experience played a key role in establishing what Jacques Jourdain and Mélanie Mailhot call the “double hegemony” of the PQ over the parliamentary left and the M-Ls over the extraparliamentary left.\(^{10}\)

The election of Allende’s UP government and the 11 September 1973 coup d’état that overthrew it were defining events for the Québec left, due to its deep engagement with the Chilean experiment. From 1970 to 1973, Chile permeated the culture of the left, as Québécois activists observed, analyzed and, in some cases, participated in the unique revolutionary process sparked by Allende’s election. The Québec left’s thought and action in the early 1970s was decisively shaped by this element of the international conjuncture, as decisively – if not more so – as by national liberation struggles in the 1960s. The significance of Chile for the left is rarely registered in the historiography of the 1970s.

There is an important literature on the Chile solidarity movement in Montréal and in Canada more broadly. Roberto Hervas gives an invaluable overview of the history of the city’s main solidarity organizations in the 1970s and 1980s, while José Del Pozo, in his fascinating history of Québec’s Chilean diaspora and their integration into Québec society, provides many important details on the Montréal solidarity movement.\(^{11}\) Julie Shayne’s work on Chilean women exiles in Vancouver includes chapters setting the local solidarity activism of these women in


\(^{10}\) Vallières, *Paroles d’un nègre blanc*, 141.

national and global perspective. Thomas Wright and Rody Onate’s moving collection of interviews with exiles includes accounts from several Chileans who ended up in Montréal after fleeing the Pinochet regime. Together these works provide great insight into the Chile solidarity movement and the experience of Chilean exiles. All these works acknowledge that the global solidarity movement derived its strength from admiration for Allende and the UP, but most provide only a cursory sketch of the ties between Québec and Chile prior to 1973 and generally do not discuss how the solidarity movement affected the Québec left.

In the enormous historiography on the PQ, the major works that cover the formation and early period of the PQ’s history (1968-1974) are biographies of the party’s leading personalities – René Lévesque above all – and organization-centred histories of the party, which tend to neglect the international context. The influence of the Chilean case on the debates over étatisme is often acknowledged, but only in passing. Pierre Dubuc’s L’autre histoire de l’indépendance is an important exception, giving an illuminating treatment of the emblematic split of Charles Gagnon (who founded the Marxist-Leninist group En Lutte!) and Pierre Vallières (who joined the PQ) after leaving the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ). He is also one of the rare historians to emphasize the significance of the Chilean coup and the broader international context to the rise of étatisme within the PQ: “On a backdrop of national and international defeatism, the idea of the obligatory referendum made its way.” Unfortunately, Dubuc

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12 Julie Shayne, They Used to Call Us Witches: Chilean exiles, culture, and feminism (Plymouth: Lexington, 2009).
13 Wright and Oñate, Flight from Chile: Voices of Exile.
15 Pierre Dubuc was a member of the small Marxist-Leninist group Union bolchevique in the 1970s. Pierre Dubuc, L’autre histoire de l’indépendance : de Pierre Vallières à Charles Gagnon , de Claude Morin à Paul Desmarais (Paroisse Notre-Dame-des-Neiges: Éditions Trois-Pistoles, 2003), 180.
concentrates his narrative on a conspiratorial reading of étapisme as a federalist plot piloted by Morin, who was an RCMP informant at the time, instead of exploring why the backdrop of international defeatism – and the Chilean coup in particular – were so influential on the party. This focus also leads Dubuc to unduly downplay Lévesque’s own agency in choosing étapisme. For the most part, biographies or accounts of the PQ left’s leading figures in these early years are rare. André Larocque’s Le parti de René Lévesque gives a useful view into the participationniste perspective, as does Pierre Vallières’s Les héritiers de Papineau. The history of the PQ left, placed in its appropriate international context, has yet to be written.

Like the historiography of the PQ, the existing literature on Quebec’s labour movement during these pivotal years examines the period through a dominant “national” frame. Most research has focused on the labour movement’s stance on the question of sovereignty and its relations with the Parti québécois, the movement’s reactions to the October Crisis, the 1972 Common Front strikes and the subsequent internal struggles in many unions, and the public sector negotiations in the later 1970s. Similarly, the existing literature on the labour movement and the question of the parti des travailleurs pays little attention the influence of the international conjuncture, a debate in which the Chilean experience – both in its hopeful and its tragic phases – was a key reference point. Quebec labour history is unexceptional in this

regard. “Research into the real history of working-class internationalism is still in its infancy,” Marcel van der Linden argues, “notwithstanding the important advances made in recent years.”

The literature on the Marxist-Leninist movement is understandably more attuned to the role of international influences in the creation of “le Québec rouge.” The appeal of the Cultural Revolution for radical students and other activists and the role of transnational links with China (often by way of Paris) have been highlighted. Pierre Beaudet’s political memoir On a raison de se révolter about his time in the M-L group that published Mobilisation attests to the significance of Chile for the left in the 1970s. But the most common international factors pointed to as explanations of Marxism-Leninism’s explosive growth after 1973 are the end of the post-war boom and the crisis of Keynesianism. These factors are in any case downplayed by Warren and Simard who argue that the M-L movement was simply a manifestation of the dogmatic, sectarian Catholic culture that preceded it.

It is in fact the literature on the province’s left Catholics where the significance of Chile to the Québec left appears most clearly. Louis Favreau has dubbed this current the “other left” of the 1970s, given how it was overshadowed by the rise of the Marxist-Leninists and the PQ. There are a number of works on the Québécois missionaries in Chile, who when they returned to Québec played a key role in building the solidarity movement and the “other left.” As figures

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19 As van der Linden notes, most historical research has focused on the narrow, institutional forms of internationalism pursued by trade unions, while neglecting the broader story of the world working class. Marcel van der Linden, Workers of the World: Essays Toward a Global Labor History (Boston: Brill, 2008), 261.
22 See Bernard Dansereau, “Un expérience de l’extrême gauche au Québec,” Bulletin d’histoire politique Vol. 13 No. 1 (Fall 2004); Warren, Ils voulaient changer le monde; Marcel Simard, Il était une fois ... le Québec rouge (Montréal: Productions Virage, 2003).
like Jean Ménard show, there is a direct line between the earlier radicalization of Catholic Action movements and the later embrace of Latin American (and especially Chilean) liberation theology by groups such as the Réseau de politisés chrétiens. Just as Catholicism has been overlooked in histories of the Quiet Revolution, so has it been ignored in accounts of Québec’s “red decade” of the 1970s. The story told by this thesis is in effect the story of the marginalization this political current, which continued to champion socialism and independence as a single inseparable project, over the course of the 1970s, only to resurface in the early 1980s, through organizations like Le Regroupement pour le socialisme.

Our understanding of Québec’s politics in these years is enriched greatly through a transnational approach. Yet as Paul Kramer warns, transnational scholarship “often unconsciously partakes in a language of post-sovereignty—of flows, exchanges, connections, and interactions—that closely resembles social-scientific, journalistic, and corporate narratives of capitalist globalization since the early 1990s.” One consequence is that transnational histories can at times underplay questions of politics, power and violence, leaving such issues to scholars of imperial history. “Whatever else it is, and whatever its limitations, the imperial is not a language of post-sovereignty: it comprehends the interconnected world as wrought in hierarchy and power, even as that power is bounded and contested.”

The following thesis aims to

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26 “Scholars might even rescue the term ‘hegemony’ from the euphemistic purposes to which it is sometimes put—often as an exceptionalist alternative to empire—by enlisting it for Gramscian inquiries about domination and
demonstrate the usefulness of combining transnational and imperial histories, as suggested by Kramer, in order to understand the transformations of Québec’s left in the early 1970s.
When Salvador Allende was unexpectedly elected President of Chile on 4 September 1970, his victory at the polls provoked impassioned – verging on hysterical – reactions at the highest reaches of the U.S. imperial state. In spite of U.S. opposition, Allende, a medical doctor and Senator from the Socialist Party representing a unified slate of the left, had narrowly bested his Conservative and Christian Democratic rivals in a three-way race with 36.6% of the popular vote. U.S. ambassador to Chile Edward Korry despairingly cabled the news to his superiors in Washington: “We have suffered a grievous defeat; the consequences will be domestic and international ...” This particular sentence was underlined by President Richard Nixon as he read over the ambassador’s report, and there is no doubt Nixon (along with his closest foreign policy advisor, Henry Kissinger) felt the same way.\(^1\) Shortly thereafter, the ambassador was summoned to Washington to meet with the President. When Korry arrived on 12 October, he was met first by Kissinger, who fumed about “those idiots at the State Department” who had not provided earlier warning about the possibility of an Allende election. Richard Helms and his deputies at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) felt humiliated by their failure to prevent Allende’s surprise win and were perhaps just as angry; overthrowing the newly-elected Chilean President became part of a “personal vendetta” for the CIA Director.\(^2\) Meeting with the President in the Oval Office, Korry discovered that Nixon was even more incensed: “When the door opened, Nixon was standing right inside. He smacked his fist into his hand and said, ‘That S.O.B., that

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S.O.B.’ I looked surprised and he said, ‘Not you, Mr. Ambassador. I know this isn’t your fault and you’ve always told it like it is. It’s that son-of-a-bitch Allende.’”

The Nixon administration’s reactions are initially puzzling, considering how geopolitically unimportant Chile was seen to be prior to Allende’s election. Historians are nearly unanimous that the usual Cold War concerns (Soviet bases, Cuban infiltration, an Eastern European-style takeover by the Chilean Communist Party) played no role in the U.S.’s plotting against Allende. Prior to 1970, Kissinger had famously described the long, slender South American nation as a “dagger pointing at the heart of Antarctica.” Assessments conducted by the National Security Council (NSC) and the CIA confirmed Kissinger’s flippant remark, concluding that the strategic importance of Chile to the U.S. was virtually nil. And yet, flying in the face of such seemingly sober assessments, after 4 September 1970 Nixon ordered Helms and his “best men” at the CIA to “get rid of Allende” using any means available. The CIA launched a wave of covert operations intended to provoke a coup d’état, which included economic strangulation, political destabilization, and even the assassination of General René Schneider, the head of the Chilean military. Chile was thus raised to the status of a vital national security issue overnight, a file over which Kissinger “was to be totally in control.” Kissinger, for instance, directly micro-managed the campaign of economic warfare against Chile himself, which raised eyebrows at the State Department. “It stuck in my mind,” recalled one senior State Department official, “because

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3 Ibid., 283–284.
Kissinger, in effect, became a Chilean desk officer. He made sure that policy was made in the way he and the President wanted it.”^7

Despite the frantic efforts of the CIA and the rest of the U.S. foreign policy apparatus to block Allende’s inauguration, on 3 November 1970 Allende was sworn in as President of Chile, the world’s first democratically-elected Marxist head of state. With the coming to power of Allende and his Unidad Popular coalition, a united front of the Chilean left in which Socialists and Communists were the dominant political forces, the sense of panic reached new heights in the Nixon administration, which felt it was on the brink of a defeat of world-historic proportions: “Truman had lost China. Kennedy had lost Cuba. Nixon was about to lose Chile.”^8 Two days after Allende’s election, Kissinger wrote to Nixon on 5 November, declaring that the situation in Chile “poses for us one of the most serious challenges ever faced in this hemisphere.” Kissinger then told the president: “Your decision as to what to do about it may be the most historic and difficult foreign affairs decision you will have to make this year.”^9 Nixon opted to continue the destabilization campaign, in the hope that conditions for a military coup (economic chaos, political polarization) would eventually ripen. The game plan was to maintain an outwardly “correct, but cold” U.S. attitude toward Allende while covertly working to “create pressures, exploit weaknesses, magnify obstacles” for his government, “which at minimum will either insure his failure or force him to modify his policies, and at a maximum might lead to situations where his collapse or overthrow later may be more feasible.”^10 The culmination of these initiatives was the 11 September 1973 coup d’état, which marked the end of “Chilean Road to

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^7 Hersh, The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House, 294.
^8 Citing Helms, on Nixon’s view of Chile. Lubna Z. Qureshi, Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende: U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile (Plymouth: Lexington, 2009), 51. E.g. On 4 November 1970 Kissinger wrote to Nixon saying, “Chile could end up being the worst failure in our administration - ‘our Cuba’ - by 1972.” This was a reference to the impact the UP victory could have on Nixon’s upcoming re-election bid. Dallek, Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power, 239.
^9 Ibid., emphasis in original.
^10 Qureshi, Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende: U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile, 75.
Socialism” and the beginning of the long night of neoliberalism, out of which Chile – and indeed the world – has yet to emerge.

A major concern for Nixon was the possibility of an imitative wave of nationalizations of U.S. corporate assets in the Third World, if Allende were allowed to implement the UP’s program unobstructed. “Far more than the loss of the copper mines in Chile,” writes historian Lubna Qureshi, “Nixon feared the example the Chilean expropriations would set for the rest of Latin America, and indeed for the Western Hemisphere.” Nixon’s hard line stance on Chile was influenced by the advice of Treasury Secretary John Connally, who impressed upon the President the danger of other countries following Chile’s example. “Like other members of the Nixon administration, Connally feared the example that Allende would set for the rest of the world, noting America’s growing reliance on imported minerals.” In conversation with Kissinger, Nixon elaborated on Connally’s reasoning: “His argument is that, that for example, Guyana, we have $500 million worth of contracts with Guyana in bauxite and so forth. They’re willing to expropriate. Chile is getting away with it. The Jamaicans, the Jamaicans are willing to expropriate and so forth and so on.”

Similarly, Pepsi CEO Donald Kendall and other members of the U.S. corporate elite were concerned that Allende’s victory might spark a worldwide socialist trend that would threaten their far-flung investments. Stausching the rising tide of rising economic nationalism in the Third World required making an example of Allende, in the eyes of the U.S. ruling class.

Allende’s nationalization of U.S.-owned corporate assets was only one aspect of the troublesome precedent-setting of his government. As disconcerting for U.S. imperial managers

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11 Ibid., 88.  
12 Ibid., 51.  
was the way in which Allende had come to power (through free elections), and the political and ideological complications that it entailed. “I don’t think anybody in the government understood how ideological Kissinger was about Chile,” an anonymous NSC aide confided to Seymour Hersh. Kissinger was greatly disturbed by the prospect of Latin America embracing similar electoral coalitions of the left, which he considered far more threatening than Cuban-style guerrilla insurgencies.

I don’t think anybody ever fully grasped that Henry saw Allende as being a far more serious threat than Castro. If Latin America ever became unravelled, it would never happen with a Castro. Allende was a living example of democratic social reform in Latin America. All kinds of cataclysmic events rolled around, but Chile scared him. He talked about Eurocommunism [in later years] the same way he talked about Chile early on. Chile scared him.14

Kissinger’s concerns about the dangerous precedent set by Allende were not limited to Latin America. A 5 November 1970 memo written by Kissinger to Nixon detailed “the global ramifications from a successful Allende government.” In addition to losing U.S. investments in Chile, Allende’s ascension to the presidency risked helping to consolidate an anti-U.S. coalition in the hemisphere. Furthermore, the grave potential consequences extended to the rest of the world, Kissinger warned, since “the example of a successful elected Marxist government in Chile would surely have an impact on – and precedent value for – other parts of the world, especially in Italy; the imitative spread of similar phenomena elsewhere would in turn significantly affect the world balance and our own position in it.”15 Hersh discovered that the impact of Allende’s election on Italy, where the powerful Communist Party of Italy was looking to create a broad coalition of the left not unlike Unidad Popular, was such of such great concern for Kissinger that not even an Allende defeat in the 1976 presidential election constituted an acceptable outcome:

14 Hersh, The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House, 270.
Another NSC aide recalls a Kissinger discussion of the Allende election in terms of Italy, where the Communist Party was growing in political strength. The fear was not only that Allende would be voted into office, but that - after his six-year term - the political process would work and he would be voted out of office in the next election. Kissinger saw the notion that Communists could participate in the electoral process and accept the results peacefully as the wrong message to send Italian voters.16

Thus, it was not the prospect of a socialist Chile per se that inspired apocalyptic visions for Nixon and Kissinger, so much as the political and ideological complications that Allende’s “Chilean Road to Socialism” raised for the U.S. empire. “There was a metaphysics of Allende-hating that went beyond matters of national security and economics,” argues historian Greg Grandin. “An avowed Marxist who was also an avowed democrat, he was at odds with Kissinger’s bipolar world. He was neither raw nor cooked. ... Socialism, much less Marxism, could not be seen to be compatible with electoral democracy.”17 Allende’s election represented a serious blow to one of the ideological pillars of the Cold War that had been so effective in keeping Communists or other left parties from attaining power through the ballot box. In Kissinger’s eyes, the UP’s victory in Chile was an intolerable affront to U.S. hegemony: “We set the limits of diversity.”18

16 Hersh, The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House, 270.
The unfolding of the Chilean road to socialism (1970-1973) coincided with heated debates on the Québec left over the question of political action, stimulated by the rise of the independence movement, the growing strength and deepening radicalism of labour, and the exhaustion of the Révolution tranquille’s reformist élan. The explosive growth of popular contestation in the 1968-1972 period compelled the left, as it grew in strength and numbers, to clarify its vision of socialism and to formulate a strategy for attaining it. At a moment when socialism in Québec was moving out of seminar rooms and theoretical journals and into union halls and onto the streets, Allende’s Chile easily captured the attention of everyone on the left. For many, the “Chilean experiment” represented exactly the kind of socialism they hoped to build. It was through the lens of political action, above all, that the various strands of the left analyzed the Chilean road to socialism.

Discussions of socialism in Québec did not of course begin with Allende’s election in September 1970. By the mid-1960s, many observers sensed that “socialism is in the air.”¹ Beyond a clear rejection of the Soviet model by nearly all sectors of the left, however, the political project of building a “socialisme québécois” was ill-defined. When young people radicalized during the 1960s and joined the Rassemblement pour l’indépendance nationale (RIN) and the FLQ, according Jean-Marc Piotte, they fought for the vision of “an independent Québec that they want to be more or less secular and vaguely socialist.”² The labour movement in the 1960s was likewise groping towards a vision of another kind of society. In 1966, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN), for instance, had developed a critique of

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¹ Maurice Lagueux cited in Warren, Ils voulaient changer le monde, 30.
² Piotte, La communauté perdue, 20.
capitalism but socialism was at the time no more than a vague notion for the formerly Catholic labour federation, according to Pierre Vadeboncoeur: “There were perspectives, but no certitudes or fixed ideas about the possible forms of socialism.” Things changed “very rapidly” thereafter.3

One major change was the growing strength and militancy of organized labour. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the largest strike wave in Québec’s history, a consequence of the seemingly irresistible momentum the labour movement had developed since the mid-1960s. With the unionization of the province’s hospitals, schools, civil service and other parts of the rapidly expanding public sector, labour’s economic clout grew significantly and its membership multiplied. Its gains, however, were threatened on a number of fronts. Growing unemployment was weakening the movement’s bargaining power and rising inflation was eroding wages. In the private sector, layoffs hit miners and metallurgy workers particularly hard, while in other manufacturing industries workers faced greater employer intransigence in the form of lockouts and speedups. Confrontations between the police and striking workers on the picket line and at demonstrations also became more frequent. The most notorious – and radicalizing, for labour activists – instance of police repression was the October 1971 demonstration by striking La Presse workers and their supporters. Montréal police declared the march illegal and charged the crowd, killing one demonstrator and injuring many others. In the public sector, the provincial government started resorting to back-to-work legislation to contain the demands of its employees.

These experiences pushed the labour movement towards greater unity, culminating in the formation of the Front Commun by the three federations in January 1972 and the general strike in April 1972. They also revealed the inherently political nature of labour relations, especially in

3 Favreau and L’Heureux, Le projet de société de la CSN de 1966 à aujourd’hui: crise et avenir du syndicalisme au Québec, 44.
the public sector, which fostered a more radical analysis. Labour’s left turn was dramatically announced to the public in late 1971. In quick succession, each of three labour federations issued “manifestos” that delineated the structural roots of Québec’s social and economic problems and denounced capitalism and U.S. imperialism in no uncertain terms. All three called for socialist solutions to Québec’s woes. Discussion of these documents in the ranks of organized labour introduced thousands (if not tens of thousands) of rank-and-file activists to Marxist-oriented analyses of Québec social reality, but provided few details on what a socialist alternative would look like. As André Leclerc, one of the authors of the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec (FTQ) manifesto, explains: “The radicalism of L’État rouage de notre exploitation implied a change in the model of society that the federation would develop from then on. We talked of ‘democratic socialism’ without giving it much definition.”

Political action – including the possible formation of a new political party – became an unavoidable consideration. The desire for political action did not flow from “a firm and articulated position,” Louis Favreau argues, but rather corresponded to a “widespread opinion” among activists who, based on their experience, “confusedly felt” that this was the direction to take. Union activists had learned that the political and economic system placed limits to how much could be won through strikes and collective bargaining. Labour historian Jacques Rouillard argues that the late 1960s and early 1970s “were certainly the moment [in Québec’s history] where the trade union movement came the closest to supporting the creation of a political party devoted to the workers’ cause.”

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4 Fédération des travailleurs du Québec, L’État rouage de notre exploitation (Montréal: M Éditeur, 2012), 16.
At its 1968 congress, the CSN declared the opening a “second front” in the class struggle. Reaching out to citizens’ committees, tenants’ associations, popular daycares, student organizations and left political groups, the CSN created Comités d’actionpolitique (CAPs) in cities throughout the province. The CAPs were intended to defend workers’ interests lying outside the confines of collective bargaining (the “first front”) – and to resist the provincial government’s frequent use of back-to-work legislation against striking public sector workers. The FTQ and the Corporation des enseignants du Québec (CEQ) created structures similar to the CSN’s CAPs, and in spring 1970 the three labour federations jointly organized 15 regional conferences with the aim of uniting all of the province’s progressive forces. The regional conferences, held in cities across the province in April-May 1970, brought together over 2,500 labour and community activists, who collectively outlined “a societal vision tied to democratic socialism that went much farther than what the labour federations were demanding at the time.”

The creation of a province-wide parti des travailleurs fighting for socialism and independence was the obvious next step for many activists. Rouillard argues that “the social conjuncture marked by ideological ferment and strong union militancy could have permitted such a party to obtain significant electoral support and, who knows, to become a vigorous political force in Québec.”

The leading voice for a province-wide parti des travailleurs in the late 1960s and early 1970s was Michel Chartrand. Elected president of the Conseil central des syndicats nationaux de Montréal (CCSNM) in December 1968, Chartrand was a “tenacious partisan” of the idea and tirelessly urged the labour movement and the left to make it a reality. Regrouping one-third of the membership of the CSN, the CCSNM’s position on the question of the parti des travailleurs

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was “not insignificant in union terms.”\textsuperscript{9} The formation of the Front d’action politique des salariés (FRAP) in May 1970 represented an important step in this direction. Launched following Montréal’s inter-union regional conference with substantial support from the CCSNM, the FRAP was a municipal workers’ party rooted in the CAPs of Montréal’s working-class neighbourhoods, but many envisioned it serving as the foundation for a future provincial parti des travailleurs.\textsuperscript{10} In addition to the CCSNM, a host of other forces sought to build the FRAP into a political alternative, including the left wing of the former RIN, left Catholics and independent Marxists grouped around the Centre de formation populaire (CFP), student activists radicalized during the fall 1968 university occupations, and a host of small left workers’ committees and political groups.\textsuperscript{11} As Rouillard emphasizes: “[The FRAP] appeared as the culmination at the political level of the radicalization of large segments of Québec society in the 1960s.”\textsuperscript{12} At the same time, the creation of the FRAP also raised profound questions, as Favreau notes:

What political action? Which allies to count on? Based on what strategy? Against which adversary first? All these questions did not yet have precise answers. But in the region of Montréal, industrial and urban heart of Québec, they found the beginning of a political articulation in the FRAP.\textsuperscript{13}

The idea of a parti des travailleurs was overshadowed from the outset by the formation of the Parti québécois. Unable to convince his Liberal comrades of the need to embrace a nationalist orientation and sensing important shifts in the tectonic plates of Québec’s politics, René Lévesque quit the Liberal Party and founded the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association (MSA) in November 1967. Lévesque had previously been Minister of Natural Resources under

\textsuperscript{9} Favreau and L’Heureux, \textit{Le projet de société de la CSN de 1966 à aujourd’hui}, 93.
\textsuperscript{10} Rouillard, “Le rendez-vous manqué,” 171; see also Comby, “L’expérience du Front d’action politique des salariés (FRAP),” 120.
\textsuperscript{11} I.e. MLP, MSP, FLP, etc. Favreau and L’Heureux, \textit{Le projet de société de la CSN de 1966 à aujourd’hui}, 38–39.
\textsuperscript{12} Rouillard, “Le rendez-vous manqué,” 171.
\textsuperscript{13} Favreau, “Mouvements socialistes, marxisme et question nationale au Québec,” 287.
the government of Jean Lesage and was famous for leading the campaign to nationalize Québec’s hydro-electric resources under the slogan “Maîtres chez nous.” MSA membership was 7,274 on the eve of its first congress in April 1968, but jumped to over 10,000 after the congress. With polls showing popular support for the newly-formed organization at 20%, the MSA was clearly punching above its organizational weight due to the undeniable magnetism of Lévesque.\footnote{Godin, René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui (1960-1976), 363, 368.}

Although Lévesque’s politics were far less radical than those of many indépendantistes, when the PQ was founded in October 1968 it garnered substantial support from the left and the union movement. Writing less than a month after the foundation of the PQ, Charles Gagnon (still involved in the FLQ at the time) lamented how quickly left intellectuals (he derisively called them the “gauche officielle”) had fallen under Lévesque’s spell: “Almost everyone criticizes René Lévesque, because he is not a partisan of unilingualism, because he leads his party like a ‘boss,’ because he mixes the Québécois sovereignty he seeks with Canadian association, etc. But few, it seems, can resist his appeal.”\footnote{Charles Gagnon, Feu sur l’Amérique (Montréal: Lux, 2006), 160.} Others were not so sceptical. The PQ’s social democratic orientation, its commitment to independence and its financial autonomy from the caisses électorales relied on by the old parties, attracted reformist trade union leaders like the Métallos (United Steelworkers) director Jean Gérin-Lajoie, as well as many union representatives at the middle levels of the union hierarchy, who saw the PQ as the very parti des travailleurs the labour movement needed. Others were less satisfied with the ideology of the PQ leadership, but argued that the party’s orientation was still being defined and its still-in-formation programme could be given a left content. This was the perspective of Pierre Bourgault, who dissolved the RIN shortly after the PQ’s founding congress and joined the ranks of Lévesque’s party. Others
still favoured the eventual formation of a parti des travailleurs but felt this needed to wait until after independence. The success of left-wing PQ candidates in working-class constituencies in the April 1970 elections reinforced such opinions. The PQ membership at the time had reached 40,000.  

The October crisis intensified debate over political action immensely. In the 1960s, Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam had been key referents for Québécois radicals, even though the conditions in which these liberation struggles played out were radically different from those in Québec. The FLQ and its “Cuban-style” guerrilla actions had taken this inspiration to its extreme limit. After October 1970, however, few illusions remained on the left about the efficacy of the FLQ’s strategy and its implicit spontaneism.  

The left was also shaken by the repressive response of the Canadian state, using the powers of the War Measures act to clamp down on the movement as a whole. Many concluded that, if the left were ever to rally the masses to its side and withstand the violence of its opponents, Québec’s liberation required a more seriously thought-out strategy and more solid, deeply-rooted organizational structures. After the “electroshock” of the armed occupation of Québec, many activists turned to socialism and Marxism as guides for understanding the structures of Québec society, according to Louis Favreau.  

In the context of a major reappraisal of the Québec left’s strategies, activists from all sides of the parti des travailleurs debate immediately began to draw parallels between the Chilean road to socialism and their own nascent attempts to forge a path to socialism. Michel Chartrand, upon his release in mid-February 1971 after his arrest under the War Measures act, was categorical about the futility of FLQ terrorism and argued that the labour movement should look to Chile for a different, more promising kind of revolutionary strategy for Québec: “It’s not

17 Mills, The Empire Within, 44–45.  
by killing two or three that we’ll finish with them, it takes a complete revolution. The labour movement must politicize itself even more and the people will finish by taking power. It can be done democratically, like it happened in Chile with Allende.” Jean-Guy Loranger, the 33-year-old economist who authored the CSN’s anti-capitalist manifesto *Ne comptons que sur nos propres moyens*, cited the Chilean experience as an important influence on the document’s orientation. *Ne comptons...* called for the nationalization not only of Québec’s forests, mines and other natural resources exploited by American capital, but also of the industries involved in the transformation of these resources. Questioned on the feasibility of such radical measures by *Pointe de Mire* in a November 1971 interview, Loranger stated: “What we until recently thought wasn’t possible, Allende has shown is possible.” Former RIN leader Pierre Bourgault found that Allende’s Chile gave him, like many socialists in the PQ, a “new reason for hope” that radical change could be made through electoral struggle. Even Charles Gagnon, future leader of the Maoist organization En Lutte!, was favourably disposed – albeit with some reservations – towards the Chilean experiment. In February 1972, Gagnon submitted a document to the executive committee of the CCSNM entitled “*Pour un programme socialiste,*” which highlighted the importance of Chile’s path to socialism: “What is happening in Chile presently merits as much attention on our part as what is happening in Cuba or China. There is much to learn, including both the possibilities and limits of certain forms of popular political action.”

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22 ACSN, CCSNM fonds, Charles Gagnon, “Pour un programme socialiste: notes à l’exécutif du Conseil centrale,” submitted to the February 21, 1972 assembly, 10; According to Stéphanie Poirier, Gagnon’s document contributed greatly to the political orientation of the CCSNM’s 1972 “Socialisme, c’est la démocratie”-themed congress. Stéphanie Poirier, “Le Conseil central des syndicats nationaux de Montréal (CSN) à l’heure de la radicalisation syndicale, 1968-1980” (MA diss., Université de Montréal, 2005), 74–76. After the coup d’état, the lessons learned by the Marxist-Leninist movement from Chile focused almost exclusively on limits. My thanks to Sean Mills to sharing this source with me.
Chilean experience was a major focus of discussion in the CAPs. “Vast debates spread throughout the left,” Pierre Beaudet writes, arising out of the “effervescence” of popular struggles in the 1970s. “The Comités d’action politique talked of creating a left party, a perspective endorsed by many intellectuals and small organizations, including Mobilisation. The experience of Chile, then headed by a socialist coalition and driven by a mass movement, was a reference point for many.”23 Chile’s attempt to build socialism through parliamentary means eclipsed Cuba as a source of political inspiration over the 1970-1973 period. As the editors of En Lutte! observed in 1973: “After the ‘Cuban road’ that exercised a considerable influence in progressive circles over the course of the 1960s, in Québec as in Latin America, it was the ‘Chilean road’ that for the last three years provided many with what they called a ‘new revolutionary model.’”24

Allende’s victory in Chile gave the dream of a democratic socialism, conquered by the ballot rather than the bullet, and propelled by grassroots participation instead of bureaucratic domination, tremendous stimulus on the Québec left. The economic and social programme of the UP government was very close to the kind of socialism many hoped to build in an independent Québec. The classical socialist aim of taking over the commanding heights of the industry and finance was combined with new forms of worker participation and workers’ self-management in the newly-created “social property area” of the economy. The programme also included a massive expansion of social programs, such a free pint of milk given to all families with children under with age of five. In addition, the initial success of the sweeping nationalizations undertaken by Allende seemed to demonstrate that Québec could reclaim its economy from the domination of U.S. multinationals without provoking a financial catastrophe. Cultural,

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educational and artistic activity flourished under Allende, growing out of an exceptionally combative, well-organized and class-conscious popular movement.

Chile’s left seemed to have accomplished – or was at least in the process of accomplishing – many things that Québécois radicals were still struggling to achieve. Reflecting on a 1972 visit to Chile, Yves Vaillancourt noted that the Chilean workers’ movement possessed advantages that “we don't hesitate to envy.” Political observers from Québec like Vaillancourt often highlighted “certain Chilean facts that correspond to Québécois aspirations: workers’ political parties, self-managed enterprises, organized popular neighbourhoods.”

The close links between the UP parties and Chile’s unions and other popular organizations were often held up as a powerful model to follow. Yvan Labelle, who visited the country on numerous occasions during the Allende years, wrote in 1971 that the combination of these factors meant that Chile was displacing Cuba in the hearts of many leftists:

In 1958, Chile narrowly missed having the first socialist president of Latin America (Allende lost by 35,000 votes). Cuba stole from it that first, in 1961. In 1970, Chile nevertheless won a first by having the first elected socialist president. And in the present political conjuncture, Chile could be the first country to realize a genuine socialist regime, that is to say with effective control of the key sectors of the national economy and grassroots participation in policy and planning. Cuba has not yet achieved that.

For the Québec left seeking a non-aligned path in a U.S.-dominated world order, Allende’s foreign policy was equally remarkable. Under the UP government, Chile defied the power bloc politics of the Cold War, bravely standing up to the U.S. while avoiding dependence on Soviet support. Allende generously provided refuge for exiles from the region’s growing list of U.S.-backed dictatorships. Chile became the first Latin American nation to re-establish diplomatic relations with Cuba. At the UN, Allende aggressively defended the interests of the

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25 Yves Vaillancourt, “Pourquoi s’intéresser au Chili?” Relations Vol. 373 (July-August 1972), 198, emphasis in original.
Third World and assumed a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement. And naturally, the David-and-Goliath nature of the UP administration’s struggle against subterfuge and aggression from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and American multinational corporations such as International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) appealed to the anti-imperialist politics of the Québécois leftists. ITT had a major presence in Québec, through its subsidiary ITT Rayonier, a pulp processing plant. The generous terms of the Côte-Nord forestry concession granted to ITT by the Bourassa government had been a major political issue in 1970, with René Lévesque denouncing the deal as “neo-imperialism.” One of the major case studies of Québec’s exploitation at the hands of the multinationals in the CSN manifesto *Ne comptons que sur nos propres moyens* was ITT’s operations on the Côte-Nord.27

With the election of Allende, the Québec left was presented with a Third World liberation struggle occurring in conditions more closely resembling its own. The base of the *Unidad Popular* coalition was a well-organized, politicized working class, and it functioned in conditions of relative political freedom in a country with a long political tradition of constitutional government. Elected on an explicitly socialist and anti-imperialist platform, Allende promised to liberate his country from the neo-colonial grip of the U.S. – but proposed to do so while respecting the Chilean constitution. The heroism of Vietnamese peasants struggling against the U.S. military juggernaut rightfully impressed many radicals, but Chile’s fight against imperialism was far closer to the lived realities of the working class in Québec.

The chief ideological contribution Chile made to debates on the left – both before and after the coup d’état – concerned the feasibility of using parliamentary means to build establish socialism. As Yves Vaillancourt explained in 1972, the “originality of the UP's project” was “not

only the totality of its objectives, but also, and perhaps even principally, *the way* it sought to attain them.”

The UP wants to go *towards socialism, by respecting and by using legality and bourgeois democratic institutions*. The UP claims to be able to change radically the economy, the State, society, *without violating the Constitution*.

It is here that the originality of the UP's project is situated, and it is here equally that are found the principal causes of its difficulties and its fragility.28

Given the space taken by Chile in political debates over how to build socialism, part of the struggle for hegemony on the left was inevitably a struggle over what lessons should be gleaned from the Chilean experience and how they should be applied to the Québec context. In the early years of the UP government, many Québécois activists were impressed by the originality of the Chilean road. But by late 1972, the difficulties and fragility of Allende’s path came to the fore. The changing lessons activists in Québec gathered from the Chilean experience were of crucial – and hitherto unrecognized – significance in the province’s political history.

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28 Yves Vaillancourt, “Le Chili... deux ans après,” *Relations* (October 1972), 263, emphasis in original.
CHapter 4
Many Dreams: Allende’s Victory and the Rise of the PQ Left

Chile represented many dreams, dreams of a free socialism, a critical church, a labour movement creating a different kind of labour relations. This and many other dreams were present in the Chilean process, and, as a result, the great interest in being in solidarity with Chile.

- Gabriel Sanhueza¹

Chercher à comprendre l’expérience du Chili, c’est d’une certaine manière, réfléchir en définitive sur le Québec, mieux prospecter notre présent et notre avenir.

- Maintenant²

On 4 September 1970, the unexpected victory of Dr. Salvador Allende, candidate of the Unidad Popular coalition, gave a major boost the Chile’s tourism industry. Suddenly, the South American nation became an obligatory destination for the global left. As Socialist Party politician Heraldo Munoz recalls in his memoirs:

Chile became a magnet for intellectuals and artists from all over the world and for progressive politicians who came to see for themselves the ‘peaceful road to socialism.’ François Mitterand and Fidel Castro met for the first time in Chile in 1971. In those days I attended a lecture by Angela Davis and never forgave myself for missing a Duke Ellington concert. Exiles from Latin America’s dictatorial regimes – Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay to name a few – flowed to Chile.³

Many came to Chile as students, both figuratively and literally. “A new Chile is being born,” observed Serge Mongeau, a Québécois doctor who lived in Santiago and studied political economy at Facultad Latino americana de Ciencias Sociales (FLASCO) during the Allende

¹ Wright and Oñate, Flight from Chile: Voices of Exile, 157.
² “Pourquoi un dossier sur le Chili,” Maintenant No. 107 (June-July 1971), 168.
years. “Numerous political observers from other countries in Latin American but also from North America and Europe have arrived to study the ‘Chilean process’.”⁴ Within North America, Québec was the place where interest in Allende’s Chile was probably the most intense. Trade unionists, students, community activists, indépendantistes, progressive Catholics, and members of political groups traveled in droves to observe for themselves the “Chilean experiment.” Upon return, Québécois visitors to Chile typically followed up on their trips with talks and written reports on the latest developments, stimulating political discussion and debate. Those unable to make the pilgrimage to Chile themselves could nonetheless vicariously experience Chile’s revolutionary process by reading about it. Left periodicals in Québec produced a voluminous output of articles on Chile, ranging from short news briefs to in-depth analyses, from reports by Québécois delegations to translated political statements of the Chilean left. Due to this deep and multifaceted engagement, Chile quickly became a near-universal referent in the growing debates over socialism in Québec.

Much of the cultural production concerning Chile was motivated by a frustration with what activists perceived as a biased and partial representation of the Chilean revolution in the corporate press. As Serge Mongeau explained to Gérald Godin, director of information of Québec-Presse: “What is happening in Chile deeply interests us, we Québécois who still believe radical changes are possible within the framework of legality. But the dispatches of the press agencies do not permit us to follow regularly the process, and they often leave us hungry for more.”⁵ Mobilisation accused the newswire services covering Chile of disseminating a “‘disaster in all respects’ image of the anti-imperialist struggle of Chilean workers.” The province’s daily newspapers were also guilty of exaggerating the scale of protest against the UP government and

⁴ Mongeau, Le rêve écrasé: Québec-Chili, 1973, 30. Mongeau stayed in an apartment in Santiago with two other Québécois, Léo-Paul and Jacqueline Desaulniers, who were also there as students.
⁵ Ibid., 35.
the hardships suffered by the population. In this way, the bourgeois press “deform[ed] reality in order to prevent Québécois workers from knowing what is happening in Chile, out of fear of the repercussions this example could have in Québec.”

Québec-Presse worked to remedy this deficiency. International affairs editor Pierre Jean Méhu regularly updated his readers on the twists and turns of events in the country through dozens of articles about the country from 1970 to 1973. The labour-backed paper undoubtedly played a major role in stimulating interest and awareness about Chile. With a readership of approximately 30,000 (hitting a peak of 52,000 during the October crisis), Québec-Presse was the publication with the widest circulation on the left. “The effect it had on building an alternative culture cannot be overestimated,” according to communications scholar Marc Raboy.

The Québec-Presse publishing cooperative had been created by the labour movement, but the paper also enjoyed close ties to the PQ. Jacques Parizeau had a regular column, Parizeau en liberté, in the weekly tabloid-format paper. Religious journals like Prêtres et Laïcs and Relations (where Yves Vaillancourt was on the editorial committee) as well as smaller left publications like Mobilisation and the Journal du FRAP also provided analyses of events in Chile.

In its hopeful phase, the Chilean experiment made the strategy of the PQ left seem more credible. Catholic intellectuals associated with the magazine Maintenant and younger radicals like Pierre Bourgault and ex-felquistes Pierre Vallières argued that the PQ was the working-class political vehicle through which the dream of socialisme et indépendance could be realized. The PQ was a young party still developing its programme; Bourgault and Vallières saw it as the duty of socialists to work within the party to define the ‘content’ of independence and influence its

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7 Marc Raboy, Movements and Messages: Media and Radical Politics in Quebec (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1984), 62.
political orientation. Drawing on the example of Allende’s *Unidad Popular* coalition, the PQ left (known within the party as the “*participationnistes*”) envisioned the Parti québécois becoming a broad left party working closely with the militant grassroots of the labour movement and the citizens’ committees. The apparent opening up of a new path to socialism in Chile combined with the rising popularity of the PQ in working-class ridings, convinced such leftists – even those who felt that founding a *parti des travailleurs* distinct from the PQ would eventually be necessary – to join the ranks of René Lévesque’s party and work for socialism through its structures.\(^8\) The abstract internationalism of orthodox Marxism did not sit comfortably with these intellectuals, who felt that socialism must be adapted to local culture and saw nationalism as a positive force. Given the impressively radical changes that the UP government had been able to achieve in defiance of U.S. imperialism, many argued that respect for bourgeois legality could even serve to protect the revolution from its enemies.

One of the key “transnational people”\(^9\) involved in developing Québec-Chile links was Yves Vaillancourt. Vaillancourt personally witnessed Chile’s intense 1970 electoral campaign during a 40-day visit to the country from early August to early September 1970 at the end of a three-month trip through Latin America. Vaillancourt, who was studying political science at Université de Montréal and had been involved in the student movement since the fall of 1968, had the opportunity to participate in several demonstrations organized by the *Unidad Popular* coalition and met with various UP activists during his stay, thus deepening his understanding of Chilean politics. On the evening of 4 September 1970, Vaillancourt was in the streets among the

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\(^8\) Comby, “L’expérience du Front d’action politique des salariés (FRAP),” 128.

\(^9\) As Dana Frank writes, “the history of U.S. labor and international solidarity is one of motion: of ideas, of institutions, of resources, swirling back and forth across national borders in every conceivable pattern and direction. Transnational people become all-important carriers, whether through immigration or unwilling diasporas. In the process solidarity flows as much into the United States as outward from it.” This clearly also applies to the history of international solidarity in Québec. Dana Frank, “Where Is the History of U.S. Labor and International Solidarity? Part I: A Moveable Feast,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* Vol. 1 No. 1 (2004), 96.
euphoric crowds celebrating Dr. Salvador Allende’s triumph at the polls. “I was there, conscious with others of living a historic moment!”\(^{10}\) When he returned to Montréal in mid-September 1970, Vaillancourt gave a presentation – the first of many – in the living room of a private home in Outremont on his trip to Chile and the elections that had just brought Salvador Allende and *Unidad Popular* to power. At the time, Vaillancourt recalls, “you could count on your fingers the number of people informed about Chile in 1970.”\(^{11}\) For the presentation, Vaillancourt discussed the significance of the UP’s victory with the help of a slideshow. Vaillancourt assembled the slideshow using images of political posters and clippings of editorial cartoons he had collected every day of his trip, taken from newspapers of the right, centre and left. The humble conference was attended by 35 people, including CCSNM president Michel Chartrand and Jeunesse ouvrière catholique (JOC) chaplain Jacques Grand’Maison.\(^{12}\) This inauspicious gathering effectively marked the beginning of Montréal’s Chile solidarity movement.

Catholicism was a major cultural and institutional bridge linking Québécois activists to Chile’s socialist experiment. Vaillancourt, who had previously studied in theology and was a Jesuit, is a case in point. His motivation to travel to Chile was based on “the intuition that the Christians engaged in social and political struggles in Latin America and in Chile were far ahead of those of us like them in Québec.”\(^{13}\) Chile was in many ways the epicentre of a continent-wide radicalization underway in the Catholic Church. In the years after the 1968 Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Medellín, Colombia, a significant number of Latin American clergymen and laypeople embraced liberation theology, an interpretation of the Gospel that called for the church to exercise a “preferential option for the poor.” For adherents of liberation

\(^{10}\) Yves Vaillancourt, “Pourquoi on s’intéressait au Chili en 1970,” *À l’heure latino-américaine* No. 15 (1994), 31. Thank you to Mr. Vaillancourt for sharing this article with me.

\(^{11}\) Yves Vaillancourt, personal communication, 26 August 2013.

\(^{12}\) Details from the paragraph come from Vaillancourt, “Pourquoi on s’intéressait au Chili en 1970,” 31.

\(^{13}\) *Ibid.*
theology, Gregory Baum explains, “Christian salvation included the liberation of people from oppression, and for this reason the Gospel was not authentically proclaimed unless it was accompanied by action for social justice.”\textsuperscript{14} Priests and laypeople were called upon to share the conditions and outlook of the poor and to accompany them in their social and political struggles. Liberation theology was a fusion of Catholicism with a number of different strands of radical thought, including Marxism, dependency theory and new approaches to popular education.\textsuperscript{15}

Chile’s reputation as a centre for liberation theology had apparently spread to Montréal by the time of Vaillancourt’s trip: “I had heard that in Chile, there was a significant number of Christians who believed it was possible to refer to both Marx and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to inform their faith and their social and political practice on the side of the popular classes and their organizations.” One of the smaller parties of the UP coalition, the Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario (MAPU, Movement of Unified Popular Action), was composed of Christian socialist activists who had split from the centrist Christian Democrats in 1969, and it was individuals associated with the left Catholic current within the UP that most frequently served as Vaillancourt’s guides. Vaillancourt formed enduring friendships with many of these Chilean left Catholics thereafter.\textsuperscript{16} According to Baum, Vaillancourt was not alone in his interest for the region’s (and, in particular, Chile’s) religious ferment: “Many Québec Catholics followed with great interest the radicalization of religion in Latin America, the new religious literature called


\textsuperscript{15} Foisy, “Des québécois aux frontières,” 318.

liberation theology, and the formation of Catholic socialist organizations in Chile and elsewhere.” In April 1972, Vaillancourt organized a four-person delegation to represent Québec at the founding convention of “Christians for Socialism” in Santiago in April 1972. The delegation was composed of Vaillancourt, Louis Favreau and Pierre Lagrenade of the Centre de formation populaire (CFP), and Karl Lévesque, a Haitian Jesuit living in Montréal. The CFP delegation was hosted by Québécois missionaries already working in Chile, as were several subsequent delegations organized by Vaillancourt over the 1970-1973 period. When Vaillancourt returned from the “Christians for Socialism” conference, he wondered: “Would it not be possible and desirable for other Québécois, union activists, activists from popular groups, activists from the left wing of the PQ to share the opportunity we have had?”

Other key transnational people were Vaillancourt’s hosts during the “Christians for Socialism” conference: the “curés rouges,” a group of Québécois missionaries living and working in Chile who played a major role in catalyzing solidarity with Chile. There were 133 Canadian Catholic missionaries active in Chile in 1971, regrouped in two principal missionary societies: the Oblats de Marie Immaculée, whose priests worked in the mining camps of the north, and the Société de Missions Étrangères, whose members worked in the barrios of Santiago and in Temuco with the indigenous Mapuche people in the rural south. Many of them were swept up by the radicalization of the Chilean masses. “Working with the faithful at the base in line with the orientations of the Latin American church, [and with] diverse intellectual currents and social and political movements,” explains Catherine Foisy, “many Québécois

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17 Baum, “Politisés Chrétiens,” 11.
18 Vaillancourt, “Pourquoi on s’intéressait au Chili en 1970,” 32. Vaillancourt helped to organize a delegation of students from Cégep Vieux-Montréal to Chile in June and July 1972. The report on their experiences was published as a book, Chili: une lutte à finir.
19 Yves Vaillancourt, “Pourquoi s’intéresser au Chili?” Relations (July-August 1972), 198.
missionaries discovered the collective dimension of salvation and became conscious of the socio-political character that mission could involve in certain contexts.”

In Santiago, many missionary priests working in poor neighbourhoods de-emphasized religious ceremony to focus instead on social and political action. Jean Ménard, a priest with the Société de Missions Étrangères, explained: “Sure, I baptised from time to time and I celebrated with the groups, but the work was done in the street, to fight against injustices, so that the streets were cleaner, so that health care was better, so that people ate well …” After seven years in Chile, Oblate Yves Laneuville wrote to his superiors: “For us, there is no Third World, since there are only two worlds: that of the exploiters and that of the exploited.”

Ironically, the Vatican had dispatched these foreign missions in the late 1950s to serve in poor parishes where Chilean priests were unwilling to go, in the hope of containing the rising influence of Marxism and Communism in Latin America.

Many Québécois activists traveled to Chile not only to observe but also to participate directly in the revolutionary process. This was the intention of Michel Beaubien, who left Québec for Chile in November 1971 to work on a popular education project in Santiago run by the Catholic development NGO Développement et Paix. Québec-Presse described Beaubien’s initial intentions:

Like many Québécois, he was very interested by what can be called, now more than ever, the Chilean experiment. Compared to a lot of people, however, he had gone a step further. He was not content to admire from afar, and to theorize about...

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24 Ibid., 74.
25 Jean Ménard, the source for this claim of anti-Communism, may be referring to the Papal Volunteers for Latin America (PAVLA) program. Pierre Dubuc, “Le plan secret du Vatican,” L’aut’journal No. 222 (September 2003); LeGrand, “L’axe missionnaire catholique,” 54–55.
this new form of revolution. He went to work. To give a bit of help to further its success.\textsuperscript{26}

Before leaving for Chile, Beaubien had often hung around the PQ’s Montréal office, always willing to lend a hand to the party’s staff. The PQ’s André Larocque traveled to Chile to visit Beaubien several months before the coup. Larocque was a leading member of the \textit{participationniste} current who had challenged Lévesque for the leadership of the PQ at the third congress in 1971, and was accompanied on the trip by his friend Michel Laguerrier, a young economist who worked with Larocque in the party’s Centre de Documentation et Recherche.\textsuperscript{27} Larocque was chief of staff and, after the October 1973 elections, parliamentary secretary for Robert Burns, the PQ Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for the riding of Maisonneuve (in East End Montréal). Laguerrier, meanwhile, played a major role in formulating the economic policies of the party in the following years and eventually held a number of important posts in economic ministries headed by Bernard Landry and Jacques Parizeau, among others.\textsuperscript{28}

The visit by Larocque and Laguerrier nearly proved fatal for Beaubien. After the coup d’état, the military raided the homes of any foreigners suspected of leftist sympathies. Anticipating a search, Beaubien burned any books or documents that could be construed as ‘subversive’ and even shaved off his beard. These precautions did not prevent him from being arrested. On 17 September, the military police searched Beaubien’s apartment and discovered an unusual 110-page document that Beaubien had not thought to burn, a document that contained no text, but featured “curious illustrations of unknown borders, incomprehensible numbers, and, on each page, a strange word, undoubtedly a secret code: Bellechasse, Compton, Missisquoi ...” The

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{26} Like Vaillancourt, Beaubien spent three months in Mexico at CIDOC learning Spanish before going to Chile. Michel Sabourin, ““Allende est mort d’avoir trop voulu sauvegarder l’unité nationale chilienne” – Michel Beaubien,” \textit{Québec-Press}, 7 October 1973, 20.
\item \textsuperscript{27} According to Larocque, he cleared his leadership bid with Lévesque before going ahead and was seeking not to unseat Lévesque but merely to draw coverage from Radio-Canada. Larocque, \textit{Le parti de René Lévesque: un retour aux sources}, 135–139.
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, 78–80.
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suspicious document was an analysis of the new riding boundaries established for the 1973 provincial election produced by the PQ’s parliamentary research staff that had been left behind by Larocque. Partly because of this document, Beaubien was interned at the National Stadium for eight days with thousands of other political prisoners.\(^{29}\) When Beaubien returned to Canada on 1 October, his harrowing tale made the front page of \emph{La Presse}. “I thought it was the end and that I was going to be shot,” Beaubien told journalists, “because there were rumours saying that those who went into the stadium did not come out alive.”\(^{30}\)

The \textit{Centro Intercultural de Documentación} (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, associated with Ivan Illich, an iconoclastic social thinker, was an important crossroads for Chile solidarity activists. Beaubien, Vaillancourt and many other Québécois who would make the voyage to Chile studied Spanish at CIDOC prior to their arrival. But Spanish was not the only instruction they received in Cuernavaca, as Chase Madar writes in a profile of Illich: “Throughout the late ’60s and early ’70s, CIDOC was part language school and part free university for intellectual hippies from all over the Americas.”\(^{31}\) Many CIDOC participants were exposed to Illich’s critique of Third World development efforts. This radical Catholic priest deeply influenced many Québécois who later spent time in Chile, whether as missionaries or as political observers.\(^{32}\)

For Théo Gagné, it was Allende’s attempt to reclaim Chile’s natural resources that drew him to the South American nation. Gagné, the Métallos’ regional coordinator for the Nord-Ouest, made the trip to Chile in July 1972 with two miners, Michel Provencher of Chibougamau and Joe Gosselin of Cadillac, representing the union. The miners’ delegation spent nearly a month in

\(^{29}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 151–153.  
\(^{32}\) Yves Laneuville, personal communication, April 2013; CIDOC was founded in 1963, as documentation centre within the \textit{Centro de Investigaciones Sociales} (CIC), which was where missionaries may have been trained by Illich prior to 1963.
the country getting to know the lives of their Chilean counterparts and witnessing the changes that socialism had wrought. Guided by their translator Yves Laneuville (a Catholic missionary and old friend of Gagné’s from Abitibi living in Chile since 1963), the group visited the El Teniente and Chuquicamata mines. Gagné and the two miners attended a celebration of the Day of National Dignity presided over by Salvador Allende himself, which marked the one-year anniversary of the nationalization of Chile’s enormously profitable copper mines. Later in the trip, the delegation even had the opportunity to sit down and talk directly with President Allende.33

The tour was recorded by filmmakers Maurice Bulbulian and Michel Gauthier and featured in a documentary film produced by the NFB entitled La richesse des autres. The film jumps back and forth between Québec and Chile, contrasting the struggles of miners in Québec against workplace injuries, dehumanizing working conditions and mine closures with the lives of Chilean miners, where the nationalized mines had put an end to such exploitative practices. The film also includes footage from a PQ congress, where delegates discuss the economic and social problems that result from Québec’s dependence on foreign capital. René Lévesque makes several appearances in the film, where he denounces multinational capital, often followed by triumphant statements from Allende about the successes of nationalization. Gagné is seen in the film appealing to workers at a labour rally to unite behind the PQ and throw out the representatives of the bosses in the next election.34

Dozens of other Québécois activists close to the PQ also observed first-hand the unfolding Chilean process. Serge Mongeau, although no longer a supporter of the party when he

34 Ibid. Théo Gagné was a prominent supporter of the PQ in the labour movement. According to Martine Tremblay, Gagné was among the trade unionists with whom René Lévesque “maintained durable friendships” throughout his life. After the 1973 election, Gagné took the place of Jacques Parizeau on the PQ’s national executive. Tremblay, Derrière les portes closes: René Lévesque et l’exercice du pouvoir (1976-1985), 318. Louis Fournier, “‘Pour les ouvriers, le PQ est une rupture avec les vieux partis’ - Théo Gagné,” Québec-Presses, 3 February 1974, 8.
went back to Chile in 1973, had run as a PQ candidate in the April 1970 provincial elections. He carried on a voluminous correspondence with activists, including many on the PQ left while in Chile, which was later collected in the book *Le rêve écrasé: Québec-Chili 1973.* Jacques B. Gélinas lived in Chile from 1971 to 1974 as a professor at FLASCO, the same institute where Mongeau was studying. Gélinas subsequently took up the post of Latin America director of the Ministère des Affaires Internationales in 1979 under the Lévesque government.

The flocks of Québécois leftists descending on Chile were significant enough to set off alarm bells at the Canadian embassy in Santiago. The embassy’s First Secretary Christopher St. John Austis warned in a 27 January 1971 cable to Ottawa that “the democratic election of a Marxist-inspired government could have negative consequences for the nations of the West.” The greatest threat was a possible “domino effect” in the rest of Latin America (where Canadian corporations had substantial investments), but St. John Austis hastened to add that “Allende's election with the support of a popular front has connotations for Canada.” He noted that Chile’s government-run newspaper had recently interviewed a visiting member of the Parti québécois, who described the purpose of their visit: “I wish to know how your Popular Unity functions, how it organizes people.... I believe that in Chile I shall find the experience necessary for my Party (which he claimed was also a popular front composed of Communists, Socialist [sic] etc. to become a majority party in Québec.” As Danilo Poblete observes in his study of Canada’s external relations with Chile during this period, the embassy was greatly concerned by growing ties between Québec and Chile. “The principal worry of the embassy concerned possible rapprochements between the Québécois independence movement and Popular Unity in Chile. These fears seemed to be confirmed by the interest that the Popular Unity government had

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elicited in certain sectors of Québécois society.” The embassy cited as evidence of growing Québec-Chile ties two major political gatherings that drew Québécois activists to the country: the April 1972 “Christians for Socialism” conference and an April 1973 international labour conference, with the theme of “The union struggle against the multinationals.”

In this case, Chilean trade unionists in 1973 had taken the initiative of building ties of solidarity with Québec’s labour movement. When Louis Laberge, Yvon Charbonneau and Marcel Pepin were jailed for defying back-to-work legislation during the 1972 Front Commun strikes, Chile’s Central Unica de Trabajadores (CUT, Unitary Federation of Workers) sent a delegation of workers to Québec to demonstrate their support. During their visit, the representatives of the Chilean labour federation extended an invitation to their Québec counterparts to attend the upcoming international trade union conference, which was organized by the CUT. Norbert Rodrigue, vice president of the CSN, and Kemal Wassef, of the research service of the CSN, participated in the April 1973 conference in Santiago (as did the FTQ’s Jean-Guy Frenette, one of the authors of L’État, rouage de notre exploitation) and were impressed by the determination of Chilean workers to build alliances in the struggle against imperialism.

In the eyes of the Canadian embassy, the danger that closer ties between Québécois activists and the UP presented was both ideological and geopolitical. On the one hand, Chile’s socialist government might provide Québec’s independence movement with “a degree of recognition at the international level.” On the other, Canadian authorities pondered “on a number of occasions the probability of the export of the Chilean model of the UP to Québec.” Embassy personnel “attentively watched” for any attempt by Allende’s government to “export the Chilean

experience to Québec.”\(^{39}\) The concern was so great that Canadian diplomats raised the matter directly with Chilean officials, who reassured their interlocutors that the UP government had no intention of actively fomenting revolution in Québec: “The director of Information Services of the Foreign Ministry, who is close to President Allende ... said that while the Chilean government would of course not prevent such individuals [Québec separatists] from studying the Chilean experience, they could not expect to receive help here in attempting to apply it to Canada.” According to Poblete, such anxieties persisted in spite of UP officials’ reassurances.\(^ {40}\)

The embassy’s anxieties were not entirely misplaced. For much of the Québec left (and the PQ left in particular) Chile clearly provided a model, or at least a source of inspiration, for its dream of a “socialisme québécois.” Most left-wing indépendantistes were, of course, quite aware that Québec constituted in many senses a special case of the fight for national liberation and they frequently objected to any imported, ready-made political formulas – a point repeated so often it became a cliché.\(^ {41}\) Yet as Claude Morin explains, “because activists were keen to know how other sovereign countries had attained [independence], the comparative reflex remained widespread.”\(^ {42}\) Like Allende and the UP, the PQ “aimed for not only a change of government, but for a constitutional mutation and a profound renovation of society,” in Morin’s words. He continues:

> It proposed to bring to term a secession opening upon a considerable transformation of the Québécois collectivity, but it claimed it would meet this challenge through democratic and reasonable means. Quite an innovation since

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\(^ {39}\) Poblete, “La politique extérieure du Canada à l’égard du Chili,” 63.

\(^ {40}\) The quote is from a 4 May 1971 cable from the First Secretary. Poblete states that these concerns increased after the coup, perhaps because of the number of Chilean exiles Canada accepted. Unfortunately he does not specify why or cite cables from after 1973: “Cette inquiétude sera visible tout au long de la période du gouvernement d’Allende et s’accentueront lors de la chute de celui-ci en 1973.” \(Ibid.,\) 64.

\(^ {41}\) “C’est devenu un cliché courant, aujourd’hui, d’affirmer qu’un modèle économique n’est pas exportable.” Yvon Leduc, “Un système qui profite aux géants,” \(Pointe de Mire\) Vol. 3 No. 10 (18 December 1971), 31.

\(^ {42}\) Morin, \(Les choses comme elles étaient: une autobiographie politique\), 308.
elsewhere this kind of initiative was most often accompanied by violence or, at the very least, significant upheaval.\textsuperscript{43}

How could the PQ left possibly resist the Chilean road to socialism, when there appeared to be so few other precedents for what the party was trying to accomplish?

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One of the most prominent radical péquistes to perceive significant parallels between Chile and Québec was Pierre Bourgault. In 1964, the 30-year-old Bourgault had been elected president of the Rassemblement pour l’indépendance nationale (RIN). The youthful RIN leader was involved in many of the radical early demonstrations of the indépendantiste movement, including the notorious St. Jean Baptiste riots of 1968. After the formation of the PQ, Bourgault engineered the dissolution of his party and encouraged its 14,000 members to sign up for the PQ.\textsuperscript{44} Many followed Bourgault into the PQ, convinced it was imperative not to divide the indépendantiste vote, but the more radical members of the defunct RIN resented his manoeuvre. Bourgault was a powerful orator, a skill that won him a seat on the PQ executive at the party’s third congress in February 1971. From June 1970 until May 1971, Bourgault served as editor-in-chief of the magazine Pointe de Mire, an indépendantiste magazine with a 1971 circulation of 10,000. Bourgault’s views, on Chile and on the future direction the PQ, thus reached a wide audience.

In a Pointe de Mire editorial written less than three months after the October Crisis, Bourgault defended, against those who had opted for clandestinity, his choice of the PQ as a political vehicle for national liberation. The PQ was far more potent politically than either the FLQ or other marginal groupings of the far left because it could practice what Bourgault called

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 266.
\textsuperscript{44} Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert and François Ricard, Québec since 1930, trans. Robert Chodos and Ellen Garmaise (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1977), 524.
“radicalization by numbers.” “We change a society more profoundly when thousands of citizens participate in an action perhaps less radical than we would like than when a handful of individuals discuss among themselves or engage in an action that is much more radical but sterilized by the limited number of participants.”

Bourgault had recently been visited by a group of American radicals, all of whom – “even the most extremist radicals” – recognized “the enormous importance, in revolutionary processes, of the ‘over ground’ machine, of a political party that struggles within the limits of legality and can thus make use of a vast tribune of information.” Bourgault chided those on the radical left who maintained that elections could not change anything, yet refused to take up armed struggle: “There aren’t 50 ways to do it. There are two: elections or a coup d’état. One has to choose.”

The Parti Québécois has chosen elections. A new reason to hope has presented itself to all those who believe it possible to triumph by means of elections: the example of Chile where a left coalition, led by Mr. Allende, has succeeded in beating its adversaries on points without shedding a drop of blood. Are we any less revolutionary for it?

This should at least convince us all to try at least one more time. That’s what I intended to do, for my part.

Bourgault argued that the PQ should define itself as a socialist party, but wanted the party – like Allende’s Unidad Popular – to be open to all political currents of the left. Bourgault felt that a social democratic current in a socialist PQ could serve to remind the party to “respect the positive gains of the bourgeois revolutions.” As Bourgault explained, he was not enamoured with the “actually existing socialism” of the East: “[T]he principal flaw of socialist regimes, notwithstanding all the fancy theories one can entertain on the subject, is to disregard too easily what are called formal freedoms, which are only despised by those who have never been

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
deprived of them." But Bourgault was also frustrated by the fact that the programme and structures of the party did not reflect the views of thousands of péquistes radicalized over the last two years. He also urged the party “to open our ranks to a dynamic and activist left that does not find its home with us.” He wanted, in essence, a Québec version of the UP.

It is therefore no surprise that during Bourgault’s brief tenure as editor-in-chief, Point de Mire covered Chile closely. In its October 1970 edition, the magazine carried a story entitled “Chile: Waiting for 24 October,” which covered the results of the recent presidential election and the manoeuvres of the Chilean extreme right and the CIA to block Allende’s inauguration. In November 1970, the magazine’s International news director, Adèle Lauzon, was sent to Chile as a “special envoy” to cover the transfer of power to Salvador Allende’s government. Reporting from the capital city of Santiago, Lauzon observed that, after a brief period of post-election instability, the situation in the country was “very calm.” The opponents of the UP had used scare tactics similar to those deployed against the PQ in the April 1970 elections:

During the presidential election campaign, Chileans were subjected to – like Québécois last spring – “le coup de la Brinks.” To elect the socialist Salvador Allende, sole candidate of the Popular Unity front, meant, people of the centre and the right said, plunging the country into a series of catastrophes: capital flight, exodus of technicians, national bankruptcy, police state, etc.

A sufficient number of Chilean voters had disregarded these threats, giving Allende the presidency. The right (with the help of the U.S.) had tried to make good on these threats after Allende’s victory, causing economic instability and capital flight. This episode had ended with the assassination of General René Schneider by elements of the extreme right (financed and encouraged by the CIA), which caused the Christian Democrats to concede victory to Allende.

49 Ibid.
Chile’s “coup de la Brink’s” had been far more serious than Québec’s in April 1970, Lauzon explained, because the UP “seems more menacing for American interests than was the Parti québécois.” The decision to nationalize the assets of American mining companies in copper, iron and nitrate had already been taken, according to Lauzon, and awaited only the sorting out of technical details.\footnote{Ibid., 56.}

Lauzon underlined the world-historic dimensions of Allende’s victory. “For the first time in the world, a Marxist government has been brought to power by democratic elections. And this, on a continent associated with violence, whether from the right or the left.” A caption for a picture of Allende accompanying the article read: “An inspiration for the left around the world.”\footnote{Ibid., 55, 56.} Lauzon concluded her report from Chile with guarded optimism concerning the larger significance of Allende’s victory, while withholding her final judgements:

> The Chilean experience has proved that it is possible to “democratically elect” a left government and overcome the crisis that can immediately follow. What is still unknown, what the future will tell, is the capacity of this government to fully realize its reforms without becoming authoritarian and without suffering serious internal or external reprisals.\footnote{Ibid., 56.}

For Lauzon, Bourgault and much of the PQ left, Allende’s victory was a hopeful sign that \textit{socialisme et indépendance} was indeed feasible, that the parliamentary path of the PQ was the way to attain it, and that the resistance of U.S. imperialism could be overcome.

\textit{Maintenant} was another of the many publications drawn to Allende’s Chile. The monthly magazine, originally published by the Order of Dominicans, was an independent platform for Catholic intellectuals espousing a left-leaning, reformist interpretation of the Gospel and sympathizing with Québec’s independence movement.\footnote{On the role of Catholic personalism in the Quiet Revolution, see Gauvreau, \textit{Catholic Origins of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, 1931-1970}; Meunier and Warren, \textit{Sortir de la grande noirceur}.}

Over the course of the 1960s,
discussions of problems and debates within the Catholic church gradually gave way in the magazine’s pages to reflections on “the engagement of Christians in the world.” Inspired by the Second Vatican Council and later by Latin American liberation theology, the editors of *Maintenant* began paying greater attention to both Québec’s socio-economic problems and developments in the Third World. This new orientation was not without its critics. “International issues have taken a lot of space in the magazine these last years, too much according to some,” observed Vincent Harvey in a November 1970 editorial marking the magazine’s 100th issue. A special issue on Latin America published in November 1966 sold poorly at first. Yet two or three years later, backorders from many different quarters for the special issue began rolling in, demonstrating to Harvey and the editors that “we had been perhaps not entirely wrong to contribute to this awareness-raising.”

By the end of the decade, the editors had concluded that the liberation of Québécois from interconnected forms of social, cultural, linguistic, political and economic oppression necessitated not only independence but a more radical, global change. As Vincent Harvey explained: “Real democratization is inseparable from the progressive establishment of a socialism *de chez nous* that takes account of our North American situation. It is in this optic that the magazine has promoted and will continue to promote movements for community organization like the *comités de citoyens*, consciousness-raising and politicization of the people.” An April 1973 survey indicated that the magazine’s subscriber base of 4,000 readers – disproportionately male, well-educated, middle class and religious, with a median age of 38 –

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was broadly in favour of *socialisme et indépendance* and overwhelmingly supportive of the Parti québécois.\textsuperscript{59}

The *Maintenant* editors devoted two special issues to Chile in just over two years, the first published before the coup and the second shortly after. The June-July 1971 special issue on Chile captures well the enthusiasm and sense of possibility that Allende’s victory generated for many left-leaning péquistes. The collection of articles introduced readers to the demographic and social characteristics of Chile and explored in detail the UP’s economic policies and political strategy. Many of the articles relied heavily on Régis Debray’s *Entretiens avec Allende sur la situation au Chili*, a book published in 1971 by the French radical publishing house Maspero and widely read and commented on by the Québec left. On the cover of special issue, the editors placed the following quote from Salvador Allende’s interviews with Debray: “The lesson is that each people possesses their own reality, and that faced with that reality, it must act. There is no recipe. Our case, for example, opens perspectives, new paths.”\textsuperscript{60} The choice of this quotation epitomized the attempt by the editors, like much of the Québec left, to balance sources of inspiration from abroad with the pursuit of a distinctively Québécois road to socialism. While allowing that there were “enormous differences” between Chile and Québec, these differences were not sufficient to the deter the editorial committee from comparing the two.\textsuperscript{61} As indicated by the title of the issue – “Chile: A Sneak Preview of Québec?” – the parallels were too tantalizing to resist.

In the introduction to the special issue, “Why a dossier on Chile?” the editors explained that studying Chile could help one to think about Québec, because the revolution underway in Chile, more than any other previous attempt at profound change, resembled the path traced by

\textsuperscript{60} *Maintenant* No. 107 (June-July 1971), front cover.
\textsuperscript{61} “Pourquoi un dossier sur le Chili,” 169.
Québec's liberation movement. The editors explained that “the path taken by Chile, that is the pursuit of a national liberation (on the economic plane) and social changes of a structural nature through elections and the complete application of existing legality, is in more than one respect the same as ours.” Indeed, the similarities were so significant that “Québec with respect to Chile finds itself in the balcony, a spectator to a kind of sneak preview. ... Thus the importance of seeking to understand how this event was possible in Chile and to follow closely how the pursuit of this experiment will be countered, partially or totally, by the local wealthy minority and by the agents of American imperialism.”*

The first lesson was that radical change could be achieved via the ballot box. This was reassuring for those who had placed their faith in the PQ. Like UP voters in Chile, PQ voters in the April 1970 elections had expressed their desire for a “radical transformation of our society.” Chile demonstrated, however, that electing a new government was only the first step in the struggle; enacting radical changes also depended on a “real politicization of the life of a collectivity.” The UP’s victory at the polls had been won through “work at the grassroots” carried out by both political parties and unions. Allende's first seven months in office had shown that structural changes could be implemented without resort to violence only if “political forces deeply involve themselves in daily problems.” “The Chilean experience exhibits a continual presence of the political apparatuses at all levels and in all sectors of life of oppressed groups and the working class.”*

These Chilean lessons resonated well with the concerns of the broad participationniste current in the PQ, which constantly argued that the PQ needed to establish closer links with unions, citizens’ committees, and other organized elements of the working class.

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* Ibid., 168.

Ibid., 168, 169.
Allende’s struggle against U.S. multinationals was highlighted as another Chilean experience relevant to Québec concerns. Political independence was inextricably linked to economic transformation, as the editors emphasized in the introduction. They foresaw that an independent Québec would have to take measures similar to those of the Allende government in order to assert its control over an economy dominated by American multinational corporations.\footnote{Ibid., 169.} In the Chilean context, the UP was trying to tackle this problem through a nationalization of the economy’s foreign-dominated ‘commanding heights’ – principally copper mining, but also banking, steel, salpeter and a host of other industries. The backlash faced by the UP government provided a window into understanding how these clashes might play out in an independent Québec: “The struggle against national oligarchies and American imperialism is still ongoing in Chile, it constitutes an example from which we can benefit and which provides us with lessons that we have every interest in absorbing.”\footnote{Ibid.} In the eyes of the Maintenant editors, the results thus far were encouraging. Allende had implemented his radical program with relative ease, indicating that Québec need not fear substantial economic change after independence. “It is equally important for Québec to analyze how Chile attempts to win national liberation through the re-conquest of its economy. Already, the experiment underway shows that it is possible to take a series of tough decisions without the earth ceasing to spin.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Both the editors’ introduction and several of the articles recognized that it was far too early to predict the ultimate outcome of the Chilean experiment. While not ruling out the possibility of a coup, the Maintenant editors were optimistic that by playing on bourgeois democracy’s terrain and winning, the Chilean left had caught the imperialists and the oligarchy in “their own trap of legality.” If the resort to force did come, it would come not from leftists but
from the wealthy classes. “Thanks to the election and the use of [existing] institutions intentions are clear, the masks are off. That, in our opinion, is a non-negligible advantage for a force for change.” Moreover, the clear intent and democratic legitimacy of the Allende government meant that “international public opinion” would provide a measure of protection from foreign intervention. Chile was, in a sense, a test of sincerity for international (“read: American”) capitalism’s pretence of encouraging development. “If the experiment fails, we will have the most explosive proof that the nice talk about aid for development and the liberal theories on the benefits of foreign investment are nothing but smokescreens for an economic domination that pretends to be democratic.”

Whatever the outcome of the Chilean process, its novelty and particular characteristics could not help but captivate Québec leftists, as Yvan Labelle explained:

The Chilean enterprise is like a great gamble: is it possible to achieve a socialist revolution through reason without having either the left or the right resort to force? Or will it find itself at a crucial moment of its history before the tragic dilemma evoked by its motto: By reason or by force?

The admiration of the editors of Maintenant for Chile was symptomatic of the radicalization occurring among progressive intellectuals of the Quiet Revolution. “The dream of building a socialist society,” Louis O’Neill observed in February 1973, “currently exerts a great attraction over reformist souls who judge that the capitalist world requires profound transformations. In Québec, the socialist option seems to be gaining ground.” While respectful of Marxism, O’Neill and other Catholic intellectuals like him found its materialist outlook incompatible with their religious beliefs. They also preferred structural reforms to violent revolution, electoral struggle to class struggle, and parliamentary democracy to the bureaucratic authoritarianism of the regimes that claimed the mantle of communism. What O’Neill and many others sought was a model of socialism in tune with their deep attachment to Christian humanism.

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67 Ibid.
and the specific conditions of Québec. Most did not reject Marxism outright. Indeed, O’Neill argued that it could provide non-Marxists with “useful tools of analysis” and that its “historic contribution” was “enormous.” O’Neill ranked “the attempt at democratic socialism undertaken by the Allende government in Chile” alongside the power of the Soviet bloc and the Chinese revolution as historic achievements of Marxism, through the latter two were clearly diminished by “the mania for repression and the heavy bureaucracy of the communist regimes.”

Writing in 1971, Guy Rocher similarly argued that the idea of socialism had been tainted by infringements upon civil and individual liberties, one-party states, and the politicized police and judicial systems that characterized most socialist regimes around the world. “They have effectively all – with the exception of the recent and difficult Chilean experience – been incapable of co-existing with political systems that recognize the freedom of people and other political parties.” For Rocher, like countless other PQ sympathizers, Chile stood as a valuable counterpoint to the “negative imagery” with which socialism was surrounded in liberal democracies. “Socialism is fundamentally much more humane than capitalism,” Rocher insisted. He was aware that his opinion was far from universal: “There is thus much to do to rehabilitate socialism and socialist solutions in the eyes of the Francophone Québécois population.”

The Maintenant editorial committee featured at least one member with direct knowledge of Chile prior to the advent of the Unidad Popular government: Jacques Grand’Maison. A Jeunesse ouvrière catholique (JOC) chaplain living in St-Jérome, Grand’Maison was intimately involved in the struggles of young workers and farmers in the area. He was also well-versed in the debates within the Latin American church stimulated by liberation theology. Grand’Maison had lived in rural Chile before and attended Yves Vaillancourt’s September 1970 presentation on

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70 Guy Rocher, Le Québec en mutation (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1973), 43.
Allende’s victory, though he was much more critical of Chile’s “revolutionary Christians” than was the young Jesuit.\textsuperscript{71} Grand’Maison regarded Chile as a model of popular mobilization and politicization worthy of emulation by the PQ. In one of his many books, Jacques Grand’Maison compared Québec’s democratic life unfavourably to Chile’s more vibrant grassroots:

Let us say from the outset that the quality of our democracy has its first real test in the daily activity of its citizens. And we cannot be proud of ourselves for having created a fertile human soil to support our democratic superstructures. Important enterprises or decisions of a political, economic or cultural nature are less possible without broad support from within the population and its diverse walks of life. The democratic experience of Chile offers an example of the fecundity of base cells spread to the four corners of thousands of local communities, rural and urban, of the country.\textsuperscript{72}

Maintenant was arguably the most powerful publication with respect to influencing the views of the upper circles of the PQ. Maintenant’s offices were located in the basement of the Monastère Saint-Albert-le-Grand, the same place where René Lévesque’s Mouvement Souveraineté-Association (MSA) had been founded in 1967. “In the 1970s,” historian Martin Roy points out, “Maintenant firmly supported the sovereigntist project and the Parti québécois (PQ) that carried it. Collaborators of the magazine like Louis O’Neill, Jacques-Yvan Morin, Guy Rocher and Fernand Dumont were, moreover, closely associated to Lévesque’s cabinet, either as ministers or as intellectuals of the regime.”\textsuperscript{73} All four were members of the editorial committee at one time or another in the early 1970s and all four had very close connections with the PQ. Louis O’Neill, a priest who taught at Université Laval and had been an outspoken opponent of Duplessism in the 1950s, ran unsuccessfully in the 1973 provincial election as the PQ’s candidate in Mercier against Robert Bourassa. Jacques-Yvan Morin, a young jurist and close ally


\textsuperscript{72} Jacques Grand’Maison, \textit{Nouveaux modèles sociaux et développement, Tome II} (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1972), 188.

\textsuperscript{73} Martin Roy, “Foi chrétienne et souverainisme québécois dans la revue catholique de gauche Maintenant (1962-1974),” \textit{Bulletin d’histoire politique} Vol. 22 No. 1 (Fall 2013), 155-156.
of René Lévesque, became the PQ parliamentary leader after Camille Laurin was defeated in the 1973 election. Guy Rocher had studied sociology at the doctoral level at Harvard University and was one of the most respected academics in Québec.\textsuperscript{74} Other editorial committee members were close to the PQ, if not as intimately related to its top leadership. Robert Boily, a professor of political science at Université de Montréal, had run as a PQ candidate in the Montréal riding of Jeanne-Mance in the April 1970 elections. Boily had also conducted pre-election polling for the party in 1970.\textsuperscript{75} Jacques Grand’Maison was another member of the editorial board who, although never a candidate for the PQ, was staunch supporter of the party and was solicited to run for office under the PQ banner on numerous occasions. When Maintenant stopped publication in 1974, many of its editorial board members and contributors went to work with Le Jour, an indépendantiste newspaper launched by the PQ in the same year.\textsuperscript{76}

The most dramatic political about-face to be inspired by the “Chilean road to socialism” was that of felquiste intellectual Pierre Vallières. After years spent in a clandestine organization that advocated setting off bombs as a means of awakening the revolutionary consciousness of the masses, the FLQ leader Vallières stunned the left by renouncing armed struggle and publicly declaring his adherence to the Parti québécois. How had Vallières, a one-time proponent of violent revolution, come to place such faith in bourgeois legality? Why did he suddenly embrace a revolutionary strategy that depended on attaining democratic legitimacy by working through the parliamentary system? The reasons behind Vallières’s change of heart were laid out initially in a series of articles published in Le Devoir in December 1971 and in the book L’urgence de choisir published by Parti pris at the beginning of 1972. As we shall see, Vallières’s embrace of

\textsuperscript{74} Although O’Neill was defeated in 1973, he would win election in 1976 and become a Minister in the first Lévesque government. Rocher had been friends with PQ parliamentary leader Camille Laurin since they were schoolboys, and would work with Fernand Dumont on the commission that produced Bill 101 in 1977. Fraser, René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois in Power, 94.

\textsuperscript{75} Larocque, Le parti de René Lévesque: un retour aux sources, 111–112.

\textsuperscript{76} Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, “La revue disparaît, l’équipe reste,” Maintenant No. 141 (December 1974), 3-4.
the PQ as the vehicle for Québec’s national liberation was strongly influenced by his reading of the situation in Chile. In a very short period of time, Vallières effectively went from being a “Guevarist” to an “Allendist.”

*L’urgence de choisir* was the fruit of an “auto-critique” conducted within the FLQ, written over the course of a few days in December 1971. When he was released from prison in June 1971, Pierre Vallières was initially convinced that the FLQ enjoyed wide popular support for both its goals and its methods. He was soon disabused of these illusions as he discovered how little opposition Trudeau’s invocation of the War Measures Act had provoked. Vallières went underground one last time in September 1971. Over the next few months while living under a false name in a friend’s apartment in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Vallières engaged in an intense period of debate and self-criticism with FLQ comrades on the wisdom of their political orientation.77 Vallières’s conclusions were categorical: the FLQ’s Guevarist *foco* strategy had not only been politically sterile, but in practice had served the interests of their opponents. During the October crisis, Ottawa’s actions had revealed that the greatest threat to the Canadian state’s integrity was not the FLQ, but the PQ, the unions and the citizens’ committees. Canada’s status as an “advanced democracy” meant that it needed a suitable pretext for crushing the PQ and the broader independence movement before it could intervene militarily again. Indeed, the federal state was desperately seeking another excuse to intervene, because it knew that the PQ was rapidly becoming the legitimate authority representing – “within the country as well as abroad” – the people of Québec.78 In order to give the PQ the time necessary to attain the legitimacy “that

would render it politically invulnerable,” said Vallières, it was crucial to avoid any kind of recklessness or adventurism of the sort the FLQ had engaged in.  

The political purpose of Vallières’s essay was to convince leftists, especially those in the unions and citizens’ committees, to join the Parti québécois *en masse* and work in its local and regional party associations to shape the content of its *indépendantisme*. Like Vallières, most leftists in 1971 – before Maoism’s consolidation – still defined *socialisme et indépendance* as their ultimate goals. But for a number of reasons, many leftists declined to support the PQ. Some argued that the PQ’s program was insufficiently socialist and its leadership too moderate. Others looked at the social composition of the PQ and saw a petit bourgeois party promoting a form of nationalism serving its particular class interests. Others still suspected that Lévesque (a former Liberal, after all) and the technocrats surrounding him were merely seeking to build a national capitalism.

Vallières rejected all such arguments with polemical zeal. Critics of the PQ who complained that it was insufficiently radical failed to grasp the inherently revolutionary character of independence movements. What Vallières called the “imperialist mode of production” (a concept borrowed from the *Monthly Review* school of Marxism) systematically frustrated social development and vigorously opposed independence movements in colonized nations like Québec. Modern forms of imperialism (embodied in the multinational corporation) meant that any struggle for political and economic sovereignty inevitably led to a conflict with international capitalism and thus tended to take on an increasingly socialist character.

There is no doubt in my mind today that the political orientation of a René Lévesque is objectively more progressive than that of the majority of the most staunchly ‘Marxist-Leninist’ leftists. [...] The political programme of the PQ is

80 For instance, the PQ’s refusal to endorse the October 1971 demonstration of striking *La Presse* workers had angered many in the labour movement and caused serious internal tensions.
not any more ‘moderate’ or conservative than that of the Vietcong (Has the left read it?) or moreover than that which Castro proposed to the Cuban masses during the struggle against Batista.\(^{81}\)

Support for the PQ and independence was thus not putting off the fight for a socialist society until later. Indeed, it was *the only way* to struggle for socialism. Unfortunately, most leftists failed to understand the imperialist mode of production and its implications for Québec and thus neglected the struggle for independence, toying instead with ideas like the formation of a *parti des travailleurs* or the creation of tiny Marxist-Leninist grouplets. As a result, Vallières lamented, “in reality many Québécois socialists are not actually tackling the political tasks that the present situation calls for.”\(^ {82}\)

Vallières characterized the PQ as a “mass party” that had arisen organically from the depth of the nation. “This party belongs to the Québécois collectivity, like the labour centrals, the citizens’ committees and all the other organizations born of popular struggles.” To critics who complained about the “petty bourgeois” character of the PQ, Vallières replied that the party was no more “petty bourgeois” than other left organizations. Vallières did admit that the PQ needed to deepen its connections with the working class and sharpen its activist orientation. Like the editors of *Maintenant*, Vallières called for a party deeply enmeshed in the daily struggles of the masses and committed to popular education, working tirelessly to raise the consciousness of Québécois. “Activism must be constant.” This was the only way to meet the challenges that faced the independence movement.\(^ {83}\)

The political evolution of intellectuals like Louis O’Neill, Guy Rocher and others associated with *Maintenant* was partly what had persuaded Pierre Vallières – who was also

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\(^{81}\) *Ibid.*, 37, 95.

\(^{82}\) *Ibid.*, 42, emphasis in original.

\(^{83}\) “A party, like the PQ, dedicated to the task of realizing the independence of a colonized nation cannot content itself with raised-hand votes at periodic Congresses.” *Ibid.*, 92–93.
affected by Catholic personalism – to place his faith in the Parti québécois. In L’urgence de choisir, Vallières argued that the intelligentsia had moved from an capitalist ideology of catch-up during the Quiet Revolution to an ideology of dépassement, correctly perceiving that attaining meaningful sovereignty required socialist measures and ultimately a different social system. As evidence for this trend, Vallières cited the work of Guy Rocher, who drew hope and inspiration for efforts at reclaiming Québec’s economic sovereignty from struggles in Chile and elsewhere in the hemisphere against U.S. multinational corporations:

The countries of Latin America (Cuba, Chile, Peru) are each seeking in their own way to liberate themselves from the American economic empire, starting from a state of dependence far more advanced than ours. It is therefore possible, if we know how to mobilize energies in a positive manner and to propose precise goals that merit the sacrifices they demand.\(^{84}\)

The strong presence of technocrats and progressive intellectuals, especially at the party’s leadership level, therefore did not bother Vallières at all. The erstwhile proponents of the ‘État-lévier’ now shared largely the same objectives as younger activists seeking the construction of a Québécois socialism. To be politically efficacious, Vallières prophesized, these two groups were called “to inevitably unite, within the independence movement.”\(^{85}\)

In Vallières’s L’urgence de choisir, the international context was evoked constantly and powerfully. Québec’s independence struggle was frequently situated in relation to other movements for national liberation. In the fight against U.S. imperialism, the Latin American experience was singled out as particularly relevant for Québec:

[W]e have everything to gain by connecting with the level of combativeness of the countries engaged in the struggle for their political and economic independence, in particular of those that, in Latin America, find themselves in the avant-garde of this struggle, all the while making part, like us, of the American continent.

\(^{84}\) Ibid., 62–63.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., 61–63, emphasis in original.
In my opinion, it’s there, much more than in Africa or Asia, that we will principally find this reciprocity of interests upon which we can build a new type of international relations, on the basis of the social development of nations and not on that of their common exploitation by imperialism.\(^{86}\)

Within Latin America, it was Allende’s Chile that elicited the greatest praise from Vallières. *L’urgence de choisir* placed Allende’s Chile on a par with Cuba and Vietnam, the two revolutionary struggles unanimously revered by the Québec left.\(^{87}\) Vallières did not want to see an independent Québec become too dependent on alliances with the Soviet Bloc and saw the non-aligned stance of Allende’s foreign policy as offering an interesting alternative: “The history of Cuba-USSR relations imposes the greatest prudence and firmness in this regard. The history of Vietnam and that, more recent, of ‘Allende-ist’ Chile are rich examples to follow for Québec.”\(^{88}\) Vallières also defended the Chilean process against criticism from orthodox Marxists, arguing that the international context called for a carefully controlled advance:

> [...\)] Chile seeks to avoid a brutal confrontation with the United States, all the while undertaking transformations in key sectors of the economy, which without being theoretically ‘ultra revolutionary’ and global, nonetheless constitute the *indispensable* starting point for its own strategy of economic development and social progress.\(^{89}\)

As late as June 1971, Vallières himself had espoused “ultra-revolutionary” views on Chile. When interviewed by American journalist Nicholas Regush, Vallières revealed that he – like many on the left – was paying close attention to the struggles unfolding in Allende’s Chile. At the time, Vallières was still pessimistic about the prospects for struggle through the ballot box and denied the revolutionary character of Allende’s election:

\(^{86}\) *Ibid.*, 150–151, emphasis in original.

\(^{87}\) On the other hand, Vallières warned that not much solidarity could be expected from the U.S., where the working class “as a whole is not any more motivated to support the liberation struggle of the Québécois than it is to support the liberation struggle of the Vietnamese, the Cubans or the Chileans.” *Ibid.*, 150.


\(^{89}\) Vallières, *L’urgence de choisir*, 40, emphasis in original.
I don't believe in a so-called democratic revolution. ... Confrontation in Chile is inevitable and it is inevitable in Québec. People appear to assume that the bourgeoisie would be willing to give up their privileges and to commit suicide because a government voted in is Marxist oriented. The bourgeoisie will resist such an attempt to protect their privileges and interests and these interests will be supported by American imperialism, which always has to lose more in each country than do the local exploiters.\textsuperscript{90}

Interviewed again after the publication of \textit{L'urgence de choisir}, Vallières told Regush he believed it was now possible to postpone – if not ultimately to avoid – a decisive confrontation in Québec, and pointed to Chile as a major inspiration:

We must develop Québec without being forced to fight constant aggression. This could be done by developing an understanding of each stage of the battle necessary to oppose imperialism. For example, Allende has profited from understanding the Cuban experience and so has attempted to by-pass the development of a new Cuba, which of course may be far more difficult today or even impossible. In Québec we must understand this point as well.\textsuperscript{91}

Chile also served as a model for the ever-fraught relationships between state, party and class in an independent Québec. Asked by Regush if a future PQ government might not end up substituting itself for the revolutionary action of the masses and thus fall into “bureaucratic and authoritarian opportunism,” Vallières responded: “I don't think there is any nation which has resolved the issue you are raising.” Chile, however, provided the most promising formula, where “[t]he avant-garde there is in the government and there is a critique from the revolutionary organizations as well.” This “mixed” formula most closely resembled what Vallières envisioned for Québec, where the revolutionary process would be guided by both an “avant-gardist or radically progressive” government and “a continuous stream of criticism” from unions and citizens’ committees. “I'm not in favour of blindly supporting the government after independence since I don't believe solely in political parties,” Vallières told Regush.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, 146–147.
\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Ibid.}, 149.
After *L’urgence de choisir* was released, Regush reminded Vallières of the initial scepticism about the Chilean road he had expressed in June 1971. Was not Vallières being overly optimistic about the radicalism of the PQ and the Québec working class? Vallières replied that what Québécois workers lacked in class consciousness, they made up for in national consciousness:

> It is obvious that here in Québec, the working class hasn't the same history. But here, the political consciousness takes the shape of a national one, because of the 'colony' status we have. And it is from this national consciousness that social and political consciousness is developed. In fact, it is the same thing. ... But since 1960, nationalism has become an ideology aimed at the desire to free society from domination. In this sense, there isn't any major difference between an independentist party and the ‘L’unité Populaire’ in Chile. The level of social consciousness is similar, even though both movements are developing in the context of different concrete conditions.  

From Vallières’s new perspective, René Lévesque and the PQ were in effect pursuing a transformative strategy adapted to the masses’ level of consciousness and to Québec’s international situation, a strategy not unlike that of Allende and the UP.

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At its height, the Marxist-Leninist movement was led by three Maoist organizations, the Ligue Communiste, En Lutte! and the Parti communiste canadien (marxiste-léniniste), that altogether possessed a combined estimated membership of 1050, and a broader following of at least 3,000 activists and sympathizers concentrated in Montréal. In addition, the province’s various Trotskyist organizations boasted a combined membership of 500. Due to their frenetic activity and intense commitment, the M-Ls were a force to be reckoned with on the left. Warren judges the dimensions of the M-L phenomenon in Québec to be “not very far, proportionately, from what was seen in France during the same period.”

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in part of the labour movement, principally the CSN, and in educational establishments (Cégeps and universities),” recalls Louis Favreau of the M-L movement, “it was predominant on the [non-PQ] left as a whole for a good five years (1974-1979).”\textsuperscript{95} Maoism had an enormous impact on the Montréal left, out of proportion with its career elsewhere in North America.

In 1970, however, few would have predicted that Maoism would soon be the dominant force on the non-PQ left. Québec’s first formal Maoist organization was the small and exceptionally sectarian Parti communiste canadien (marxiste-léniniste), which was founded in March 1970. But the rest of the “movement” at the time was little more than a scatter of Marxist reading circles, student political groups, workers’ committees, and fragments of the dissolved RIN. Maoist ideas had been circulating on university campuses since 1967, but they were tinged at first with a libertarian sensibility typical of the New Left. Persisting until the October crisis, this “Mao-spontex” phase was a far cry from the obsessive focus on party-building that took hold in the mid-1970s.

For Charles Gagnon, and for much of the Québec left, the October crisis provoked a period of intense re-examination. Like his FLQ comrade Pierre Vallières, he was released from prison in June 1971 and renounced armed struggle in September 1971.\textsuperscript{96} Unlike Vallières, he resolutely rejected the PQ and the parliamentary path. Gagnon would soon become one of the leading lights of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Québec, but his switch from anti-colonial nationalism to “scientific Marxism” did not happen overnight. Gagnon worked for the CCSNM’s Service d’éducation where he collaborated with activists from the CAPs and the CFP, and his deepening engagement with Marxism-Leninism coexisted with the objectives of \textit{socialisme et}

\textsuperscript{95} Favreau, “Mouvements socialistes, marxisme et question nationale au Québec,” 290-291.
\textsuperscript{96} Gagnon, \textit{Feu sur l’Amérique}, 204.
indépendance until 1973 or 1974. “In 1972,” write Ivan Carel and Robert Comeau, “nothing is settled.” The intensification of Québec’s class struggle (Front Commun strikes, Firestone strike in Joliette, etc.) propelled Gagnon and many other activists down the M-L path. The FRAP and the Montréal CAPs were the seedbed of the movement, with CAP St. Jacques and CAP Maisonneuve serving as major incubators.

Gagnon's political trajectory was “emblematic,” Carel and Comeau write, as it “testifies to that part of the Québécois youth, on the left obviously, ... for whom the passage from indépendantisme to Leninism was much more an evolution than a radical rupture.” Younger and more intransigent than Michel Chartrand, left Catholics like Yves Vaillancourt, or Louis Favreau and the CFP, the M-Ls’ political differences with the parti des travailleurs current were initially slight. Major divergences emerged in part through conflicts in the FRAP from 1970 to 1972. Debates over how to understand the significance of Allende’s victory were a part of this evolution. In the face of the excitement about Chile’s peaceful revolution and the analogies made between the PQ and the UP, Marxist-Leninists felt the need to re-affirm orthodox conceptions of revolution, the seizure of power, and the bourgeois State.

The features of the Chilean road that so impressed Bourgault, Vallières and the Maintenant editors were precisely those that most unsettled Québec’s emerging Marxist-Leninist movement. Chile's “revolution without rifles,” its careful constitutionalism and its respect for bourgeois legality posed a vexing puzzle for orthodox Marxists. The rapidity of the UP’s advance on major parts of its socialist programme in its first year seemed to indicate that structural, even revolutionary, changes could be realized within the framework of parliamentary

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97 En Lutte! only officially rejected the concept of the struggle in Québec as one of national liberation against U.S. imperialism in November 1974. Its relentless focus on party-building only really emerged in 1975. Charles Gagnon, En lutte! (Montréal: Lux, 2008), v.
98 Ibid., i, ii.
democracy. Could the bourgeoisie really have relinquished its class privileges so easily? It was for this reason that in 1971 Régis Debray referred to Chile’s unfolding revolutionary process as “the Chilean oddity.”

The transition to socialism initiated by the Unidad Popular government, Debray explained, did not readily conform to any of the predictions of orthodox Marxism. A foreign traveller in Allende’s Chile, with “a few oddments of historical materialism in his memory,” found himself confronted with “an ungraspable situation.” “Translated immediately into canonic terms – into ‘basic Marxist-Leninism’ – it becomes incomprehensible, irritating, even disturbing. The endless train of perplexities destroys one's bearings.”

In the newsletter Vaincre, published by Gagnon and a group of activists associated with the Comité Vallières-Gagnon from February 1971 to March 1972, the election of the UP government was greeted as an “historic development” that gave a “new character” to the class struggle in Chile. But Vaincre reminded its readers that if Allende had won an important battle in the 4 September 1970 elections, the class war was far from over. The UP formed the government, but it now had to contend with a bureaucracy stacked with Christian Democrat partisans, a judiciary that shamelessly meted out “class justice,” and a Congress still in the hands of its opponents, all of which were working doggedly to frustrate its advance. Furthermore, the “statute of democratic guarantees” that the UP gave to the Christian Democrats in order to secure congressional support for Allende’s nomination to the presidency constituted a serious mistake. Most PQ supporters viewed this agreement, which committed the government to holding regular elections and reaffirmed the sole responsibility of the military and the police for matters of public order, as a sensible and necessary compromise. Yet Vaincre, like most Marxist-Leninist

101 Gagnon, En Lutte!, 369; Gagnon, Feu sur l’Amérique, 207.
publications, was highly critical of the deal, arguing that by agreeing to a ban on the organization of popular militias, the UP had placed itself at the mercy of the Chilean military.\footnote{102}

Many observers in Québec, \textit{Vaincre} noted, had rushed to hail Allende’s victory as a “revolution without rifles.” \textit{Vaincre} replied that it was important to retain a sense of proportion. “Would it not be rather the beginning of the revolution?” Allende’s government was a socialist administration pushing progressive legislation that benefitted the working class. But its gains were inherently fragile, due to the strategy of respecting bourgeois legality the UP had used to obtain them. At any moment, these changes “could be completely wiped out if the Allende government were overthrown, if elements on the right fomented a coup d’état... In short, the class struggle continues in Chile and the fact is that the labouring classes are not armed to confront their class enemies the day they decide to take the struggle to this level.”\footnote{103} Until the bourgeois State and its repressive apparatuses were effectively neutralized, “there is no revolution, there is no seizure of power by the labouring masses.”\footnote{104}

In \textit{Pour le parti prolétarien}, Charles Gagnon reaffirmed this important distinction between the ascent to governmental power by a working-class party and the revolutionary seizure of power that transfers power in society from one class to another. He referred directly to Chile:

The first ‘step’ [of a revolution] consists of the seizure of power by revolutionary forces: forcibly exploited economically and dominated politically, the proletariat and with it all of the people must become the dominant force. Such a transformation of the situation could thus not be reduced to the simple taking of power in parliament or even of the presidency of the (bourgeois) State like, for example, in Chile two years ago.\footnote{105}

\footnote{102}“Le Chili en 1971,” \textit{Vaincre} Vol. 1 No. 6 (December 1971), 3.  
\footnote{103} \textit{Ibid.}  
\footnote{104} \textit{Ibid.}  
\footnote{105} Gagnon, \textit{En Lutte!}, 6.
Gagnon’s *Pour le parti prolétarien* was first published 17 October 1972 and reverberated widely on the left. In his history of the M-L movement, Jean-Philippe Warren describes it as “one of the crucial milestones in the development of Marxist-Leninist thought in Québec.” According to historians Ivan Carel and Robert Comeau, the document was what brought the Maoist organization En Lutte! into being. The group evolved from an initial core of activists (the “Équipe du journal”) drawn from the Partisans du Québec libre, the Comité Vallières-Gagnon, members of Mobilisation, various CAPs, and the Librairie Progressiste.

Thus, *Vaincre* insisted that the example of Allende’s Chile changed nothing. Building the revolutionary organization of the workers remained the essential task, in order to smash the bourgeois state and establish in its place a proletarian democracy. “Whether before or after the seizure of power by the workers (like in Chile), we cannot avoid confrontation between the radically opposed interests of the bourgeoisie and the working class. It is in the perspective of this inevitable confrontation that we should immediately organize.” *Vaincre* was thus extremely critical of those like Bourgault and Vallières who had joined the PQ “to make this party, devoted to the interests of the middle classes, a left party.” “Today, they defend the ‘democracy’ of the exploiters under the pretext that one must not scare the workers when in fact they are the ones who tremble before the responsibilities and the engagement that the struggle for liberation from all exploitation involves.”

After the publication of *L’urgence de choisir*, Charles Gagnon issued a blistering critique of Vallières’s political conversion. Gagnon mocked René Lévesque’s and Vallières’s “ridiculous pretension” that “before the necessity of realizing the national independence of Québec, the

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108 “Objectifs et Moyens de Lutte,” *Vaincre* Vol. 1 No. 3 (June 1971), 1, emphasis in original.
working classes should completely forget their own interests and massively join the PQ.”\textsuperscript{109} The PQ was not a “parti de masse,” as Vallières claimed, but rather a party of the nationalist fraction of the Québécois bourgeoisie that felt threatened by the spread of American imperialism. Alliances of workers with national bourgeoisies, as the post-independence experiences of countless African countries had demonstrated, did not succeed in pushing back imperialism by even an inch. Even worse, capitalist social relations were in every case consolidated and the revolution left unmade. “An anti-imperialist struggle, in North America and in 1971, that was not at the same time an anti-capitalist struggle, would not solve anything at all, certainly not the ‘national question’ or ‘national independence.’”\textsuperscript{110} For Gagnon, compared to the 1960s, national liberation struggles had definitely lost their lustre.

The PQ suffered from the same reformist bent as some elements of the UP, in this critique. The PQ’s strategy remained “essentially bourgeois, electoralism doubled by an extremely fastidious legalism.” And to those who claimed the PQ was a workers’ party because its deputies had been elected overwhelmingly by the votes of workers, Gagnon wryly answered that this proved nothing more than that the working class comprised the overwhelming majority of the electorate. Despite the massive “entryism” of the PQ by former RIN members, “the ideology of the founders of the PQ has not fundamentally changed since the time of the MSA.” In a clear reference to the refusal of the PQ to support the La Presse strikers’ 29 October 1971 demonstration, Gagnon pointed to how “this party has multiplied its anti-union and anti-popular organization statements, going so far as to openly condemn those of its members who dare to mix with the worker rabble during street demonstrations.”\textsuperscript{111} Despite the obviously bourgeois

\textsuperscript{109} Gagnon, \textit{Feu sur l’Amérique}, 187.

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid.}, 190.

\textsuperscript{111} Robert Burns, PQ MNA for Maisonneuve, had joined the strikers in defiance of Lévesque and the executive. \textit{Ibid.}, 191–192. For those outside the PQ’s ranks, Gagnon’s arguments were made even more persuasive by the
character of Lévesque’s party, this did not stop “some of its partisans and ideologues ... to dream, with the help of the conjuncture, of another PQ, of a ‘PQ – mass party.’ What is it other than a dream, in effect, this PQ where the ‘content’ of the programme is ‘defined at the base, in citizens’ committees, unions and local associations’? What is it other than a dream, this absurd identification of the PQ with a ‘national front’ where the programme is as progressive as that of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front?” Here was, the Maoists argued, an illusion maintained, in part, by comparisons made between Québec and Chile.

Gagnon analyzed Vallières’s appeal to join the PQ as a desperate attempt, like Lévesque’s recent warnings to labour leaders not to throw themselves into politics, to prevent the creation of a parti des travailleurs.

The creation in Québec, in the current conjuncture, of an indépendantiste social democratic party, of a party that, like the NDP in Canada, would have the official and financial support of the labour federations appears as nothing short of a catastrophe to petits bourgeois who place all their hope, since always or since yesterday only, in a “democratically conquered” independence.113 Yet Gagnon himself was not in favour of the creation of a parti des travailleurs either. In his books, a party formation created with the support of the appareil syndical (labour bureaucracy) would suffer, much like the PQ, from the petit-bourgeois obsession with winning independence through a strictly (bourgeois) “democratic conquest.” Such a development would be negative because it would potentially block the development of a now-consolidating revolutionary workers’ vanguard. Gagnon saw the creation of a genuine workers’ party as a necessarily bottom-up process that might be frustrated or delayed by a party formation coming from the appareil syndical. If attempted, the creation of a parti des travailleurs (or “l’aventure social-

112 Gagnon, Feu sur l’Amérique, 192.
113 Ibid., 193.
démoocrate” as Gagnon called it) “would serve neither the interests of the workers nor of the bourgeois nationalists.”

Gagnon was forced to admit that the way forward was not yet clear. “The problems posed by the establishment of the revolutionary party of the masses seem to be still unresolved.” But this was no excuse for giving up the revolutionary road, as Vallières had done with his “melodramatic resignation which we have just witnessed.” Finding the solution to these problems lay in popular struggles in Québec and the “ever more advanced debates that are being carried on in popular organizations about the conditions for the development of the revolutionary struggle here. It’s from these struggles and these debates that will emerge the organization, the instrument of political struggle of the Québécois masses.”

Marxist-Leninists’ interest in Chile grew as the political situation polarized. Articles on Chile in M-L journals proliferated after October 1972, when a CIA-backed and –financed truckers’ strike paralyzed the Chilean economy and forced the UP government onto the defensive. The intense opposition of the Chilean bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialism confirmed their earlier warnings that the class struggle was far from over in Chile. The M-Ls multiplied their critiques of the “reformism” and “legalism” of Allende and the UP leadership for acting as a “brake” on the counter-mobilizations of Chilean workers. The revisionist Communist Party was a frequent target of criticism. As the Journal du FRAP explained in November 1972, the Chilean crisis proved the general validity of Marxist-Leninist theses about the necessity of smashing the bourgeois State:

Today more than ever, the bourgeoisie continues to organize within its standing army, its civil service. It makes itself the faithful defender – now that it is no longer in government – of its constitution, of its parliamentarism, of its freedom of the press, etc. ...

114 Ibid., 197.
115 Ibid., 198–199.
The big lesson that Chilean workers have drawn from the current crisis is that they cannot content themselves with taking the machinery of the state as it is and trying to make it serve their ends.

They must break, demolish the bourgeois State and its institutions, one after the other, and replace them with tools responding to the political needs of the workers’ struggle.116

*La taupe rouge*, the journal of the Trotskyist Groupe Marxiste Révolutionnaire (GMR), began closely covering Chile in late 1972. One November 1972 article succinctly summed up the theoretical stakes of the ongoing struggle in Chile for Leninists:

Worker activists and revolutionaries must follow closely the Chilean situation. Because what is happening there is a veritable “object lesson” in politics: the central theses, which form the basis of the strategy of revolutionary Marxists, on the nature of the bourgeois State, on its necessary destruction, on the concept of “paths to a peaceful transition to socialism,” prove concretely in Chile, day after day, their validity.117

The young M-L movement did not seek only negative lessons from Chile. As was the case with Michel Chartrand and members of the CFP, instances of workers’ control from below greatly interested Marxist-Leninists. Factory and land occupations by workers and peasants were highlighted as evidence of the initiative and class consciousness of the Chilean proletariat. In late 1972 and 1973, M-Ls were impressed by the “incredible mobilization” of workers against the offensive of the right. They viewed the *cordones industriales* (networks of worker-occupied factories) and the *commandos comunales* (self-managed urban squatter settlements) as nascent institutions of proletarian democracy. *Mobilisation*, for instance, had planned to feature in a subsequent issue reports on Chile’s workers’ councils and the communal organizations in the slums, but this was not completed before the coup.118 They also endorsed the political line of the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* (MIR, Revolutionary Left Movement), a Marxist-

117 “La bourgeoisie marque un point,” *La taupe rouge* No. 2 (November 1972), 8.
118 See the back page of *Mobilisation* Vol. 2 No. 2 (February 1973).
Leninist party that remained outside the UP coalition and that focused its efforts on extra-parliamentary activism. Maoist activists affiliated with Mobilisation (many of whom eventually joined either Gagnon’s En Lutte! or the Ligue communiste/Parti communiste ouvrier) had numerous ties to the MIR, according to Pierre Beaudet.\footnote{Beaudet, \textit{On a raison de se révolter: une chronique des années 1970}, 166–167.}

The M-Ls objected strenuously to the PQ left’s interpretation of what was happening in Allende’s Chile and what it meant for Québec. “There has been much discussion about Chile in the last two years,” Mobilisation remarked in February 1973. Unfortunately, much of the discussion had served to obfuscate the issues, because “opportunists of all stripes are distorting, to better make use of, the Chilean experience.” In the hands of “numerous ‘péquistes de gauche’ and certain trade unionists ‘à la Gérin Lajoie’,” the Chilean example was being deployed to argue that bourgeois legality had to be unconditionally accepted as appropriate for Québec’s liberation struggle. “It’s almost as if the Chilean workers had opted for this path out of moralism and not political strategy!” Even worse, “the strategy of Popular Unity is compared very artificially with that of the P.Q., in order to conclude that they are identical and since Popular Unity is a revolutionary movement, consequently the P.Q. must be too.” Disturbingly, the Chilean analogy used by PQ supporters was effective at winning over the rank-and-file: “It is a vicious reasoning, but very clever and very effective at fooling many workers and many activists of the P.Q. as well.”\footnote{“La lutte des travailleurs chilien,” \textit{Mobilisation} Vol. 2 No. 2 (February 1973), 35-36.} By their own admission, the M-Ls were losing the battle of ideas over Chile on the left and in labour circles.

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From 1970 onwards, the PQ rapidly consolidated its hegemony on the left, becoming the political vehicle not only for those seeking independence but also for many committed to...
socialism. In these early years, Marcel Léger argues the PQ brought together “nearly all the progressive forces and dynamic tendencies of Québec.” Serge Mongeau similarly recalls that by 1973-1974, the Parti québécois “carried the hopes of nearly everyone who wished to see radical transformations in Québec.” Unlike Léger, who was a member of the PQ leadership, Mongeau was part of the “après PQ” left of the 1970s. The debate within the union movement over political action and the possible creation of a parti des travailleurs was effectively dead by 1973, largely because most union activists were convinced that they already had one, in the form of the PQ. According to Jacques Bourdouxe, a vice-president of the CCSNM and a member of the FRAP, this even included many union activists who “had a critical approach to the PQ and its leadership.” The influx of trade unionists and leftists into the ranks of the PQ, contra Charles Gagnon, did have an appreciable effect on its political programme – though not, as he correctly pointed out, on the ideas of Lévesque and his associates. Bourdouxe claims (somewhat hyperbolically, perhaps) that 50% to 60% of the PQ’s programme was taken directly from union resolutions:

When the PQ began to take shape, our resolutions were submitted in their entirety to the congress of the PQ. On the floor, union activists would say they’d already voted for it at the congress of the CSN. ... For sure, people felt comfortable. They said: “It’s our party, look at how much importance we have.”

Even in the CAPs, where the M-L current was strongest, the influence of the PQ was also substantial.

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121 Léger, Le Parti québécois: ce n’était qu’un début, 50.
125 Warren, Ils voulaient changer le monde, 86–87; Mills, The Empire Within, 211.
The PQ thus became the political home of countless activists from trade unions, citizens’ committees, women’s organizations, and other popular groups. What brought all these leftists together was a vision of the PQ as a left party, in embryo if not yet fully realized, striking back against U.S. imperialism and pursuing a *socialisme québécois*, effecting change through parliamentary means while remaining deeply rooted in popular struggles and accommodating many different political currents. Whether a realistic projection of a possible future or a misleading illusion, the PQ left’s dream hegemonized the political imagination of most Québécois *contestataires*. This vision derived much of its persuasiveness and its credibility from the promising initial phase of Allende’s Chile.
CHAPTER 5
Implacable Dialectics: Chile Solidarity and
the Genesis of Québec’s Marxist-Leninist movement

The Americans have succeeded! The bandits! They’ve always supported dictatorships that serve their interests. But to overthrow a democratically-elected government, it’s a scandal, a scandal! - Michel Chartrand, reacting to the Chilean coup.¹

On 11 September 1973, Chile’s Unidad Popular government was overthrown in a U.S.-backed coup d’état. As they watched footage of the Chilean air force bombing the National Palace on television, many Québécois reacted with horror and outrage. “On campuses, restaurants and bars, among trade unionists and ordinary people who had become interested in the ‘Allende experiment,’ the event was talked about,” La Presse reported the next day. “The initiated were half expecting it. The others expect them to explain it.”² The near-unanimous conclusion of the initiated was that Allende’s overthrow was the work of the CIA and the American multinationals. The report quoted Jean Ménard, a Québécois missionary deeply involved in the Chilean process who was visiting Montréal at the time of the coup: “This unique Chilean experience, that wanted to transform the system to the benefit of the majority while avoiding violence, has run up against the wall of the propertied classes. That path seems closed once more.”³ For Ménard and many other Québécois leftists, the pain of the coup was felt in the marrow of their bones. The tragic outcome was a terrible blow for the Québec left, which had invested so much hope for its own political future in the outcome of the Chilean experiment.

¹ Fernand Foisy, Michel Chartrand: La colère du juste (Montreal: Lancrot Editeur, 2003), 240.
³ Ibid.
For the self-proclaimed defenders of Leninist orthodoxy, on the other hand, Allende’s overthrow was anything but a disappointment. From the outset, the various Maoist and Trotskyist journals and organizations had welcomed Allende’s election, but they had also warned of the dangers of the constitutionalist road taken by the UP. Unless the bourgeois state was smashed and replaced with institutions of popular power, socialism could never be secure. The bourgeoisie would never cede its privileges without a fight. To talk of “peaceful paths” or different “national roads” to socialism was to ignore the fundamental tenets of Leninism, one of which was the necessarily violent revolutionary seizure of power. Québec’s Marxist-Leninists “considered Marxism to be a real science whose principles, enunciated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, were applicable to all of society and particularly to capitalist societies.”4 What was true for Chile was therefore true for Québec. The coup d’état in Chile and the nightmarish repression of the left that followed seemed a stunning vindication of their theses.

The apparent closure of peaceful paths to socialism contributed to a climate of opinion on the broad Québec left in which Marxism-Leninism could spread. After the coup, even observers sympathetic to Allende’s strategy despondently concluded that it had represented an “impossible gamble.” Marxist-Leninists triumphantly declared that Chile was proof that parliamentary politics were hopeless for effecting radical change. The “reformism” of the PQ left and the labour movement leadership risked leading Québec’s working class into a similar dead-end of fascism, bloodshed and misery. The only way workers could hope to achieve socialism was to cast off the straightjacket of bourgeois legality and forge the proletarian party. Marxist-Leninist activists worked in the Comité Québec-Chili (CQC) coordinating solidarity efforts.5 Their publishing houses worked overtime to disseminate the lessons of the Chilean tragedy. In an

5 For a history of the CQC and other Chile solidarity organizations, see Segovia, *Les organisations de solidarité avec le Chili: essai*. 

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environment where many Québécois were already frustrated and disillusioned by the functioning of the province’s parliamentary system, the Chilean coup pushed them into outright rejection of the parliamentary path. More confident than ever about the justness of its analysis in the wake of the coup, the Marxist-Leninist movement soon came to represent “the quasi-totality of the non-péquisté left of the 1970s.” Not coincidentally, 1973 was the year of the “M-L” current’s most explosive growth. Although Trotskyists retained some influence, it was Maoist organizations that truly flourished, “often attracting hundreds of members, publishing weekly newspapers, and playing an influential if controversial role in union and community organizations.” Over the course of the 1970s, Québec, and Montréal in particular, became “a Maoist centre unmatched elsewhere in North America.” The deep involvement of the Québec left with the Chilean road, hitherto largely overlooked, is a crucial element in the explanation of Marxism-Leninism’s exceptional strength in the province.

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In November 1973, Maintenant devoted a second special issue to Chile entitled “Le Chili après Allende.” The cover was eloquent. Below the words “Le Chili,” the top half of the cover featured a picture of young adults happily studying in a classroom, captioned “RÊVE”; below it, on the bottom half of the cover, a second picture of soldiers in the streets of Santiago, lining up detainees on the ground in front of a menacing tank, captioned “CAUCHEMAR.” The Chilean coup d’état was a nightmare for the PQ left in a double sense. The methodical killing, torture and internment of Chilean leftists by the Pinochet dictatorship was enough to upset anyone with a shred of humanity, and Québécois living in Chile were not entirely spared its effects. Yet the coup also represented an ideological nightmare for the PQ left. Faced with the consequences of

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the UP’s painstaking adherence to bourgeois constitutionality, those seeking radical change through the structures of parliamentary democracy found the credibility of their political projects brought into serious question. Those who persisted in believing that this road was the right one for Québec’s independence movement had to address the disturbing example of Chile, but there were few easy explanations for why Québec-Chile comparisons suddenly did not apply. While the PQ left was in a sense left speechless, unable or unwilling to articulate what lessons the Chilean events held for Québec, the coalescing Marxist-Leninist tendency eagerly drew their own conclusions for the struggle at home.

The grim spectacle of Allende’s downfall could not help but darken the political horizons of those who had placed so much hope in the example of Chile. In 1973, the editors of Maintenant were demonstrably less enthusiastic about drawing clear parallels between Québec and Chile than in 1971. In the editorial introduction to the Catholic magazine’s second special issue on Chile entitled “Chile after Allende,” Robert Boily surveyed the wreckage:

Today we find ourselves confronted with a reality that we could have predicted: the assault against the people took place. The assault took place following the close collaboration of conservative Chilean forces and those of international capitalism. ... Their privileges threatened, the wealthy did everything to undermine public order, the economy, the social climate. They used institutions beyond their ultimate purposes. They did not want to take the risk of another electoral confrontation. They had to act beforehand. They acted, calmly, coldly, efficiently.8

What did such ruthlessness portend for the struggle in Québec? While acknowledging that the Maintenant editors and countless other Québécois “had followed this experience feeling incessantly concerned by this attempt at national liberation and social and economic transformation,” Boily urged readers not to give in to “emotional” judgements: “Before condemning what was called ‘the Chilean road,’ it is necessary to examine the real impact of all

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Figure 1: The cover of Maintenant after the coup, evoking a widespread feeling on the left.

that was done, in order better to understand and to act here in our own context.” Certainly the protections offered to political projects like that of the PQ by bourgeois legality – protections that *Maintenant* had previously vaunted in 1971 – seemed illusory in light of the Chilean coup d’état. Boily’s introduction, accompanied by a photo of Allende and excerpts of his last speech, could muster no stronger defence of the legal road than to note that thanks to this strategy, “the masks have fallen.”

Those who witnessed the Chilean process first-hand were more willing to criticize Allende’s leadership. Yves Vaillancourt wrote a two-part article for *Relations* in November and December 1973, which detailed how the economic chaos and political unrest in Chile was a direct consequence not of Allende's policies, as much of the press in Québec had claimed, but of the campaign of destabilization organized by U.S. imperialism and the local bourgeoisie. This systematic “obstruction,” organized from within and without to defend the threatened privileges of the wealthy minority, “put into question not the objective of socialism, but the road to get there. When we see the social cost of the violent repression exercised by the bourgeoisie against the Chilean people since the coup d'état, one starts to wonder if Allende’s error was not to have been too ‘nice’ towards those in whose interest it was for him to fail.”

Maurice Hébert, a missionary who had worked with peasant organizations in Temuco, was more categorical, criticizing Allende’s conduct in terms almost identical to those of the Marxist-Leninists. “It was impossible for Allende’s experiment in Chile to succeed,” Hébert told *Québec-Presse*. “The confrontation was inevitable, sooner or later, between the workers and the bourgeoisie. I am convinced that if the confrontation had been initiated by the left, with the aim of establishing popular power, there would never have been the carnage that we are seeing in Chile at this

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9 Ibid., 10-11.
moment.” Pierre Beaudet, a leading member of Mobilisation, recalls in his political memoir of the 1970s that such curés rouges returned from Chile were a major influence: “They knew the country by heart, its organizations too. Not to mention their internal debates. Alongside the poor, they had navigated the battlefields of liberation theology. ... They [taught] us a lot. Not only about Chile.”

Jean Ménard, a missionary priest returned from Chile who was heavily involved in solidarity work, was interviewed for the Maintenant special issue, and he also questioned the wisdom of Allende’s stubborn parliamentarism: “In his passionate opposition to violence, Allende was perhaps wrong to refuse to give the MIR (Movement of the revolutionary left) the green light to arm the people in preparation of its defence.” Remarking on the parallels between Québec’s and Chile’s labour movements and the imposing presence of such multinational corporations as ITT in both nations, Ménard warned that Québec's liberation movement would inevitably face – “sooner or later” – “provocations” similar to those mounted by ITT against Allende. Yet Ménard rejected the conclusion drawn by Marxist-Leninists that what was true for Chile was also true for Québec, even if “the parallels are tempting to establish.” Instead, he felt the priority for leftists should be a long-term focus on popular education, emulating the “historic patience” of Allende and the Chilean working class. But in the atmosphere of the early 1970s, an impatient, even frenetic time when l’urgence de choisir was felt by leftists of all stripes, Ménard knew his advice was not likely to be taken:

What is happening in Chile will perhaps sharply radicalize a good number of Québécois activists. How many will be tempted to conclude: the peaceful road of Allende was really a dead-end ... The propertied right, everywhere in the world,

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11 Louis Fournier, “‘Si la gauche avait frappé d’abord, le carnage actuel n’aurait pas eu lieu’ - un prêtre québécois de retour du Chili,” Québec-Presse, 7 October 1973, 20-21. Hébert was also interviewed by Maintenant for their special issue on Chile.
answers and will always answer with violence to any serious intention of liberation.\textsuperscript{13}

One activist sharply radicalized in exactly this way by events in Chile was Michel Beaubien. Shortly after his return to Canada, Beaubien accorded a long interview on his first-hand perspective on the coup d’état by \textit{Québec-Presse}. Beaubien had been a proponent of the “Chilean road” before going to work in the Latin American country, but when confronted with the intensity of the class conflict provoked by Allende’s socialist measures, Beaubien soon changed his mind: “It was pretty quickly evident for me that Allende’s revolution was impossible. You had at the head of the government a man who was trying to reconcile the interests of the working class with those of the bourgeoisie, while the latter was trying to overthrow him by any means available.” Not unlike the editors of \textit{Maintenant}, Beaubien realized during his time in Chile that “the wealthy are ready to do anything to preserve their privileges, even remove bread from the mouths of the poor.” Beaubien went so far as to criticize Allende’s credentials as a Marxist: “If Allende had been a real Marxist, he would have seized the opportunity, after the elections last March, to install a veritable popular power, since he had just received the support of the whole working class.” Although he had been a frequent volunteer for the PQ prior to leaving for Chile, Beaubien appeared to be disillusioned with nationalism, which he saw as the main reason why Allende refused to arm the workers: “He preferred to pursue his dream of national unity. By acting in this way, he betrayed the masses who had supported him.”\textsuperscript{14}

Even Allende’s widow, Hortensia Allende Bussi, expressed regrets about the failure to arm the people. When the First Lady of Chile was interviewed briefly during a stop-over at

\textsuperscript{13} Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, “Des choses pertinentes pour le Québec,” \textit{Maintenant} No. 130 (November 1973), 14-16.

\textsuperscript{14} Sabourin, “‘Allende est mort’,” 20.
Dorval Airport, a journalist asked: “Do you believe it is possible to establish a socialist regime without a revolution?” Allende replied that “the vote is not enough” and that what was needed was an army “for the people.” “In Chile, we believed that the professional army was legalist, but it was an army imbued with class prejudices and in which many officers had been trained and made specialists in the United States.”¹⁵

Québec-Presse reported extensively on the coup and featured debates on its Québec implications. Magassouba Moriba, a Senegalese intern at the labour newspaper, declared that the coup demonstrated the correctness of Mao’s thought: “Mao said that power comes from the barrel of a gun. Today, it can no longer be doubted.” To the “utopians” who still placed their faith in the “parliamentary masquerade,” Moriba replied that Allende “has given the world a lesson it will not easily forget.” “The socialist experience in Chile, despite its ephemeral character, will certainly help to dissipate the illusions of dreamers who have missed the train of history.”¹⁶ Pierre-Jean Méhu, Québec-Presse’s international news columnist, found it difficult to follow the “implacable dialectic” of those “specialists in revolution” like Moriba, whom he found heartless in their criticisms of Allende and their reaction to the coup:

A bloody coup d’état has brought to an end in Chile one of the most original political experiences of our time. ... Thus, hope was killed. Only conservatives of all stripes and purs et durs leftists are rejoicing, the latter refusing to share the anguish of those who hope, in spite of everything, that socialism by peaceful means, without gallows or firing squads, is possible and desirable.¹⁷ Méhu nonetheless recognized that “with the events currently unfolding in Chile, it will become more and more difficult to believe that justice for all can be obtained by peaceful means.”

In Latin America, in the Third World as well as in the industrialized countries, the lessons of Salvador Allende’s failure will be very quickly drawn. The right is only

¹⁵ Clément Trudel, “Mme Allende à Dorval: ‘Le vote ne suffit pas, il faut aussi une armée pour le peuple’,” Le Devoir, 11 October 1973, 8.
legalist to the degree that it profits from legality. The left should avoid this trap or seek to substitute for it another concept of legality.  

The coup in Chile convinced many Québécois activists that the ultimate outcome of the class struggle was determined not by election results or parliamentary procedure, but by force. In a letter to Québec-Presse days after the coup, Marcel Allard mourned the death of Allende, a man whom Allard considered not only a martyr for the cause of liberty and justice but also a model. Nonetheless, Allard's disillusionment with the parliamentary path chosen by Allende was palpable. “Finally, it may be necessary to admit that the word ‘democracy’ no longer holds any value for our society, and that its right to exist can only be found in our books.”  

Serge Mongeau wrote to a friend on 30 October 1973 from Santiago, commenting on the impact that seeing up-close the end of the Chilean experiment was having on him: “I will maybe manage to extirpate from myself this trust in ‘democracy’ that they so well inculcated in us. If I only accomplished that in Chile, it would already be a lot. And I have the impression of being on the right track ...”  

On 3 October 1973, the national committee of the Mouvement des travailleurs chrétiens (MTC) submitted a letter to Le Devoir that denounced the Chilean coup as “an act of contempt towards the profound aspirations of the workers of Chile and of the world,” the latest salvo in what the MTC national committee called “a third world war” pitting “the servants of money” against “the oppressed of this system.” “These sad events are causing more and more worker activists to question non-violence in the conquest of political power.” Such reactions were generalized throughout the left. The lesson learned by most activists from Allende’s overthrow was that real democracy is not possible under capitalism.

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18 Ibid.
22 Laneuville, personal communication.
After 29 October 1973, the lopsided results of the provincial elections intermingled in the minds of many leftists with bitter images of Chile. The landslide victory of Robert Bourassa and the Liberals, a combined product of an effective anti-PQ fear-mongering campaign and a first-past-the-post voting system, limited the PQ to only six seats in the national assembly. This paltry representation for the PQ, despite receiving 30% of the popular vote, amplified the already-growing disillusionment with parliamentary democracy. In a letter to Québec-Presse, Claude Falardeau found the elections of 29 October resembled those of an African one-party state he had witnessed seven years ago. “Le parti unique (ou inique)! – this is perhaps the future of Québec. ... That’s where the cult of fear or even terrorism put forward by the Liberal party, Union nationale and Social Credit over the course of the last campaign leads.” The October crisis had proved that it was the Liberals, not the PQ, who were willing to suspend democracy if it suited them, Falardeau argued: “The credit-socialist Dupuis promised us Chile with Lévesque; yet it might be Bourassa who Chileanizes us, he who knows all about War Measures.”23 Between the electoral dictatorship of the “law and order” Liberals and the Pinochet regime intent on “extirpating the Marxist cancer,” many Québécois leftists saw only a difference of degree.

Older activists close to the PQ were disturbed by the strong radicalization of young people like Beaubien in the face of the Chilean tragedy and the 29 October elections. Jacques Grand’Maison described a “collective Oedipal drama” playing out in the province and was deeply worried by its potential consequences. The success with which the Liberals had mobilized the “great fear” of older voters represented “the continuation of an old autocratic style,” which was certain only to increase the revolt of the younger generation.

These thousands of young activists who constitute one of the most vital and dynamic forces of the nation, after a withdrawal into disgust or discouragement, will perhaps apply themselves to ‘making the train derail.’ ... Many have lost

confidence in traditional political action. Watergate or the Chilean crisis abroad, corruption of the dominant old parties at home.

While Grand’Maison warned of the dangers to which “this activism of despair” might lead (i.e. “fascist totalitarianisms”), Québec’s political situation – characterized by the “concentration of political power” driven by the “monopolistic omnipotence of high finance and the ruling class” – was so hopeless that he himself could scarcely find reason to disagree with the M-Ls’ political analysis. “The diagnosis is hard and even simplistic but does it not hold some truth?” The only way to halt this trend was for the PQ to stop “playing the moderate.”

Contrary to Grand’Maison, there were few signs of despair among the youthful Marxist-Leninists following the Chilean coup. Although Chile (and growing disaffection with parliamentary politics more generally) weakened the appeal of the PQ left’s strategy, the shifting political atmosphere had exactly the opposite effect on its emerging rivals of the extra-parliamentary left. Their movement was given a tremendous burst of confidence and credibility, its theses resoundingly confirmed by the Chilean tragedy. Jean-Philippe Warren describes the years 1972-1974 as the movement’s “moment of great hopes.” Many activists “gave up on the parliamentary path and sought to organize the working class in workplaces through agitation and propaganda activities with the aim of creating the revolutionary party.” Activists in the M-L movement unanimously viewed the brutal repression of the Chilean left as, in the words of La Forge editor Marie Boti, “an incontestable proof that elections cannot fundamentally change society.”

In its front page coverage of the Chilean coup, En Lutte! savoured the coup’s implications for its rivals on the PQ left:

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25 Warren, Ils voulaient changer le monde, 185.
26 Ibid., 128.
The ‘Chilean road’ was followed with much interest here. Until the moment of the military coup d’état, the ‘left wing’ of the P.Q. and numerous trade unionists presented it as the ideal solution. What better for petit bourgeois than the establishment of socialism by capitalism! Elections suffice, no violence, no confrontations! But there you have it! The Chilean generals have with one punch destroyed the house of cards. The dream has collapsed.27

The newspaper’s accompanying editorial, entitled “Only one revolutionary path,” hammered home the point. “The coup d’état of September 11 in Chile is a fresh demonstration that imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation cannot be defeated through peaceful means.” The UP’s overthrow, like that of many other reformist, anti-imperialist governments before it, was rooted in its egregious revisionism, in particular its failure to create a single revolutionary party. The lesson was equally applicable for Québéc: “Confronted by monopoly capitalism and imperialism, the revolutionary path is unavoidable. ... In a more immediate way in Québéc, it’s the development of the working class’s unity in struggles and through the organization of workers’ committees that will form the party of the working class, instrument of the seizure of power.”28

The journal Mobilisation felt that events in Chile were significant enough to merit an entire issue. “The fascist coup d’état of the Chilean military has a significance that goes far beyond the internal political life of a people.” The coup represented, among other things, “a failure of the ‘peaceful transition’ to socialism” and thus a vindication of the publication’s anti-revisionist theses. The issue, entitled “Apprendre à vaincre,” consisted of an interview with Miguel Enriquez, secretary general of the MIR, and a collection of documents from the various tendencies of the Chilean left (Socialist Party, Communist Party, MIR, MAPU) to give readers an opportunity to evaluate the diverse positions of the parties making up the Resistance. The MIR was singled out for praise because it had “advanced very correct theoretical positions,” such

as the need to smash the bourgeois state. The issue was intended as a pedagogical tool to allow activists to better comprehend “a certain number of historical laws of the revolutionary movement” – i.e. the class nature of the bourgeois state, the necessity of revolutionary violence, the importance of popular militias. Mobilisation’s editors felt it was important “to emphasize the fact that two intellectual tendencies, bourgeois nationalism and reformism, have forcefully thwarted the revolutionary efforts of the Latin Americans. And these two tendencies are far from absent in Québec.”

For the Groupe Marxiste Révolutionnaire (GMR), Allende’s overthrow spawned a veritable cottage industry of publications on Chile, with the Trotskyist group producing a half-dozen special issues and supplementary booklets. In a lengthy article analyzing how Allende’s peaceful path had ended in an “aborted revolution,” Léon Peillard declared: “One thing is sure, the workers of Chile and those of Québec will never be able to take power if they do not assimilate the lessons of the failure of Popular Unity.” GMR once again summed up pithily the lessons of Chile for Leninists:

In Chile as in Québec, the working class must be prepared for violent confrontations with the armed forces of the bourgeoisie to accede to a socialist society. ... Due to its character, the Chilean experience is not only Chilean. It is universal. History has just repeated one of its fundamental lessons: there is only one solution, revolution.

Disseminating these lessons to the working class was what motivated many M-L groups to throw themselves into Chile solidarity organizing. Activists associated with Mobilisation and the GMR were particularly involved in solidarity work, the latter especially through the CQC’s

30 See in particular, La taupe rouge No. 6 (September-October 1973) and No. 7 (November 1973).
31 Léon Peillard, “Révolution Avortée,” La taupe rouge No. 6 Dossier Chili-supplément (September-October 1973), C.
32 “Vive la lutte armée du peuple chilién!” La taupe rouge No. 6 Dossier Chili-supplément (September-October 1973), A.
campus committees. As Mobilisation explained: “For Québécois proletarians, the Allende experience had been a hope of establishing a socialist society in a peaceful way, and the tragic failure of this illusion was for many a revelation of the character and the orientation of our struggle.” M-L activists claimed that these lessons arose naturally during solidarity work with the CQC:

So, with the rank-and-file workers in the union local meetings (above all with [public] services workers, teachers, and some industries, and in neighbourhood groups) we were able to discuss questions like, for example, democracy, the limits of bourgeois democracy that the Chilean people had run up against with the result that we know, the army and multinationals, etc. ... Because of the short-term objective (support for the struggle against the military dictatorship), we understood that the Comité should not be a place for debate on the lessons of the Chilean experience (that is to say the critique of reformism). ... The critique of reformism aspect nonetheless arose, it was impossible not to talk about it because the masses themselves (in the union locals for example) brought it up.

Chile served as an excellent recruiting tool for MLisme. Pierre Pagé, an activist with the Ligue communiste, describes the decisive impact the coup d’état had on his political views: “I am emotively a reformist. I would like for things to change peacefully. But, in all of history, the ‘bosses’ have never let go of their privileges without a fight. It is the case of Chile that convinced me of that.” In the pages of Vie Ouvrière, a former JOCiste described his transition to Marxism-Leninism. He broke with the orientation and structures of the JOC, taking up the study of Marxism partly through a process of self-education and partly with the help of comrades whom he found “too intellectual.” “I studied Marx, Engels, Mao, Chile, the Canadian workers’ movement.” En Lutte! prominently featured the case of Chile, “which is sufficiently well-known that we don’t need to analyze the details here,” in its January 1974 Cahiers on “Political

33 Vaillancourt, personal communication.
36 Warren, Ils voulaient changer le monde, 232 fn 73.
parties and elections.” The Cahiers were a series of educational booklets included with the newspaper to be used in discussion groups.\textsuperscript{38} The CQC sold 5,000 records of Chilean music entitled “Chansons et musique de la résistance chilienne” (Songs and music of the Chilean resistance) as a fundraising initiative; many M-L groups thereafter integrated Chilean revolutionary songs as part of their effort to build a communist culture.\textsuperscript{39}

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Québec was not the only place where the overthrow of Allende fostered the growth of a Marxist-Leninist tendency on the left. In his masterful history of the U.S. “New Communist” movement, Revolution in the Air, Max Elbaum argues that the international conjuncture was crucial to the movement’s formation, as “events in world and national politics continued to push those individuals who did become radicalized in the direction of Marxism-Leninism.”

The bloody US-sponsored 1973 coup in Chile had a huge impact. ... When Allende was ousted and killed, the entire revolutionary left – as well as far broader circles – concluded that his key error lay in failing to move decisively against the counter-revolutionary core in the army, police and right-wing groups. The Chilean events seemed bloody confirmation of Leninism’s argument that socialist transformation required smashing the bourgeois state apparatus and establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat. Soviet and social democratic speculations about peaceful transitions to socialism lost credibility in favour of antirevisionist insistence on armed revolution.\textsuperscript{40}

Marxist-Leninists’ convictions were further reinforced (at least initially) by the heroism that the MIR displayed in resisting the Pinochet dictatorship and the apparent successes of armed struggle by revolutionary guerrilla armies in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in South-East Asia, in Portugal’s Southern African colonies, and elsewhere in Latin America.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{38} “Les parti politiques et les élections,” En Lutte! Cahier No. 5 (10 January 1974), 7.
\textsuperscript{39} Segovia, Les organisations de solidarité avec le Chili: essai, 62; Warren, Ils voulaient changer le monde, 152.
\textsuperscript{40} Max Elbaum, Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che (London: Verso, 2002), 202.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
The influence of Chile over the development of Marxism-Leninism as the hegemonic tendency of the non-PQ left has been overlooked or misinterpreted in the historiography of Québec’s movement. Ivan Carel and Robert Comeau claim that the response of M-Ls to the Chilean coup, which was greeted almost enthusiastically as a confirmation of their ideological principles, “embarrassed” them and hindered their advance in Québec: “Maintaining this posture, the Marxist-Leninists alienated other Québécois socialists, to start with trade unionists and the Politisés chrétiens, who on the contrary supported Chilean immigrants and opposed the military coup.”

In fact, Marxist-Leninists worked side-by-side with the Politisés chrétiens in the CQC and supported Chilean immigrants contesting the coup with relatively few clashes. As we saw above, their position on Chile was received quite well at union local meetings. While the M-Ls would fight bitterly with left Catholics like Vaillancourt over control of the CFP, it was not their work in the solidarity movement or their stance on the coup (which many did find somewhat callous) that alienated them from the Politisés chrétiens or labour activists.

In his history of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Québec, *Ils voulaient changer le monde*, Jean-Philippe Warren identifies 1973 as a turning point: “It is no coincidence that *M-Lisme* had its biggest wave of popularity ... in 1973.” Like Elbaum, Warren credits this growth in part to the international conjuncture. Unlike Elbaum, he gives the Chilean experience little explanatory weight, pointing instead to the OPEC oil crisis and the collapse of the Bretton Woods order as problems to which all other existing ideologies (liberalism, self-management, the counterculture, welfarism) failed to provide an answer. Yet reading through M-L publications of the time, one finds scant reference to the oil producers’ cartel or to the arcane mutations of the international financial and

42 Gagnon, *En Lutte!*, xii.
43 Vaillancourt, personal communication.
monetary order. Instead, one finds dossier after dossier and article after article of in-depth analyses devoted to Chile, where the minutiae of Allende’s brief tenure are pored over. Such analyses conclude time and again that revisionism, reformism and nationalism can only lead the working class into a fascist blind alley.
It is the beginning of the demolition of our ideal. In the name of electoralism, we will one day become a party like the others.

- An activist at the PQ’s fifth congress

A little over a week after Québec’s 1973 provincial election campaign had begun, the gloomy themes that would characterize the contest throughout were already in evidence: disorder and violence, political instability and economic ruin. Gabriel Loubier’s Union nationale (UN) and Yvon Dupuis’s Parti créditiste led the rhetorical charge, principally directed against René Lévesque and the Parti québécois. As La Presse journalist Claude Beauchamp noted, the frenzied attacks mounted by these two declining parties lent an international flavour to electoral vocabulary. They both pointed to the sorry lot of other nations as evidence of what would befall Québec if it were to embark on the indépendantiste adventure proposed by the PQ: “In unionistes’ and créditistes’ assemblies over the weekend, references to Chile, Cuba and Russia ceased only to make way for the words revolution, communism, terrorism.” It was what Beauchamp called the “terrifying muse” of Chile, in particular, that inspired the greater part of the attacks on René Lévesque and the PQ, and which left the sovereigntist party the most unsettled.

It is hardly surprising that Chile became a frequent point of reference during the October electoral contest. The coup d’état had received prominent coverage and editorial discussion in all

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1 Léger, Le Parti québécois: ce n’était qu’un début, 76.
of Québec’s major daily newspapers. When the campaign began just three weeks later, election news often shared column space with reports of the unfolding Chilean tragedy and its local reverberations. Newspapers carried reports on the arrival in Montréal of the first group of Chilean leftists fleeing the relentless butchery of the Pinochet regime, in-depth feature stories on the eye-witness accounts and experiences of expelled Québécois missionaries and harrowing tales on the front page of development workers who had been interned in the National Stadium, converted by the military into a massive concentration camp and torture centre. And, as we have seen, Montréal was even briefly visited by President Allende’s wife Hortensia Allende, who met with Chile solidarity activists in Dorval Airport and told the press of how fascism had overrun her country and taken the life of her husband.3

Allende’s ghost would continue to haunt the PQ left after the October 1973 elections. While the M-Ls were fortified by the Chilean coup, it was the opponents of the left within the PQ – the apostles of étapisme – who seized the initiative. Stung by the Chilean analogy during the campaign, René Lévesque resolved to rid the party of its radical reputation, which was, in his eyes, a liability both electorally and geopolitically. With the help of Claude Morin, Lévesque got the upper hand in post-election debates over the party’s strategic direction. The example of the Chilean tragedy was crucial to cementing the arguments of Claude Morin in favour of étapisme, and more broadly to consolidating the hegemony of Lévesque and the technocratic current over the leadership of the party.

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The Union nationale fired the campaign’s first and most prominent Chile-related salvo at the PQ on 7 October. Introducing UN leader Gabriel Loubier to the party faithful in Saint-Charles, MNA Jean-Noël Tremblay warmed up the crowd by comparing Lévesque to deceased

3 Trudel, “Mme Allende à Dorval,” 3.
President Salvador Allende and evoking the spectre of a Chilean-style tragedy if the PQ received a substantial number of votes. Lévesque’s professed nationalism, Tremblay declared, was “nothing more than a cloak for seasoning Québec à la sauce Chili.”4 Not to be outdone, Loubier called on Lévesque “to stop inciting the people to collective suicide! Québec does not want to be Cuba!” Over the course of a two-hour tirade, the UN leader feverishly denounced René Lévesque’s “Hitlerian invasion,” his “brainwashing,” and his “intellectual guerrilla tactics to elicit the votes of separatists, the socialists and the extremists of all stripes.” Loubier claimed his party was the bearer of true Québécois nationalism, the nationalism “of those who do not want Québec to explode, and become a ghetto in the North American continent.”5 Loubier then issued a list of ten questions directed at the PQ leader, demanding to know, among other things:

If the PQ takes power with 35% or 40% of the ballots, will it carry out the separation of Québec? Will it proceed via referendum? If the result of such a referendum is negative, what will it do?

After separation, the PQ will nationalize the banks, the insurance companies, the mines, the forests. Where will it get the money?

Will the PQ use Canadian currency or a Québécois currency? If Canada refuses to conclude an accord on a Canadian currency, what will the Québécois dollar be worth? How will it repay the billions of dollars of debt of Québec, repayment which must be made in Canadian dollars?

René Lévesque sang the praises of the Allende government in the Journal de Montréal on 23 June 1972 and 12 January 1973; Will he attempt the same experience, as Pierre Bourgault indicated in a September 1973 edition of Dimanche-Dernière-Heure, [sic] Will Québec know the agony of Chile?6

Lévesque and the party leadership had anticipated such attacks, and prepared their electoral strategy accordingly. The 1973 election was first campaign meticulously planned in advance by the party leadership, with the help of advertising experts. The focus was on projecting the image of a “calm and serene” post-independence Québec and of a less irascible, 

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5 “Le chef de l’UN fustige les usurpateurs du nationalisme,” Le Devoir, 8 October 1973, 8.
more reassuring Lévesque.\textsuperscript{7} The PQ leader had launched the electoral campaign by promising an “indépendance tranquille.” In anticipation of “a campaign of fear and psychological terrorism” from its adversaries, the party opened the elections by embarking on an informational campaign to reassure voters and dispel myths about independence. The party printed and distributed 500,000 copies of the pamphlet “C’est pas sorcier,” which aimed to give “clear and precise” responses to the objections to independence. Claude Morin, author of the pamphlet and candidate in Louis-Hebert, explained to the press: “We want to warn activists to be ready for anything because we expect that our adversaries will make use of any possible arguments.”\textsuperscript{8}

The Chilean analogy nonetheless clearly struck a nerve – if the frequency with which PQ candidates and their sympathizers felt compelled to refute it is any indication. In response to Loubier’s ten questions for René Lévesque, Jean-François Bertrand demonstrated that nine out of the ten questions could be answered directly from the door-to-door manual for party activists. René Lévesque took it upon himself to answer the question concerning Chile, declaring to the crowd of 700 in the riding of Dorion that there was absolutely no parallel to be drawn between Québec and Chile and that in the South American context, the late President Allende was “a man who had perhaps made many errors but who had done his best.”\textsuperscript{9} PQ parliamentary leader Camille Laurin mistakenly accused Bourassa of resorting to the Chile analogy when speaking before an audience of nearly 300 in Trois-Rivières. Laurin denounced the Prime Minister’s attempts to “resuscitate the ghosts of the crisis of May 1972 for the simple pleasure of provoking a new confrontation with the union leaders, to pull out bugbears, boogeymen and even to associate Chile to the present campaign.” These “irresponsible” and “scandalous” tactics were

\textsuperscript{7} Murray, \textit{Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir}, 181–188.
\textsuperscript{8} “Le PQ se prémunit contre les ‘coups’...” \textit{La Presse}, October 1 1973, A8.
nothing but a “smokescreen” to distract Québécois from the real problems of unemployment, factory closures and low wages, Laurin argued.10

The Liberals’ campaign echoed Loubier in incessantly claiming that independence would be an unmitigated disaster for the province. They depicted the PQ as dangerous and undemocratic radicals, albeit without making direct comparisons with Chile during the campaign. Robert Bourassa made the Front Commun crisis of April-May 1972 “directly and indirectly the centre of most of his speeches for the first week of the electoral campaign.” He claimed that “citizens who respect the law vote Liberal” and never missed an opportunity to associate René Lévesque’s name with those of labour leaders Marcel Pépin (CSN), Louis Laberge (FTQ) and Yvon Charbonneau (CEQ). Bourassa’s focus on the unions was paralleled by Jérome Choquette and Jean Cournoyer, Minister of Labour in the campaign’s first week.11 At a rally in Chicoutimi, Le Devoir reported that Liberal candidate Marcel Claveau warmed up the crowd “by serving his audience a salad of reminiscences of the October Crisis, allusions to dangerous labour leaders and attacks on socialist separatists.”12 Throughout the campaign, the Liberals cast themselves as the party of “law and order” while depicting the PQ as the party of discord and class struggle.

The Liberals also issued not-so-subtle warnings that Québec would fall under the yoke of a Marxist dictatorship if ever the PQ were to realize its goal of independence. Bourassa’s Minister of Education François Cloutier alerted an audience of 170 Liberal activists that the PQ would seek to give itself a reassuring air, in order to camouflage its “radical and demagogic” character. Cloutier reminded the crowd of the ominous vehicle in which the PQ had traveled

during the 1970 election: “A khaki jeep that was missing only the machine guns ...”\(^\text{13}\) Even the Liberals’ campaign theme song evoked the loss of individual freedoms that independence would supposedly bring. “Je vis dans un pays,” an up-beat ballad written by Jean Lapointe of the Jérolas, contrasted the liberty enjoyed by Québécois with the absence of liberty suffered by the singer’s “Romanian friend” in his home country. In a thinly veiled jab at the PQ and the independence movement, Lapointe sang of “malcontents” “who want to make of my country / a tiny little country / a kind of Romania.”\(^\text{14}\)

The spectre of Chile continued to haunt the PQ later in the campaign. The disillusionment with parliamentary democracy provoked by the Chilean coup spilled over into the PQ’s efforts to win support from young people. With a recent survey showing nearly 30% of Québec students undecided in their voting intentions, the PQ sent three of their candidates, Claude Charron, Jean Roy and Gilbert Paquette, to meet with UQAM students. On a campus that was a beehive of solidarity activism for Chile, the reception at the salle Gésu for these three leading lights of the PQ left was underwhelming, *Le Devoir* reported:

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Room almost empty, indifferent, marked by passivity, absence of curiosity. The outgoing MNA and péquiste candidate in Saint-Jacques [Claude Charron], exasperated, was forced to declare: “Universities are the most arid and demoralizing places. There’s interest in Cuba, in Chile, etc. It easier than getting your act together to take care of our affairs at home. When you tour the
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\(^{\text{14}}\) “Je vis dans un pays,” (Interprète: Jean Lapointe). The theme songs for the 1973 campaign (and several others) can be listened to here: [http://www.archivespolitiquesduquebec.com/publicite/ritournelles/](http://www.archivespolitiquesduquebec.com/publicite/ritournelles/). The choice of Romania was likely not haphazard. In 1971, Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu had taken an autarkic turn modelled on North Korea’s *Juche* strategy, and had attempted to launch his own ‘mini-cultural revolution,’ leading to a greater clampdown on freedom of expression. Nor was Lapointe’s barb directed at the PQ entirely baseless. Romania had in fact been held up by at least one intellectual close to the PQ as an example of how nations could pursue an autonomous economic strategy, regardless of the geopolitical pressures of the Cold War. Sociologist Guy Rocher, for instance, included Romania in a list of countries that had managed “to break their economy out of the grip of the Soviets.” The experiences of Romania, China, Albania and Yugoslavia gave reason to hope that Quebec too might break free from the grip of Anglo-American domination and reclaim its economic sovereignty: “Each had sought a path that was its own, that corresponded to its traditions, its culture, its resources and its social and economic structures. ... Taking into account the differences of context, it is the same opération-libération that the North American francophone community must seek to accomplish, whether in the framework of a redefined Canada or in that of a politically sovereign Quebec.” Rocher, *Le Québec en mutation*, 84–85.
polyvalentes, the Cégeps and the universities, you get the impression that you’re dealing with a generation of card players and runaways who produce reasons for not producing!” While he spoke, Marxist revolutionaries rallied their comrades to abstention on 29 October against the “bourgeois scoundrels.”

The controversy provoked by Lapointe’s Romanian analogy, ironically enough, ended up leading back to the Chilean example. The first secretary of the Romanian embassy in Ottawa protested that the lyrics of the song were malicious and unfriendly towards his country; Bourassa, however, saw nothing to get upset about: “In every campaign, all the parties make reference to various countries to support their propositions. The PQ talks of Tanzania, or Algeria, the UN talks of Chile, and the rest.” The song also prompted a letter to the editor from a “Québécois of Romanian origin” objecting to the “underhanded tactics” employed by the Liberals. The author, A. Stefanescu-Hluza, noted that many members of the Romanian community had used the campaign song as an opportunity to virulently denounce the Romanian regime and socialism in that country. Without denying that liberty was dead in Romania, Stefanescu-Hluza denounced the “profound dishonesty on the part of Lapointe and his Liberal friends” for “attempting to exercise their usual electoral terrorism by associating the most progressive elements of Québécois society to a Marxist dictatorship (others use the Chilean drama to ‘frighten people’).”

The Chilean coup even overshadowed the PQ’s model budget of the first year of an independent Québec. The so-called budget de l’an 1, intended to counter opponents’ claims that independence would carry a catastrophic price-tag, was the “centrepiece of the campaign” to reassure the electorate. The PQ’s star candidate, economist Jacques Parizeau, was tasked with explaining the budget de l’an 1 to the public during the campaign. Speaking to journalists on 10

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18 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 181–188.
October, Parizeau insisted that foreign, particularly American, capital would not shun an independent Québec, nor would there be any slowdown in economic growth. Competition obliged corporations to continue investing in Québec or risk losing market share to their rivals, Parizeau reasoned, adding that in any case, Québec was not as dependent on foreign capital as the PQ’s opponents claimed. As Le Devoir reported, the model budget intimated “in very prudent terms” that Québec would take “certain distances” from the U.S., in an effort to limit “to a certain degree” outside economic influences. Parizeau’s confident façade, however, was rattled – “the only time during the press conference” – by a journalist’s question that drew an uncomfortable parallel: “Doesn’t the recent experience of Chile demonstrate that it is not so easy to get away from the influence of the powerful Americans?” Parizeau bristled at the comparison with Chile, claiming it was as ridiculous as the suggestion made during the 1970 campaign that an independent Québec would be somehow like Biafra. “There are 140 countries in the world and we can compare ourselves to many of them where things are going well,” an exasperated Parizeau replied.19

The model budget, which Bourassa mocked as “Créditisme for intellectuals,” backfired badly. The Liberals seized the opportunity to sound the alarm about the dire economic consequences of independence – consequences which bore a striking resemblance to the foreign-instigated economic troubles suffered by Allende’s government. “Capital flight, job loss, reduction of the standard of living, exile for youths, these are the dramas that animate the Prime Minister of Québec in all of his assemblies,” Le Devoir reported on 15 October. Bourassa also warned the public of the dangers of devaluation if Québec created its own currency. On a call-in radio show, Bourassa asked a caller, “If you had $1,000 and you knew that you would lose 30%...”

19 Gerald LeBlanc, “Jacques Parizeau n’appéhende aucune fuite importante de capitaux” Le Devoir, 10 October 1973, 8.
of it in Québec, while it would still be worth the same in Plattsburgh, what would you do?” The reply, predictably, was: “I would go to Plattsburgh.” Speaking to students of Université de Laval, Liberal Justice minister Jérôme Choquette claimed the PQ’s proposed budget, if implemented, would lead to a process of “accelerated inflation” because of its projected expansion of social expenditures. By making the calculations of the PQ’s economic team the centre of the campaign’s economic debate, the budget de l’an 1 directed attention away from the track record of the Bourassa government.

After the campaign, Claude Castonguay revealed just how prominently the Chilean analogy had figured in the minds of Liberals. In a lengthy interview with Le Devoir several weeks after the election, Castonguay expressed several major reservations about Québec independence, one of which concerned how the U.S. would react to an independent Québec. The former Minister of Social Affairs was “profoundly convinced” that if Québec were to separate, it would experience a “period of political, economic and social instability.” The government of an independent Québec would “without a doubt” have trouble financing its debt and suffer a drop-off in investment, with a consequent loss of employment. Simultaneously, it would face “great anxieties, great resistance” from sections of the population – even if a referendum gave a 51% majority to the partisans of independence. Given the unavoidable instability that independence would provoke, Castonguay challenged the geopolitical wisdom of the PQ’s political project:

In the American hemisphere, the United States have demonstrated on multiple occasions that they don’t tolerate any situation of instability. At the moment of the events of Chile, people reacted in terms of United States intervention. So what makes us think that the United States would remain completely impassive facing a separated Québec?

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[..] They don’t have to intervene with their Marines. They have refined their methods these days. If they wanted to intervene, they could do it in many different ways: what companies can’t they (the United States) direct by remote-control to a certain degree in Québec? They may not do it normally, but in a situation like that, they could do it. The best way for them to intervene would be to aggravate the instability. It’s pretty much what they’re accused of having done in Chile.22

The U.S.’s more “refined” methods of intervention alluded to by Castonguay had been revealed in a 21 March 1972 syndicated column by American investigative journalist Jack Anderson, which detailed the “bizarre plot” hatched by ITT and other multinational corporations in collaboration with the CIA. ITT had tried to block Salvador Allende’s ascension to the presidency and later worked to undermine his government, in an attempt to halt or at least slow the nationalization of the corporation’s considerable holdings in Chile. Anderson’s sensational revelations had made headlines around the world and prompted an investigation by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Multinational Corporations.23

The inevitability of unrest, the heavy presence of American multinationals (such as ITT) in Québec’s economy and the risk of U.S. intervention led Castonguay to argue that the PQ was guilty of sins of omission. The PQ’s reassuring message was dishonest, and the budget de l’an 1 failed to take into account the sacrifices that independence would necessarily entail. Castonguay insisted his assessment was not simply a partisan exaggeration. “I didn’t participate in the campaign. I can’t be accused now of brandishing threats and scaring people.” Castonguay had decided to retire from political life before the start of the campaign and claimed to have

22 Michel Roy, “Claude Castonguay interpelle le PQ: le Québec a déjà perdu trop de temps,” Le Devoir, 20 November 1973, 6. Castonguay’s logic appears patently contradictory; on the one hand, the U.S. doesn’t tolerate instability, yet on the other, it would intervene “to aggravate the instability” in an independent Quebec. Here Castonguay’s usage of the term “stability” clearly conforms to what Noam Chomsky calls, with respect to pro-imperialist thought, “its standard technical meaning: subordination to Washington’s will.” “There is no contradiction, for example, when liberal commentator James Chace, former editor of Foreign Affairs, explains that the United States sought to ‘destabilize a freely elected Marxist government in Chile’ because ‘we were determined to seek stability’ (under the Pinochet dictatorship).” Noam Chomsky, “Humanitarian Imperialism: The New Doctrine of Imperial Right,” Monthly Review Vol. 60 No. 4 (2008), 22–50.

intentionally waited until after 29 October to publicly air his opinions about the likelihood of Chilean-style U.S. intervention, not wanting to be accused of having an attitude “de colonisé, de peureux.”

On 29 October 1973, the apocalyptic visions of separation conjured up by the Liberals, the UN and Social Credit proved more compelling than the post-independence ledger sheet prepared by the PQ’s economists. Robert Bourassa and the Liberals won a landslide victory, obtaining 54% of the vote and taking 102 of 110 seats in the national assembly. The elections gave Bourassa one of largest legislative majorities in Québec’s political history, while the PQ was reduced from 7 to 6 seats. Although the PQ had increased its percentage of the popular vote from 23% to 30%, the results were a disappointment for most indépendantistes, who had hoped for more.

In the immediate aftermath, a broad consensus formed within PQ circles that fear in general – and the disconcerting spectre of Chile which hung over the campaign in particular – had been a major reason for the Liberal landslide. The post-election analysis of *Le Travail*, the official magazine of the CSN ("pour le monde ordinaire"), typified the emerging consensus. The labour publication celebrated the progression of the vote for “an independent Québec” represented by the one million votes garnered by the PQ: “In 10 years, a politicized opposition was born and has become the only alternative to the government: anything is possible.” The hopes of one million Québécois had been frustrated, however, by a mix of “money, power and fear,” with the spectre of Chile prominent in the mix of scare tactics that gave the Liberals their 54% of the vote:

25 “Un million de Québécois qui n’acceptent plus que Bourassa liquide nos biens pour quelques emplois sans lendemain comme si on était des quêteux. ... Il y a des Québécois qui refusent de donner la Côte-Nord à ITT, nos mines aux Américains, nos journaux à Power Corporation, nos épargnes et nos taxes aux financiers multinationaux.” “Asteure qu’on est un million...” *Le Travail* Vol. 50 No. 1 (January 1974), 26-27.
Because once again, thousands of authentic Québécois were tricked by hundreds of mini-coups de la Brink’s in 110 ridings: bloodshed, la sauce Chili, the army, socialism, the loss of welfare and old-age pensions, the $8,000 car, job flight, the shutdown of bingo parlours, etc. Fear and violence maintained over the years and exploited once again by the créditistes and the unionistes as well as by the Liberals.26

Le Travail suggested that comparisons with Chile had been one of the rhetorical devices used by the Liberals in as many as 1.5 million phone calls made 48 hours before the elections “to warn voters of the danger of the PQ.” A cartoon strip accompanying the article at the bottom of the page depicted a typical (one-way) phone conversation between a Liberal Party campaigner and an undecided voter. “C’est pas compliqué,” the sunglasses-wearing, moustachioed Liberal tells the voter on the other end of the line, after a PQ victory, “ça serait comme au Chili. On serait gouverné par les syndicats. / Il y a juste l’armée qui pourrait replacer [sic] le gouvernement, c’est ça qu’ils ont été obligés de faire là-bas. / Savez-vous, monsieur, que c’est les communistes qui sont derrière ça?”27

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Figure 2: Liberal scare tactics, as portrayed by the CSN.

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26 Ibid., 29.
27 Ibid., 29-30.
Days after the election, Jacques Parizeau penned a column in *Québec-Presse* assessing the campaign. For Parizeau, the electoral images that stood out “with a singular force” were those steeped in “fear, panic.”


News of the Chilean coup’s impact on the election even reached Serge Mongeau, a well-known Québécois doctor and former PQ candidate living and studying in Santiago. Writing shortly after the elections, Mongeau’s friend Jean-Pierre observed that “the rather aggressive use of the ‘unfortunate events in Chile’ during the campaign certainly paid off, to the detriment of the PQ and of Chile.” Jean-Pierre relayed to Mongeau the hysterical claims of the UN’s Jean-Noël Tremblay about Québec being seasoned ‘à la sauce chilienne,’ and argued that the Liberals had used “the same type of argument, albeit more hidden and formulated in a more intelligent manner.” With the Chilean coup casting a long shadow over the election, fear had proved its efficacy as a tool for preventing an electoral breakthrough by the PQ. The question for the PQ was what to do about it.

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René Lévesque had a deep and abiding interest in world politics, so it is not surprising that he paid close attention to Allende’s Chile. During his years as the host of Radio-Canada’s *Point de mire*, Lévesque had acquired a passion and a facility for popularizing international affairs. In the early 1970s, Lévesque applied his talents as a public communicator on international events to a weekly column in the *Journal de Montréal*. “He always seemed to be, and by far,” Claude Morin recalled of Lévesque, “the best informed of all the [Québec prime] ministers.”

ministers concerning foreign policy and the evolution of other peoples."

Lévesque published (at least) three columns concerning Allende’s Chile.

Clearly, René Lévesque had admired the Chilean President, lauding Salvador Allende in the pages of the Journal de Montréal as a “democrat,” “a man of consensus” and “a man of good will.” And Pierre Bourgault had envisioned the PQ as a vehicle for effecting radical change through electoral struggle and found, like many socialists in the PQ, a “new reason for hope” in the example of Allende’s Chile. Beneath the layers of bombast and scare-mongering, Gabriel Loubier’s ten questions did contain a measure of truth. But far from reflecting a will to revolutionize Québec along the lines of the Chilean model, the writings of Lévesque on Chile illustrate the important divergences between him and the more radical political currents of the party represented by the likes of Bourgault. While visiting Québécois leftists returned with glowing accounts of Chile’s working-class political parties, its self-managed communities of urban squatters in the poblaciones and its cordones industriales (networks of worker-controlled factories), Lévesque omitted any discussion of the profound class consciousness of Chilean workers and its organizational expressions. In Lévesque’s account, the “Chilean road to socialism” had little to do with socialism per se, and consisted largely of the leadership of one man. The differing political ‘lessons’ extracted from the Chilean experiment, drawn more or less explicitly, reflected underlying tensions in the PQ between the left-wing participationniste current and the centrist, technocratic current grouped around Lévesque, tensions rooted in disagreements over the party’s immediate strategy and ultimate goals.

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31 Contrary to Loubier’s tenth question, Bourgault’s views on Chile were not published in Dimanche-Dernière-Heure in September 1973. Bourgault, “L’envie des Américains,” 12.
Lévesque’s writings on Chile approached the Latin American nation and the transformations it was undergoing from a different angle than that of the PQ left. If in the eyes of the PQ left, Chile represented the dream of a democratic socialism, for René Lévesque Chile stood as a confirmation of his dream of an indépendance tranquille. Lévesque consistently argued that Québec could wrest its economic and political sovereignty away from U.S. multinationals and the federal state through winning elections, passing legislation, and conducting firm but reasonable negotiations. Although Lévesque at times described Québec as a colonized nation, he generally sought to dissociate the party from the kinds of violence and upheaval that accompanied national liberation struggles in Vietnam, Cuba and other Third World countries. Independence for Québec would be hardly anything more than a continuation of the Quiet Revolution. As Claude Morin explained, Lévesque and the leadership were desperate to make this vision of the ascension to sovereignty plausible to the wider public: “At the beginning of the 1970s, the eventual ‘separation’ of Québec worried so many citizens that it was imperative to calm their anxieties with the help of anything that could, from anywhere in the world, but preferably in the twentieth century, resemble a peaceful ascension to sovereignty.”

When pressed for examples of their strategy, the principal PQ spokespeople would point to Norway in 1905 or Hungary in 1919 as examples of nations that had won their independence rather painlessly. (Ireland (1920-1921) and India-Pakistan (1947) were studiously ignored.) Given the paucity of historic precedents available, it is hardly surprising that Lévesque seized upon Allende’s Chile as living proof of the feasibility of the PQ leadership’s reassuring strategy.

What was most noteworthy for René Lévesque about Allende’s Chile was its ability to assert its economic sovereignty in the face of American opposition. On 23 June 1972, Lévesque

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33 Ibid.
presented an article about the nationalization of copper in Chile and the lessons it held for Québec. Understanding international affairs was important, Lévesque explained, in order to counter what he called the “terrorisme folklorique” used to frighten Québécois:

One of the ‘fears’ that the propagandists of the status quo exploit liberally against Québécois sovereignty is the terrible riddle of the international jungle: if we got stuck with our own currency, with our balance of payments problems, with the occasional bad moods of other countries... brrr... tremblez, mortels... 34

In order to put things into proper perspective, Lévesque recommended looking at how “countries that are infinitely worse off than Québec are nonetheless able to manage and survive.”35 The example chosen by Lévesque was Chile.

Less than a year earlier, Salvador Allende had nationalized Chile’s copper mines, in the process expropriating those owned by Anaconda and Kennecott, two U.S. mining giants. After calculating the surplus profits accumulated by the copper corporations over the years, the UP government argued that these “excess profits” negated any claims for compensation and even called for repayment by the company. The refusal to pay compensation outraged the U.S. government, but Lévesque approved of the Allende administration’s line of reasoning: “In terms of fairness, if not in strict legal terms, the Chilean idea is eminently defensible.” By mid-1972 the consequences of the U.S. backlash were being felt. As Lévesque noted, Washington had “in every way possible ... tried to turn the screws on Chile.” A covert campaign of economic strangulation and political destabilization manifested itself in CIA-backed truckers’ strikes, an “invisible blockade” by the development banks, massive hoarding of food and other basic supplies by the bourgeoisie, and attempts to interdict exports of Chilean copper. With a deteriorating balance of payments, a growing external debt and rapidly increasing inflation, Allende’s government was charged by opponents with catastrophic mismanagement of the

35 Ibid.
economy. Yet Lévesque denied that the UP government was responsible for the economic crisis gripping the country, which had been “provoked and maintained at once by the furious upper crust from within and their eminent accomplices from without.”

One of the “eminent accomplices” engaged in undermining Allende was International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT), which Lévesque described as a “corporate octopus.” Allende had struck back against the octopus, Lévesque noted, by expropriating its Chilean holdings without compensation “following spectacular revelations concerning the political intrigues of ITT.” Lévesque had good reason to single out ITT, since the corporation was quite familiar to Québécois. Jack Anderson’s exposé about ITT’s collusion with CIA against Allende had been making international headlines just months before. Furthermore, ITT also had a major presence in Québec through its subsidiary ITT Rayonier, a pulp processing plant, and had been a target of Lévesque’s column in the past. When the Bourassa government in 1970 had granted forestry concessions on very generous terms to ITT Rayonier for its operations on the Côte-Nord, the deal had been a major political issue. Lévesque had criticized the ITT deal at the time as proof that Bourassa was surrendering the province to the “quasi-total domination” of foreign investors. Lévesque warned that multinationals were in the process of becoming “almost everywhere more ‘weighty’ than states and peoples themselves. These economic mastodons are the spearhead of a neo-imperialism that is nine-tenths American.” With Bourassa refusing to undertake any major state investments, Québec was reduced to begging for help from the private sector. “Canada is already the promised land of all these new conquerors. When it comes to us, we have two fragments of a state that literally compete in terms of servility towards the neo-imperialists.”

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 “René Lévesque et le capital américain,” 10A.
In spite of a deteriorating balance of payments and angry groups of external creditors, consequences of the U.S.-orchestrated economic strangulation, Chile had managed to defy the odds, Lévesque claimed, successfully renegotiating its debts without being forced to accept draconian conditions put forward by the Americans. “Naturally, Chile struggled like the dickens. And it quickly found supporters – since all the countries, each in turn, know that one day it could equally happen to them ...” Chile had overcome the hostility of Washington and managed to find its way out of a very difficult financial situation through vigorous negotiating and the reasonable approaches of sympathetic creditor nations. The reassuring lesson for Lévesque was that if Chile could stand up to the multinational corporations and even to the U.S. empire and reclaim its economic sovereignty, despite its status as “the number 1 black sheep of the Western world,” there was no reason that Québec could not do the same. “O.K.? On respire un peu mieux, peut-être?...”

In Lévesque’s Journal de Montréal columns, Allende’s political project resembled the indépendance tranquille he envisioned. During Allende’s tumultuous three years as President, the good-hearted Socialist statesman had “heroically” maintained his vision of “a gradual revolution that would be accomplished with peace and the respect of liberty.” The revolution to which Allende had dedicated his life – or rather Lévesque’s description of it – was so gradual that it hardly differed from the reformism of his Christian Democratic opponents. “The ‘Chileanization’ of copper, agrarian reform and the tenacious revalorization of underprivileged areas” were cited by Lévesque as Allende’s great accomplishments, yet all of these reforms had been initiated by Allende’s predecessor, Eduardo Frei, under the banner of his “revolution in

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The more radical aspects of Allende’s politics were conveniently edited out. Shortly after Allende’s death, Lévesque paid homage to the deceased Chilean President in his 15 September 1973 column with a long citation from Régis Debray’s “famous” book, *Entretiens avec Salvador Allende*. In the excerpt, Allende stated that whether he succeeded or not, social conditions in Latin America meant that the struggle for “economic independence” and “authentic freedom” on the continent would continue. Lévesque was impressed by Allende’s “vision of the continental future” which he had elaborated with a “foresight shorn of personal illusions.” Yet the quote was perhaps most notable for what Lévesque chose to leave out. A passage from the middle of the quotation, where Allende emphasized that the “great prospect” of authentic freedom and economic independence lay “in this struggle, in rebellion, in dedication to solidarity with the workers,” was replaced with an ellipsis.

Unfortunately for Lévesque, the international jungle proved to be a far more dangerous place than his analysis implied. Debt negotiations provided Allende with only a temporary respite, while his opponents at home and abroad continued to turn the screws ever tighter. The deteriorating situation intensified the class struggle within the country and culminated in the military’s bloody resolution of the contest on 11 September 1973. Lévesque’s reassuring lesson drawn from the Chilean example was in tatters. And so, in his diagnosis of the reasons for the coup printed the day after news of the coup broke, Lévesque changed his tack. The Chilean coup d’état was declared to be the result of a strictly South American affliction, rather than of any American machinations. Under Allende, Chile’s political system had lived for three years in a “perpetual state of crisis,” Lévesque wrote, brought on by the “incurable paralysis of the State” caused by the conflict between the executive and the opposition-controlled Parliament.

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course, other administrations easily survived such conflicts between different levels of government. Why had the political gridlock proved so deadly for Allende? Lévesque explained that Chile’s fate was ultimately determined by its geographical location on a continent where “militarism and coups d’état are an endemic illness.”\(^43\) A subsequent column reiterated the view that the coup was the manifestation of a regional sickness, since “the contagion was too strong and Chile in its turn fell under the reign of the commandants.”\(^44\) The vector of the disease – U.S. imperialism – was notable for its absence in Lévesque’s post-coup columns. Perhaps seeking to ward off unpleasant comparisons between Chile and Québec, Lévesque de-emphasized the preponderant role played by imperialism in Chile that his previous columns had highlighted. After all, if the U.S. were to react in a similar way towards an independent Québec intent on exercising its economic sovereignty and reining in U.S. multinationals, would not Lévesque’s notion of an *indépendance tranquille* become untenable? Lévesque certainly did not want such thoughts crossing his readers’ minds.

Unlike Chile solidarity activists who fired most of their rhetorical shots at U.S. imperialism, Lévesque set his sights on Chile’s revolutionary left and its international fellow-travellers. Lévesque’s column published the day after Québec learned of the coup lamented “the end of a man of good will.” True to his principles, President Allende had clung tenaciously to democratic procedure throughout his time in office. Unfortunately, Lévesque argued, he had found himself trapped between “two implacably opposed camps”: on the one hand, “a brutish conservatism and its murderous fringes” and on the other, “the fantasies and provocative extravagance of the extreme left.” It was the intransigence of the left camp, however, that Lévesque singled out for criticism. He biting denounced “the enthusiasts of ‘popular power’

\(^{43}\) Lévesque, “La fin d’un homme de bonne volonté,” 8.
\(^{44}\) Lévesque, “Salade de samedi,” 8.
and all the champions of the blank slate, those from Chile as much as all the gadflies from abroad come to enjoy the experience,” for whom Allende’s reforms were “always too little, too late.” The lesson of the Chilean experiment was clear: Allende had died (or been killed, suggested Lévesque) because he had not been able to exorcise “the demons of extremism.” “In the end, Allende died because he was a democrat, that is to say a man of consensus, in an all-or-nothing climate.” As the period after the October 1973 elections would reveal, Lévesque was determined not to make Allende’s mistakes.

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Since the founding of the Parti québécois in 1968, René Lévesque had struggled with his own demons of extremism. In the febrile political atmosphere of early 1970s Québec, the PQ had become home to a variety of political currents that did not share Lévesque’s concern for moderation. The PQ’s radicals were drawn “from groups as diverse as the RIN, the FRAP, popular movements, leftist sects, students and trade unions.” Such a multiplicity of horizons did not prevent the radicals from cohering into a broad participationniste political tendency, one that embraced left politics, intra-party democracy and grassroots mobilization. They clashed frequently with the dominant technocratic faction headed by René Lévesque. The power of the participationnistes within the PQ was not definitively broken until the party’s fifth congress in November 1974, with the advent of étapisme. Demoralized and defeated by the PQ’s embrace of Claude Morin’s referendum idea, the left wing of the PQ was never again able to seriously contest Lévesque’s hegemony. This resounding victory for the technocrats and their political vision was secured through the astute deployment of the Chilean analogy by Morin.

From 1968 onward, René Lévesque had waged an almost continuous battle against the left. The PQ leader frequently found himself at loggerheads with those he derided as the “purs et durs” of his party, over issues ranging from unilingualism to support for the Comité Vallières-Gagnon. It was not an easy battle. The weight of the left-wing participationnistes was significant in the PQ’s ranks, accounting – says Pierre Godin – for fully one-third of party membership. On several occasions, Lévesque had to play his ultimate trump card by threatening to resign in order to contain their influence. There were moments in the early years of the party when he considered resigning from the leadership to resume his journalism career. As political scientist Vera Murray explains, frictions between participationnistes and technocrats arose from both differences of ideology and of social composition. In terms of ideology, the technocrats sought “the construction of a ‘beautiful Québec,’ modern and technically efficient,” and were “attached above all to values such as rationality, functionalism and faith in science.” The participationnistes, on the other hand, desired “the realization of a society founded on social justice and an authentic politics of participation,” and were far more sceptical of the claims to authority made by elites and experts. The leading elements of these two major groupings were further divided by social background and prior political experience:

The core of the ‘technocratic’ tendency is formed above all by former members of the PL [Parti libéral] and former government functionaries. The ‘participationniste’ current, for its part, is animated by people without prior political allegiance: labour activists, social animators, students, professors.

The influence wielded by the participationniste current (also known as the aile militante, or the activist wing) was in part made possible by the Parti québécois’ unusually open and democratic statutes and regulations. The founding congress of the PQ had been preceded by

47 Ibid.
48 E.g. Lévesque threatened to resign over the issue of unilingualism, Ibid., 535, 537.
49 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 29.
alliance negotiations between Lévesque’s MSA, the conservative Ralliement national (RN) led by Gilles Grégoire and Pierre Bourgault’s RIN. Talks broke down, intentionally sabotaged by Lévesque in order to keep out the notorious Bourgault and his militant followers. The MSA and the RN went ahead to found the new party without the RIN. The (very short-lived) sidelining of the RIN did not allay the fears of René Lévesque and his closest advisors. Concerned about how the founding congress would unfold, Lévesque sent an envoy to meet with André Larocque, a prominent participationniste figure. “Jean-Roch Boivin shared with us the concerns of René Lévesque: it was vital that this founding congress not be transformed into an assembly dominated by radical elements.” Boivin relayed Lévesque’s offer of a deal to Larocque: if he agreed to help keep a lid on any outbursts at the congress, Lévesque and his supporters would accept the participationnistes’ proposal for the party’s statutes and regulations. Larocque in fact had no plans to overrun the congress with his supporters, and thus immediately accepted the offer. Larocque had been studying the statutes and regulations of various parties around the world, and now, given free rein by leadership, he seized on the example of the party with the most open, bottom-up statutes he could find: the Communist League of Yugoslavia. “In a couple of hours,” Larocque recalls, “I had rewritten the statutes while redacting any allusion to the Communist League of Yugoslavia. And that’s how the founding congress of the Parti québécois enthusiastically adopted original and audacious statutes.”

This early victory for the participationnistes, along with their influence over the procedural rules adopted for party congresses, gave the new party its “exceptionally democratic character.” The statutes established a clear separation between the structures governing the programme of the party and those pertaining to “services” (organization, finances, media), with

50 Larocque, Le parti de René Lévesque: un retour aux sources, 78–79.
51 Ibid., 87–89.
52 Ibid.
the former given precedence over the latter. This structure gave more influence to rank-and-file members than to officials over the political orientation of the party. Resolutions on the programme had to come from the base and then work their way up through the party’s democratic structures. Thanks to Larocque’s plagiarism, the PQ’s internal structures opened the party to influence from its radicalizing base, much to the chagrin of René Lévesque, for whom this excess of democracy represented a “permanent headache” for his more realistic approach to politics.53 These headaches would only get worse when, shortly after the PQ’s founding congress, Pierre Bourgault dissolved the RIN and urged its 14,000 members to join the new party en masse. “Thus, barely several months after its birth,” says Larocque, “the PQ had its ‘purs et durs.’”54

Working through these exceptionally democratic structures, the broad PQ left exercised a substantial amount of influence over the party’s programme. Although the programme was initially drawn almost entirely from documents elaborated by the MSA (and thus bore the imprint of the technocratic current's ideas), Vera Murray demonstrates that from 1968 to 1973 the participationnistes managed to significantly modify the ideological tenor of the programme, in particular the social and economic measures put forward by the PQ: “It is important to emphasize ... that over the course of the successive programmes of the PQ, a growing willingness to advocate for, if not actually socialist measures, at least more and more participationniste measures emerges.”55 By 1973, the party’s economic policy statements contained, in equal parts, technocratic visions of comprehensive national economic planning and New Left-ish commitments to grassroots participation. The party leadership made much of their

53 “Fait étonnant, les statuts ne prévoyaient pas de ‘commission politique’, au sein de laquelle, normalement, un groupe de spécialistes élaborent le programme officiel du parti.” Ibid., 89.
54 Ibid., 80.
55 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 60.
“préjugé favorable” towards the working class, and party spokesmen (they were almost all men) even talked at times of building “another economic system.” Socialist and participationniste measures, however, were often enshrined in the party programme over the objections of Lévesque and the party executive, who tried in vain to impress upon the rank-and-file the importance of “gradualism” and “prudence.” When pressed to define more precisely what kind of regime the programme implied, it was typically Sweden and other Scandinavian countries that Lévesque held up as models for an independent Québec.

How independence was to be realized was another a point of contention between the leadership and the PQ left. The PQ’s initial programme, drawn from MSA documents, declared that negotiations over Québec’s ascension to sovereignty would begin immediately with the election of the PQ. The founding congress of the PQ hardened this position significantly, declaring that after a PQ victory, the only question to be negotiated for Québec would be how to put into effect its already-acquired sovereignty. In the debates concerning Québec during the 1972 federal elections, however, certain PQ leaders defended positions contrary to the party’s programme. As Murray notes, “[t]hey expressed the opinion that it will probably be necessary to organize a popular consultation on the question of independence, in the eventuality of the ascension to power of their party.” The fourth party congress in February 1973 responded by explicitly committing a future PQ government to the establishment of an independent state immediately upon taking office. The congress also expressed its opposition to any federal intervention in the process – including in the form of a federally-imposed referendum. This position was notably more radical than the original formulation of Lévesque’s MSA, indicating the influence of former RINistes and other “purs et durs” proponents of independence within the

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 71.
party. Lévesque had countered with a resolution calling for a referendum on the constitution drawn up by a constituent assembly of an independent Québec, which was also adopted.\textsuperscript{58}

The arrival of Claude Morin in the Parti québécois must have felt like a godsend for René Lévesque. Just eight months after stepping down from his post as Deputy Minister of Inter-Governmental Affairs, Morin officially became a member of the Parti québécois on 8 May 1972. In the pages of the *Journal de Montréal*, Lévesque lavished praise on his newest star recruit. Morin was rapidly integrated into the higher echelons of the party, first as an advisor to the national executive council starting in November 1972 and then as a fully-fledged member of the executive after his election at the fourth party congress held on 23-25 February 1973. Morin joined other high-level former civil servants like Louis Bernard and Jacques Parizeau in the top levels of the PQ. All three were members of a credible, experienced political “team” being assembled by Lévesque. Morin got along famously with Lévesque and was quickly welcomed into the PQ leader’s inner circle, in large part because, according to Robert Normand, “both of them shared realistic political ideas.” As the man hitherto responsible for the province’s negotiations with Ottawa, Morin had a high media profile in Québec and his conversion to the cause of sovereignty (a word he much preferred to “indépendance”) was a major political coup for the party, given his former position. Yet it was in Lévesque’s battle against the ‘enemy within’ that Morin proved to be most valuable. “His arrival in the péquiste machine,” writes historian Jean Décary, “had the effect of re-centering the equilibrium of forces on the executive where the balance was not leaning to the side of moderation.”\textsuperscript{59}

With the help of Claude Morin, the technocratic faction around Lévesque, despite the growing influence of the *participationnistes*, maintained firm control over the PQ’s political and

\textsuperscript{58} *Ibid.*, 70–72.
\textsuperscript{59} The information in this paragraph is drawn from Décary, *Dans l’œil du Sphinx : Claude Morin et les relations internationales du Québec*, 139–145.
electoral strategies. As the October 1973 campaign approached, the technocrats were focused on projecting a reassuring image of the party and the consequences of independence. They used their “star candidates” (like Claude Morin) to transmit that vision to the population via the corporate media. Much to the frustration of the PQ left, the leadership relied on the same electioneering techniques as the traditional parties (slogans, advertisements, press conferences), which were often ill-adapted to expressing the more substantive issues raised by the programme. “For this reason,” Murray observes, “this approach often has the effect of minimizing the social changes involved in the realization of the programme of the party.” Indeed, the leadership consistently de-emphasized the obvious aspect of rupture involved in achieving independence and disavowed its connection to any larger social project. Lévesque typically presented independence as an inevitable, almost natural result of the maturation of a Québécois nation, and the rational extension of the reforms that had begun during the Révolution tranquille. Claude Morin played a key role in elaborating the strategy deployed during the October 1973 elections, which Décary argues was “strongly marked by his influence.” While the left-leaning participationniste wing of the party made its strength felt at congresses through the content of the programme, it was Lévesque and his inner circle who exercised a “primordial influence” over the PQ’s modes of political action, Murray notes, thus determining how the programme was presented to the public.

During the October 1973 campaign, the discrepancies and ambiguities that had arisen as a consequence of the conflict between participationniste-influenced themes and those of the technocrats were dragged into the spotlight. The Liberals hammered relentlessly on the

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60 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 201–202. Elsewhere, Murray notes, “c’est le groupe des ‘technocrates’ qui a jusqu’à présent contrôlé les orientations stratégiques du P.Q.” Ibid., 176. See also p.164 on Lévesque’s dominance of the structure.


62 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 224.
divergence between the radical programme of the party and the moderate image projected by its leader. “The reassuring image of the PQ is in total contradiction with the radical solution it proposes,” declared Jérôme Choquette, comparing Lévesque to the wolf-disguised-as-grandma from the fairy tale “Little Red Ridinghood,” and claiming he was seeking to trick electors into believing the PQ was something it was not.

The PQ has given itself a new image since the beginning of the campaign. Mr. Lévesque wears a blue suit, he smokes less, he does not gesticulate as much as before and he no longer ‘barks’ at the crowds come to hear him; all with the goal of projecting a reassuring image and masking the real problems that separation would provoke.63

The Union Nationale followed a similar line of attack. Gabriel Loubier’s ten questions addressed to Lévesque constituted a caricature of the PQ’s program, to be sure. None of the PQ’s economic policy statements called for the wholesale nationalization of mining, forestry and financial services, or other measures as radically socialist as those pursued by Allende in Chile. Yet party documents did envision an independent Québec regaining control of these sectors through a combination of expanded state enterprises and/or cooperatives. The party’s 1972 economic manifesto Quand nous serons vraiment chez nous, for example, was “filled with references to socialist measures, cooperatives or co-management.”64 The ten questions likewise highlighted the heavily contested (and far from resolved) issue of a referendum on independence.

Lévesque openly admitted that his party was running a “reassuring” campaign, but insisted that “we don’t have any reason to make people panic with our programme.”65 Attacks on the radicalism of the PQ, however, even came from within party ranks. Gilles Grégoire, founder of the conservative Ralliement national (which had merged with Lévesque’s MSA to form the PQ in 1968), decided to sit out the 1973 elections due to the influence of the left wing. Although

64 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 46.
Grégoire had been a major force in the 1970 campaign, he complained to *La Presse* that he no longer felt at home in the Parti québécois:

> I am an independentist, it’s well-known, but I am not a leftist nor a socialist, far from it; yet, within the PQ, around René Lévesque, Parizeau and Claude Morin, it’s full of *p’tits gauchistes* who often don’t have any notion of the true Québécois reality, especially during elections. They judge everything from the perspective of Montréal and do not understand much of the mentality in the countryside, so different from that of Montréal. I have trouble working with these people.\(^{66}\)

The PQ left, for its part, was frustrated by the tendency of the PQ leadership during the campaign to disregard elements of the programme that might clash with their vision of an *indépendance tranquille*. Claude Morin, for instance, angered many PQ supporters at his nomination rally in Louis-Hébert prior to the October 1973 elections “when he affirmed, contrary to the programme, that there will be no independence without a referendum.” René Lévesque, however, was pleased since he too felt a referendum was necessary to reassure voters, and had no qualms about disregarding the party’s programme.\(^{67}\) Another source of frustration was the distance the PQ attempted to put between itself and more radical proponents of independence. Its election pamphlet “*L’indépendance, c’est pas sorcier*” contained passages like this: “Q.: Is the PQ socialist? / A.: The PQ is neither socialist, nor communist, nor anything -ist. The proof is that Michel Chartrand is shouting against it!”\(^{68}\)

The most flagrant traducing of the programme occurred at the end of the campaign. With the PQ trailing the Liberals in the polls, Lévesque tasked Guy Joron with placing full-page ads in

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\(^{66}\) Having become independently wealthy thanks to a series of fortunate real estate transactions, Grégoire told *La Presse* he was planning to travel around the world. Grégoire would return to run for office with the PQ in 1976, after Lévesque had reined in the radicals. Cyrille Felteau, “Gilles Grégoire ne sait plus où ‘se brancher’,” *La Presse*, 19 October 1973, A8.

\(^{67}\) Godin, *René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui (1960-1976)*, 615, 621. From the outset of the October 1973 campaign, Lévesque had insisted that his party would not declare independence immediately after election and would give Québécois the chance to decide themselves one and a half to two years later via referendum. “We no longer live in an epoch where a civilized society can be forced to accept a change like that. Otherwise, it would not be sound. We must realize a peaceful and calm independence.” Gravel, “Le fils de Bertrand répond au chef de l’UN,” A9.

all the major newspapers and printing thousands of reminder cards to be distributed to voters bearing the message: “Today, I vote for the only team ready to form a real government. In 1975, through a referendum, I will decide the future of Québec. One thing at a time!”69 This open disregard for the programme frustrated many in the party, including Jacques Parizeau, who felt that these electoral tactics diluted the PQ’s commitment to pursuing independence immediately upon taking power.70 Lévesque’s last-minute manoeuvres were enough to completely disillusion the recently-converted péquiste Pierre Vallières: “That’s how ... during the last days of the October 1973 electoral campaign, I became absolutely certain that the Parti québécois would never achieve the independence of Québec.”71

The disappointing results of the provincial elections served as a catalyst for intense internal debates over the leadership’s strategic choices. The debates revolved around the general issue of how to address the fear wielded so effectively by the Liberals, which had prevented many Québécois voters from giving their support to the PQ, and generally pitted participationnistes against technocrats. As Vallières observed in his political memoirs, conflict between the party’s two ideological factions sharpened after 29 October 1973:

The second electoral defeat of the PQ and the crushing victory of the Liberals had the effect of dangerously aggravating the tensions and dissensions that were developing for some time already within the ‘sovereigntist’ party. The left of the PQ vigorously reproached René Lévesque for the authoritarian, ‘Duplessist’ character of his leadership. The leader, for his part, was eager to be done with the ‘rêveurs brouillons’ of independence and of socialism.72

The electoral defeat brought to the surface the untenable duality of the PQ’s politics. The party faced a dilemma, to be resolved at the upcoming fifth national congress in November 1974:

69 Godin, René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui (1960-1976), 621.
70 Duchesne, Jacques Parizeau: Le Baron, 97–99.
72 Ibid., 249.
either bring the programme closer into alignment with the reassuring rhetoric, or readjust the rhetoric, and the political strategy more broadly, to more honestly reflect the programme.

For prominent participationnistes, the election results demonstrated that the leadership’s techniques of reassurance had failed to convince the public. André Larocque and Robert Burns, both of whom were members of the executive, felt that the PQ needed to give up its current communications strategy, since the project of independence was simply too radical to be reassuring. Rather than concentrating on election-time media blitzes that soft-peddled the party’s political orientation as stated in the programme, the PQ needed to establish closer day-to-day contact, especially between elections, with ordinary Québécois in order to win the confidence of the population and thus counter the fear-mongering of their opponents. As one participationniste PQ MNA explained to Vera Murray: “You can’t dialogue with the television, you can present certain ideas, but you must go out among the population to dialogue. You cannot win the election with a television show, a press conference, a slogan ...” Gilbert Paquette, an UQAM professor, CSN member and councillor on the executive, expressed the view of many participationnistes who felt that when it came to countering the scare tactics deployed by the opponents of independence, “[t]here is no magic shortcut.” Paquette was sceptical of the PR-heavy strategy of reassurance pursued by the leadership and called on the party’s national executive to rethink its style of political action: “It is only through political action sustained over three years, among the citizens, and not only by taking positions, that we will succeed in giving confidence to Québécois regarding their collective future. When they will see Québécois like them, not necessarily more intelligent, but who relate the programme of the party to their concerns and their needs and who are determined to see it through, our fellow citizens will get on

74 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 201.
board.” Participationnistes called for a re-orientation of the PQ’s strategy in favour of greater riding-level organization, increased efforts devoted to political education and mobilization, and closer ties with unions, citizens’ committees and other popular organizations. Building the public trust necessary to weather the gales of fear-inducing propaganda kicked up by the opponents of independence required an intensification of activism and engagement at the grassroots by the PQ.

The PQ left had an unlikely ally in its assessment of the 1973 election: Jacques Parizeau, one of Lévesque’s cherished technocrats. Like Paquette, Parizeau argued that it was unrealistic to expect some sort of magic bullet that could immediately win over the hesitant or fearful segments of the population. “The PQ is not reassuring and it never will be. ... It is pride that will push us to attain independence, but fear will always be a factor. Some will be scared of getting killed, like in Chile or Biafra, others of going broke. We have to dissipate the fear by wearing it out.” Parizeau’s solution was ambiguous, but it leaned towards the participationniste position that such fears could only be addressed through a long-term process of political education. On the one hand, Parizeau emphasized the urgency of the situation: “The entire problem consists of hardening, as quickly as possible, the largest number of Québécois against fear.” Yet the solution he proposed for defeating fear and winning independence was one of slow consciousness-raising, which he juxtaposed with the armed violence of other national liberation movements: “The fights that others have conducted with gunshots, we will conduct them, each one of us, in the depths of a consciousness that, little by little, ceases to be that of a beaten dog.” Parizeau was the first political casualty of the October defeat. His performance selling the budget de l’an 1 to voters

76 Murray, Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir, 202–204.
77 Dubuc, L’autre histoire de l’indépendance : de Pierre Vallières à Charles Gagnon , de Claude Morin à Paul Desmarais, 179.
was mercilessly criticized from all sides at the PQ’s 17-18 November 1973 national council that followed the elections. Parizeau defended the idea of the budget and his role in presenting it to the public, arguing that it had served a useful pedagogical purpose. Yet he was stung by the harsh criticism of his colleagues. The day after the national council, Parizeau submitted his resignation from the PQ national executive, but remained involved in the party.\(^79\)

The PQ left’s calls for a new strategy initially seemed to gain some traction with the party leadership. In early 1974, the PQ officially supported a number of bitter strikes at Canadian Gypsum in Joliette, at Great Lakes Carbon Company in Berthier and at United Aircraft in Longueuil. Paquette and others celebrated Lévesque's participation in a solidarity assembly with the strikers on 12 February 1974. The PQ leader appeared to be moving closer to the left wing's position. Robert Burns, one of 6 PQ MNA elected in 1973 and a former labour lawyer with the CSN, told *La Presse*: “I find that Lévesque is making an error in always wanting to dissociate the party from the labour federations and union actions. After all, union leaders are also elected.”\(^79\)

This newfound influence was perhaps due to how well-represented the *aile militante* of the PQ was on the party's national executive. Joining Paquette and Burns on the executive were Métallo regional director for the Nord-Ouest Théo Gagné and ACEF activist Rose Gélinas. All four were experienced activists who “favour to the greatest extent possible a rapprochement of the PQ with workers’ associations, popular groups, ordinary people.”\(^80\)

Unfortunately for the PQ left, René Lévesque was not willing to give up his thesis of an *indépendance tranquille* so easily. Lévesque and the technocrats rejected criticism of their electoral strategy, pointing to the PQ’s growing share of the vote and talking instead of “moral


victory” or a “stolen” election.\textsuperscript{81} Lévesque admitted that the party could have been better prepared going into the election, but claimed it had been weakened by “tensions between radicals and moderates that had marked 1972.”\textsuperscript{82} Dealing with the fears raised by the possible consequences of independence was still important for Lévesque, but contrary to Parizeau and the participationnistes who felt that such fears could only be worn away with time, Lévesque contended that more could have been done to reassure voters during the 1973 election. The principal strategic error, in Lévesque’s opinion, was to have waited too long before clearly committing the PQ to a referendum on independence.\textsuperscript{83} The priority for Lévesque was to change the PQ’s programme to include an obligatory referendum and, more generally, to gain full control over the party apparatus in order to put an end to the internal dissensions caused by the left wing.

The inspiration for this line of strategic thinking was Claude Morin. Ever since he joined the PQ, Morin had focused his attention on the question of the ascension to sovereignty. He was convinced, for both electoral and geopolitical reasons, that the PQ, rather than treating every vote for the PQ as a vote for independence, had to make a clear commitment to holding a referendum on independence after it took office. The October 1973 defeat demonstrated to Morin that independence still “frightened too many people.” If the party were to win the next election, it needed dissociate the election of a PQ government from establishment of a sovereign Québec state.\textsuperscript{84} In this way, the PQ could appeal to a wider swath of voters fed up with the Liberal government but not necessarily won over to the cause of independence. Accompanying this baldly electoralist rationale for the referendum was a more subtle set of arguments concerning

\textsuperscript{81} Murray, \textit{Le Parti québécois: de la fondation à la prise du pouvoir}, 188.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid.}, 629.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid.}, 644.
international relations. If the PQ could not afford to *bouscule* the population, as Morin so often repeated, neither could it afford to *bouscule* the U.S. empire. “More than an ordinary party,” Morin remarks in his memoirs, “[the Parti québécois] effectively needed to fear the virulence of its opponents.”

As Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for over nine years, Morin had negotiated on behalf of various Québec governments with foreign countries. Based on his experience, Morin was certain that the “international community” would not recognize an independent Québec unless it had demonstrated its democratic legitimacy through a referendum. Being able to demonstrate a clear 50%-plus-one majority of the population in favour of independence was crucial; Morin argued that there were too many issues at stake in a general election for the outcome to give the PQ the necessary mandate. Even worse would be to declare independence after winning a PQ majority in National Assembly with less than 50% of the vote, which Morin felt left Québec’s claims to sovereignty dangerously open to question. International legitimacy was considered by Morin, Lévesque and many others in the party to be essential for fending off another Canadian military occupation or other forms of meddling in the process of independence.

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85 Morin, *Les choses comme elles étaient: une autobiographie politique*, 266.
86 Biographer Pierre Godin describes Lévesque’s thinking at the time thusly: “Si l’accession à la souveraineté présentait quelque faille, Pierre Trudeau s’empresserait de mettre en doute sa légitimité et de miner la reconnaissance internationale du nouveau pays. Pis encore: il saurait sur l’occasion pour créer le chaos et envoyer l’armée au Québec, comme il l’avait fait en octobre 1970.” In keeping with his vision of an indépendance tranquille, Lévesque preferred to downplay these fears in public, so as to not create an atmosphere of civil war. “Mais il s’inquiète en privé des convictions démocratiques élastiques du gouvernement Trudeau.” Jacques Parizeau, who was not so discreet, told the *Toronto Star*’s Robert McKenzie that the Trudeau Liberals would go mad with rage were a PQ government to take power. “Ils seraient tentés de monter un coup pour écraser la démocratie et jeter tous les dirigeants du parti, René Lévesque et moi compris, en prison.” Godin, *René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui (1960-1976)*, 644–645. The PQ had ample reason to fear such a possibility. Through Jacques Parizeau’s contacts in the military, the PQ had learned that the Canadian military’s Mobile Force was spying on the CSN and other labour unions, learning counter-insurgency techniques from British officers experienced in the art in Northern Ireland, and preparing a second occupation of the province, code named “Operation Neat Pitch,” in the event of a popular uprising. The PQ exposed the secret documents attesting to these plans to the media during the September 1972
Pursuing independence without a clear, democratic mandate was not the only factor which could hinder an independent Québec’s recognition on the international stage. Morin was quite attuned to the reality that left-wing policies might expose Québec to foreign interference, especially the American variety, and was therefore quite troubled by the fact that the PQ was viewed from without as a political formation “de style Spartacus et de tendance Robin des bois.” Due to the perceived radicalism of the Québec independence movement, the PQ could not complacently rely on the “sacrosanct principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other peoples” for protection, since “the eventual arrival of a new actor on the international scene” could “displease” certain other actors who were following closely the situation and who might be inclined to provoke “disorder.” “It had to get in our heads that a Québec at the moment of international emergence would not be alone on the planet.”

The mix of electoral calculation and geopolitical caution was typical of those who lined up behind Morin’s étapisme. According to Pierre Godin, Jacques-Yvan Morin, Guy Joron, Marc-André Bédard and Claude Charron exemplified the péquistes for whom “pragmatism transcended all the rest.” Like Lévesque, they viewed an obligatory referendum as necessary both to reassure the electorate but also to take account of “the fact that Québec is not an island within the confines of the American continent.” Lévesque had long been aware that to realize his dream of an indépendance tranquille, it was necessary for the PQ to avoid the taint of radicalism. Discussing the strategic implications of living in the shadow of the U.S., Lévesque

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87 Morin, Les choses comme elles étaient: une autobiographie politique, 267.
88 Interestingly, Morin’s concerns echoed those of his long-time friend Claude Castonguay, who had warned that the U.S. state and corporations could be expected to sow instability if Québec attempted to declare independence. Ibid.
89 “For the ‘morinistes’, pragmatism transcends all the rest. Étisme seeks to take account of the depth of realities, notably the fact that Québec is not an island within the confines of the American continent, which would tend to favour its independence, but it is very imbricated economically, culturally and socially in North America.” Godin, René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui (1960–1976), 646.
had reminded PQ delegates before the party’s third national congress in 1971 that an independent Québec would be “no more difficult to colonize, or, at least to manipulate economically than Canada today.” “That’s why I find completely absurd the intention of our home-grown socialists who say: at the same time as independence, we have to build an all-encompassing socialism. In other words: aggravate the Americans as well as Ottawa.”

Concerns about international – essentially American – reactions to an independent Québec were further heightened by the coup d’état in Chile. Although rarely admitted publicly, fear of American intervention was widespread at the top levels of the PQ. The leadership had begun to worry about “possible foreign interventions in the sovereigntist process” due to a number of factors, according to Claude Morin:

> The events of October 1970, the progressive revelation of certain acts of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the overthrow of the Allende government, in Chile, due to the presumed intervention of the American CIA, all this, pell-mell with other incidents here and there in the world, prompted the belief, in 1973 or 1974, that Québec’s ascension to sovereignty would perhaps not occur in an isolated and antiseptic environment.

The debate over étapisme thus emerged at a time when the fall of Allende had sensitized the PQ’s leading figures, whether participationniste or technocratic, to the perils of any path of radical change – even if pursued through scrupulously parliamentary means – in a U.S.-dominated global order.

The pragmatic thinking of Morin did not resonate widely in the party, where electoralism was viewed with suspicion, if not disdain. Gilbert Paquette spoke for many in the party when he argued that étapisme represented a dangerously slippery slope for the PQ. In an editorial in *Le Jour*, Paquette claimed that in trying to dissociate the party from its ultimate objective,
independence, the PQ was being transparently dishonest, a strategy that was unlikely to reassure many voters. In order to succeed, Morin’s political logic would have to be pushed even further, to the point where the PQ could find itself “saying that independence no longer appears to us as absolutely necessary to be ‘maître chez nous.’” At that point, what use would the party then be?”

The PQ would be indistinguishable from their Union Nationale rivals, with their stance of Égalité ou Indépendance, while Liberals could easily claim to offer the same policies of economic nationalism and cultural sovereignty as a PQ government but without the risk of undertaking independence. Although Paquette agreed that a majority of the population had to be won over to independence, he, like most members of the activist wing of the PQ, suspected that Morin’s étapisme would cause the party to lose its political identity, transforming the PQ from an “instrument of national liberation” into an ‘old party’ like the others:

To obtain this massive support from Québécois, the party must be able to mobilize its activists much more than from 70 to 73 when the activity of the party among the citizenry was almost nil.

Yet any position that would lead us to make more and more compromises risks demobilizing more and more activists with each significant ‘strategic’ retreat.

It is likely that our most committed activists would then be replaced by the proponents of the special status [for Québec within Confederation], not to mention the inevitable opportunists that come to infest every party that starts to get old.

Rather than independence by steps, we are instead liable to get the old party by steps.92

Opposition to Morin’s étapisme came from a diversity of sources and was quite broadly-based. The first camp, composed of mostly ex-RINistes, was the most unconditional in its opposition to Morin’s referendum idea, which earned its members the label of “purs et durs.”

The second camp consisted of Jacques Parizeau and his supporters, who felt the party was

getting bogged down in Byzantine debates over the subject. The third camp was led by the *participationnistes* of Montréal-Centre (led by figures such as Gilbert Paquette, Louise Harel, Guy Bisaillon and Louis O’Neill), who were open to the idea of a referendum if necessary but opposed including a firm commitment to a referendum in the programme. All three groups were united in opposition to any attempt to dissociate the party from the struggle for independence and were steadfast in their belief that every election should in effect be a referendum on support for independence. Prior to the fifth congress, the Parizeau camp and the *participationnistes* “seemed majoritarian,” in Pierre Godin’s estimation, while the “*purs et durs*” accounted for another one-third of PQ activists.93 Vera Murray’s 1976 study of the Parti québécois corroborates Godin’s impressions, finding support for Morin’s position in favour of an obligatory referendum restricted to the group of technocrats around Lévesque (with the significant exception of Parizeau) and a certain number of party “organizers.” “Our research leads us to believe that at the moment of the fifth congress this group was not very representative of the members of the party as a whole.”94 As Morin discovered while trying to drum up support for his *stratégie référendaire*, many rank-and-file PQ members regarded *étapisme* as “an outrageously revisionist idea,”95 one that effectively diluted the party’s commitment to independence for the sake of votes.

Given the balance of forces against the idea of a referendum, Morin’s strategy should have been dead in the water. Given their adamant rejection of arguments based on electoralism, convincing his opponents of the necessity of a referendum would be far more difficult than convincing Lévesque. Morin was aware, however, that many radicals had admired Allende’s

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Unidad Popular government and, in some cases, had even seen the PQ as pursuing an analogous political project of building socialism through parliamentary means, as Pierre Godin explains:

The Chilean analogy struck Claude Morin. In effect, since 1968, Marxism had been very popular among Québécois intellectuals, in the colleges, the universities, the unions. The radicals of the PQ, notably the left wing incarnated by Montréal-Centre, view the party as the advanced wing of the proletariat, following the Marxist mould.96

The PQ left was likely to find his geopolitical arguments for a referendum far more persuasive, Morin realized, in light of the tragic spectacle unfolding in Chile. “The Chilean example ... was still too fresh in the memories of many not to be taken into consideration.”97 In Morin’s view, the Chilean experience contained some hard lessons that had to be taken into account. Allende had gone too far, too fast, exceeding the bounds of an “imprecise” mandate – and also nationalizing American assets – thus recklessly endangering his government by exposing it to a U.S. backlash.98 Declaring Québec’s independence on the basis of a simple parliamentary majority, without the backing of a clear and unequivocal mandate from a referendum in which 50% of Québécois voted for sovereignty, would be “suicidal,” since it would place the PQ “in the same explosive situation as ex-Chilean President Salvador Allende.”99 Morin “worried” that if a future PQ government attempted to claim independence on such a basis, it might suffer the same fate as Allende, who had won the presidency of Chile with 36.6% of the vote in a three-way race but “nonetheless undertook to apply, often by decree, his left programme as if he had received an absolute majority of the popular vote.” As a consequence, Allende had made himself vulnerable to foreign intervention: “His internal and external enemies (CIA) found it easy to organize almost all the tendencies of the opposition against him.”100 Morin’s concerns echoed those of his

97 Décary, Dans l’œil du Sphinx: Claude Morin et les relations internationales du Québec, 156.
98 Ibid.
100 Claude Morin, unpublished document attached to e-mail to the author, 10 April 2014.
long-time friend Claude Castonguay, who had warned that the U.S. state and corporations could be expected to sow instability if Québec attempted to declare independence.\footnote{Morin also accused his opponents of being “anti-democratic” in their rejection of the referendum, Pierre Godin reports: “Claude Morin les voit comme des agitateurs qui refusent inconsciemment la démocratie. Que la population soit prête ou non, d’accord ou non, cela les indiffère. L’important pour eux, c’est de l’entraîner là où le parti le veut.” Given the demonstrated willingness of Morin to set aside the party programme and speak in the place of an imagined “silent majority,” the politician was evincing a certain chutzpah. Godin, 	extit{René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui} (1960-1976), 647–648.}

Lévesque agreed completely with Morin’s Chilean analogy, but both of them avoided making such comparisons publicly. “In the atmosphere of the time,” Morin recalls, “this would have led people (especially opponents) to make parallels between the PQ and the Chilean left or, if you will, between Lévesque and Allende!”\footnote{Claude Morin, e-mail message to the author, 10 April 2014.} Having already been stung by Loubier’s unearthing of Lévesque’s columns on Chile in the 	extit{Journal de Montréal}, Lévesque and Morin did not want such comparisons to do any more damage to their strategy of reassurance. Morin thus saved his Chilean argument for when it could be employed with discretion. The moment came six weeks before the fifth congress at a meeting of the PQ executive and the parliamentary caucus gathered to listen to Morin’s report on the ascension to sovereignty. Morin attempted to convince the meeting of the need to include an obligatory referendum in the programme of the party, drawing heavily on the example of Allende’s Chile to rally the party leadership behind his ideas. As Morin recalls, “I made use of the Chilean experience in the internal discussion within the executive of which I was a part, to convince the members still hostile to the idea of the referendum.” “[T]he Chilean argument ... served above all to convince, behind closed doors, the executive of the party. Once the executive agreed to the referendum, things became simpler with the congress itself.”\footnote{Ibid.} Although Morin had to settle for a compromise resolution, he managed to
win over both the executive and the parliamentary wing, including the representatives of the *participationnistes*, to the idea of modifying the programme to include a referendum.104

Morin had astutely sensed the lowering of expectations caused by the coup among the PQ left’s ranks. At least one representative of the PQ left on the executive had been chastened by the coup in Chile, even before being persuaded by Morin’s arguments. When Théo Gagné was elected to the PQ’s executive (taking Parizeau’s vacated seat after his resignation), *Québec-Presse* interviewed him concerning the lessons he drew from Allende’s overthrow. The labour activist, who had been a member of the editorial committee of the journal *Socialisme* and had traveled to Chile with a delegation of miners in 1972, sounded a note of caution for those who thought Québec was on the verge of realizing the dream of *socialisme et indépendance*: “From Chile, Gagné concludes that the struggle against ‘the international exploiters’ will be long and that a small country like Québec, right next to the American giant, will have to proceed by steps.”105 With the help of the Chilean coup, Morin’s *étapisme* now had the crucial initial foothold it needed to go forward.

By the time of the party’s fifth national congress, held at the Petit Colisée in Québec City on 15-17 November 1974, the adoption of the referendum resolution seemed like a foregone conclusion given how carefully the groundwork had been laid. Both the party executive and the parliamentary wing unanimously backed the motion; a poll made public shortly before the congress showed that 83% of Québécois supported the idea of a referendum on sovereignty; and

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104 The hostility of the radicals to *étapisme* was widely held and despite René Lévesque’s support for Morin, the proposition for an obligatory referendum was rejected. “Sa conclusion provoque une levée de boucliers des radicaux que René Lévesque lui-même ne réussit pas à endiguer.” The party leadership instead adopted a compromise position put forward by Gilbert Paquette that committed the party to a conditional referendum, to be held only in the event of systematic obstruction from the federal government. Godin, *René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui (1960-1976)*, 648. In spite of the opposition of the radicals, the compromise resolution was ultimately sufficient for Morin’s purposes. *Étapisme*, appropriately enough, was installed in the programme of the PQ by steps.

105 Louis Fournier, “‘Pour les ouvriers, le PQ est une rupture avec les vieux partis’ - Théo Gagné,” *Québec-Presse*, 3 February 1974, 8.
from the floor, René Lévesque “threw all his weight in the balance.” Speaking in favour of the resolution, Lévesque cited the opinion poll and recalled that the party had always wanted to make independence in a “peaceful, democratic manner.” Lévesque’s argumentation also included a subtle reference to the geopolitical importance of the measure. “The referendum will permit us to confirm our legitimacy both here and abroad,” Lévesque told the delegates, a “discrete reference to international opinion” noted *Le Jour.* As Jean Décary notes: “Although not expressed clearly at the start, the idea of facilitating the international recognition of Québec was equally a part of the rhetoric of the proponents of the referendum.” Even so, the resolution faced far more resistance from the floor than expected, with 353 delegates voting against versus 630 for. Acceptance of the outcome was “far from unanimous” among the delegates: “Upon announcement of the results, many tore up their membership cards which they threw with disgust on the floor of the congress.” Lévesque, however, was delighted by the outcome and praised the delegates for being able “to reconcile the visceral side” of their convictions with “the necessary calculations of strategy.” The rest of the fifth congress went far more smoothly for Lévesque and Morin. According to *Le Jour*, Lévesque was “visibly satisfied” to see that delegates had followed “in almost all domains, the ‘ideological corridors’ he had traced in his opening speech.” Even more importantly, the congress “chose a new executive in which all the candidates that Mr. Lévesque and his allies actively supported were elected.” With the exception of Guy Bisaillon, a trade unionist who had played a leading role in the recent United Aircraft strike, the *participationnistes* were shut out of the executive. For Lévesque, the congress was

106 The referendum idea’s intellectual father Claude Morin, on the other hand, lay low, his reputation in party circles still stained by the heretical declarations he had made in a November 1973 interview with *Le Devoir*. Godin, *René Lévesque: Héros malgré lui* (1960-1976), 650.
“the most beautiful, the most productive, the most balanced and the most serene in the history of the party.”

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After the PQ won the 15 November 1976 elections, Lévesque publicly expressed confidence that the U.S. would abstain from intervening against his government and its moves towards independence. When asked about the risk of American meddling, Lévesque affirmed his faith in the democratic traditions of the U.S., which were beginning to re-assert themselves after the “great traumas” of the Nixon era. The “excesses” of the CIA and the “revelations on Chile” meant that the U.S. was less likely to give in to the “temptation” of intervening in Québec. Chile, Vietnam and Watergate had provoked “a kind of internal purification of the American mindset,” evidenced by Jimmy Carter’s embrace of human rights as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy. Lévesque optimistically concluded that the Americans were reconsidering “their role as ‘gendarme of the world’,” and abandoning “a too rigid, at times dangerous policy” in favour of “a policy of consensus, above all with the countries that they know well.”

Regarding American attitudes to Québec in particular, Lévesque admitted that the U.S. was not enthusiastic about “upheavals north of the border.” Yet, he maintained, independence would be accepted if “everything happens in order.” On this basis, Lévesque insisted that Québec need not fear reprisals from the Americans. “Rest assured! We are not a potential Cuba, as our most staunch opponents love to pretend! Nor a Chile either, for that matter ...”

Behind Lévesque’s confident façade, however, a quiet, persistent fear of American intervention continued to haunt the PQ after 1976. According to Jean-François Lisée, such

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111 Ibid.
112 René Lévesque, La passion du Québec (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1978), 115, 117.
113 “Qu’on se rassure! Nous ne sommes pas un Cuba en puissance, comme se complaisent à le faire croire nos plus farouches opposants! Ni non plus un Chili, d’ailleurs ...” Ibid., 171–172.
concerns reached the highest levels of political power. The devastating Chilean truckers’ strike of October 1972, for instance, which the CIA had amply funded “to destabilize the local economy and weaken the power of Marxist President Salvador Allende,” was not far from the minds of members of the Lévesque cabinet:

When a demonstration of Québécois truckers paralyzed traffic around the Parliament building in Québec City in 1977, several péquisteministers observed from a window the deliberately provoked traffic jam in front of the august stone building. “You know what this makes me think of?” asked one of them over the noise of horns barely muffled by the glass. “Allende,” answered another.114

At the end of his political career, René Lévesque wrote that he was convinced that the PQ had been infiltrated by American intelligence: “I’d bet my life on it that there were constantly CIA agents in the wings ...”115 The PQ’s federalist opponents may have played a role in stoking such fears. As Pierre Vallières observed in his 1977 book Un Québec impossible, the Trudeau Liberals did not hesitate to raise the spectre of Chile in order to intimidate the Lévesque government. Shortly after the 15 November 1976 election, Marc Lalonde evoked the possibility of “Chilean-style tactics” that would strike “so hard at the Parti québécois that it would be unable to recover.”116

After taking office, Lévesque was extremely careful to distance the PQ from anything which might rile its neighbours to the south. Lévesque’s first visit abroad as Premier of Québec was to New York City, where he met with bankers and industrialists in an attempt to calm the ‘animal spirits’ of Wall Street. In a speech delivered to the Economic Club in New York on January 1977, Lévesque reiterated his government's commitment to its ‘social democratic’ programme and its objective of independence, while promising that the pursuit of these objectives would not go off the rails. Lévesque afterwards explained: “I was able to give all the

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115 Ibid., 18.
reassurances necessary to those who might have thought that what was developing in Québec constituted, in a certain way, an experience ‘à la cubaine.’” According to Lisée, even before the PQ won the 1976 provincial elections, Lévesque and Morin provided similar assurances directly to American diplomats at the U.S. embassy, so anxious were they to demonstrate the PQ’s moderation to the Empire:

End of 1975, Claude Morin ... assures a diplomat that the PQ has at most “400 Marxists” in its ranks. Lévesque also affirms to American envoys that in these years of radicalism he does not want to formally associate his party to the labour federations, “certainly not to the current labour leaders,” Louis Laberge, Marcel Pepin and Yvon Charbonneau. Not surprisingly, the U.S. government was well-informed of the PQ's post-fifth congress drift to the right: “It’s the movement of the PQ towards respectability that dominates in the [U.S. embassy] dispatches.” Étapisme was but one facet of a broader-based push towards moderation, a drive that became more open and undisguised as Lévesque consolidated his control over the party.

From Allende’s fall, Lévesque had gleaned the lesson that the imposing global presence of the U.S. required dispensing with the PQ’s leftist orientation, but it was only after the fifth congress that Lévesque publicly acknowledged the inspiration provided by Chile. Speaking before an assembly of about 100 students at the Université Laval in December 1974, Lévesque gave a typical speech appealing to young people to shake off their political apathy. It was incomprehensible, Lévesque said, that such educated people as they were “incapable of getting interested in politics and, consequently, allowing society to stagnate, to degrade.” Lévesque appealed to the students to “give a hand” to the PQ, eliciting no visible response. During the question period, a student elaborated a lengthy proposition concerning Chile and timidly warned

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117 Lévesque, La passion du Québec, 61.
118 Lisée, Dans L’œil de L’aigle: Washington Face Au Québec, 204.
119 The Embassy remarked on the PQ’s courting of Castonguay as evidence of this trend. Ibid.
Lévesque to beware of the American superpower. In his reply, as reported by the *Canadian Press*, Lévesque declared that “the United States had taken advantage of an extreme left within the Allende government to provoke popular discontent and encourage the coup d’état.” “He however drew a lesson and maintained that the PQ ‘will not favour the leftists in Québec,’ evoking a bit later the acts of the FLQ in 1970.”120 Lévesque had always been hostile to the left, but the Chilean coup arguably redoubled the intensity of his attack.

Lévesque’s hostility to leftists was no surprise for Serge Mongeau, a Québécois doctor who was living and studying in Chile at the time of the coup. In an open letter to the PQ leader prompted by Lévesque's comments on Chile at Université Laval, Mongeau wrote: “You certainly did not wait for the Chilean events to adopt this stance, which seems to come from the depths of your very being.” Mongeau recalled how the party leadership had allowed him to be ousted as a candidate in Taillon in 1970 because he had “a few left ideas” and was not afraid to defend them – “even against you.” After he was arrested during the October crisis, Mongeau was also expelled as riding president because the leadership felt he “risked giving the party too radical an image.” Mongeau therefore wondered if it was not a good thing that “more and more young people were taking their distance vis-a-vis the Party that you lead with an iron fist.”

Mongeau was nonetheless shocked and outraged that Lévesque would adopt the “strongly reactionary position of all those who attempt to place the blame for Allende’s fall on the back of the extreme left.” Mongeau reminded Lévesque and the readers of *Le Jour* that the far left, namely the MIR, had not formed part of the Allende government, having understood “that you can’t govern for the people with instruments that were forged by and for the bourgeoisie.” But the far left had not opposed the government and had in fact worked to oppose the disorder caused by the right. It was the *failure* of the U.S. to create sufficient popular discontent that caused it to

provoke the coup d'etat, Mongeau argued, pointing to the strong showing of the UP in the March 1973 elections and the three-million-strong demonstration in Santiago on the third anniversary of Allende's election. “The September 11th coup d’état was the last card of the bourgeoisie who saw its power slipping away rapidly and definitively. To speak of the popular discontent which supposedly justified it is to side with the imperialists who invoked this false pretext to legitimate their intervention.” Mongeau concluded that Lévesque’s comments on Chile were symptomatic of the party’s efforts to distance itself from the left. “Mr. Lévesque, I believe you are confusing the left and the extreme left. And you are lashing out at both. The students and many others don’t join the PQ because they want to be involved in a left party.”

Dr. Mongeau’s diagnosis of what Lévesque’s Chilean lesson implied for the PQ was quite accurate. Once in office, Lévesque repudiated the idea that the victory represented a “left turn” for Québec, dismissing the notion as an old Anglo-Canadian bugbear brandished to scare away investors. Lévesque emphasized that his government refused to take the “revolutionary path” advocated by the “maximalists,” while objecting to left critiques of his indépendance tranquille as promoting nothing more than a form of state capitalism or “neo-capitalism.” “Between the autogestionnaire revolution and the ‘gradualism’ of those who do not finally want to change anything significant, there is room for a radicalism doubled by realism.”

Realism, of course, meant respecting the limits of diversity laid down by the Empire.

One of the major changes entailed by Lévesque’s “realistic radicalism” (or was it “radical realism”?) was the ditching of the PQ’s commitment to neutralism and an acceptance of the Cold War parameters in foreign policy. In 1977, Lévesque persuaded the party rank-and-file to remove from the programme the PQ’s pledge to withdraw from NATO and NORAD after

122 Lévesque, La passion du Québec, 172, 185, 188.
independence. The change was pushed through with little resistance, earning the party praise from Lévesque for having outgrown its “immaturity.” Lévesque justified the move by explaining that Québec's choice of independence would be better received in Washington (and on Wall Street) if Québec gave proof of “its willingness to reasonably insert itself in the North American and Western dynamic.”\textsuperscript{123}

In matters of economic and social policy, Lévesque labelled his “realistic radicalism” social democracy, and held up Sweden and other Scandinavian countries – rather than Chile – as sources of inspiration. But although Lévesque proclaimed his admiration for Swedish social democracy, he also cautioned that Québec was part of the North American continent “which is still the Mecca of capitalism in the world.” Social reforms in an independent Québec therefore needed to be tempered by gradualism, and would not be nearly as far-reaching as those in Scandinavia: “Social democracy, in economics, it is a certain \textit{étapisme} in the requirements, and which includes the acceptation of living with others. And in North America, we know well what that means. ... We cannot, whatever happens, break with the American context and American mentalities.”\textsuperscript{124} Consistent with his acquiescence to the constraints imposed by the North American context, Lévesque promised that the push for independence would not infringe on the interests of multinational firms operating in Québec. “Foreign companies have nothing to fear,” Lévesque told an interviewer, “from what is presented as an intransigent ‘nationalism.’”\textsuperscript{125}

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Many opponents of the referendum resolution presciently grasped the implication of the November 1974 congress for the future direction of the party. One activist told Marcel Léger immediately after the vote: “It is the beginning of the demolition of our ideal. In the name of

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Ibid.}, 117–118.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Ibid.}, 187–188.
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}, 121.
electoralism, we will one day become a party like the others.” 

126 Among the many torn-up PQ membership cards strewn about the floor of the Petit Colisée was one belonging to Pierre Vallières. The former felquiste participated in the fifth congress as a delegate for a Montréal riding and voted against “the silencing of the independentist orientation.” “It was the first congress of the Parti québécois in which I participated, it was also the last.”

I distanced myself definitively from the party at that moment. ... Many indépendantistes quit the Parti québécois as I did after the 1974 congress. But others, in fairly large numbers, decided to stay on regardless, ‘en désespoir de Cause.’ I was quite shocked that the party did not split in 1975 or 1976. 

127 For his 1987 book La communauté perdue, Jean-Marc Piotte interviewed 26 activists and found a similar demobilisation of the PQ left, conditioned by the outcome of the fifth congress:

The Parti québécois institutionalized the indépendantiste movement of the sixties and distanced itself from its more radical demonstrations and speeches. ... The PQ no longer offered anything more than a part-time activism and the majority of interviewees who were involved at the start of the seventies left in ’74 when it subordinated sovereignty to the result of a referendum. 

128 Morin did in fact long for “a party like the others” and it was the national liberation-inflected, movement-oriented cultures of the PQ, embodied in the participationniste current, that had stood in the way of his ideal. In the spring 1973, Claude Morin had seriously considered leaving the Parti québécois, his doubts fostered by the lack of “realism” in its ranks, which was “in certain respects more of a movement than a political party.” In the end, Morin decided to persevere, encouraged by the “realistic instinct” of Lévesque and the presence of a “silent majority” favourable to a moderate vision of sovereignty that did not require offending “le gros bon sens.” 

129 In fact, the referendum was initially only supported by the active minority of the technocrats, while the party’s silent majority leaned to the side of the participationnistes. It was

126 In hindsight, Léger agreed, citing the splits in the party in 1985 provoked by Lévesque's beau risque strategy. Léger, Le Parti québécois: ce n'était qu'un début, 76.
129 Morin, Les choses comme elles étaient: une autobiographie politique, 270.
Morin’s cunning use of the Chilean example, combined with the charisma and authority of Lévesque, that paved the way forward for étapisme. Although the PQ left had counter-arguments (which were to be amply confirmed) against étapisme as a political strategy on the domestic plane, they were apparently disarmed on the international plane by Morin’s Chilean analogy.

The rightward drift of the PQ was contested after November 1974. Serious tensions within the sovereigntist party’s ranks brought it to the verge of splitting on a number of occasions in the 1970s, including on the eve of the November 1976 elections.130 The PQ’s hold on the left was not absolute, and its moderate turn strengthened the M-L movement. “In the PQ, Vallières and the socialists suffered a marginalization and observed, powerless, the recruitment of large numbers of young people to organizations of the extreme left.”131 The triumph of étapisme represented a defeat for the left-wing, movement-oriented politics of the participationniste current, a defeat from which it would never recover.

The fifth congress and the adoption of the referendum resolution are widely recognized as a “turning point” in the history of the Parti québécois. Marcel Léger judges the fifth congress of the PQ to be “the most determining for the future of the Parti québécois and particularly for its orientation.”132 The ascendancy of Claude Morin and his étapiste strategy marked the end of the PQ-as-movement and the beginning of the PQ-as-party, governed by the more prosaic routines and imperatives of traditional politics. “Benefitting from the unshakable support of René Lévesque,” Pierre Duchesne writes, “Claude Morin transformed little by little the political movement that constituted the Parti québécois into a real political party.” The triumph of realism in the PQ allowed Morin to persuade the party “to modify its political programme in function of

131 Vallières, Paroles d’un nègre blanc, 141.
132 Léger, Le Parti québécois: ce n’était qu’un début, 75.
elections, which is the usual method of all traditional political parties: to get elected."\textsuperscript{133} With the PQ left out of the way, the conditional referendum adopted as a compromise in 1974 was quickly changed to an obligatory referendum in 1975, as Morin had wanted from the start.\textsuperscript{134} It was the fifth congress, however, that represented the turning point in the party’s history. Indeed, at the close of the congress, many delegates and observers repeated the same assessment: “The PQ has today become a real party.”\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} Duchesne, Jacques Parizeau: Le Baron, 104.
\textsuperscript{135} Courtemanche, “Oui au referendum,” 1.
CONCLUSION

Allende’s Ghost: U.S. Hegemony and the International Reverberations of the Coup

C’est une nuit beaucoup plus noire que tout ce qu’on aurait pu imaginer qui commence, une deuxième Grèce, d’autant plus pénible que trop de peuples suivaient l’expérience avec envie. J’ai l’impression que la leçon est bien apprise maintenant pour le reste du monde. Ça fait mal au cœur de penser au prix que les Chiliens devront payer pour la démonstration.

- Letter from Pierre to Serge Mongeau1

The Chilean road to socialism was not only an inspiration for Québec’s socialisme et indépendance left. It was also an invaluable resource for popular education. Struggling against popular stereotypes of socialism which tended to connote Soviet tyranny and violent revolution, the Québec left seized on Allende’s regime as concrete proof that revolutionary change did not require dispensing with civil liberties or political freedom. The UP’s socialist political project went far beyond the bounds of social democracy as practiced in the West, yet it simultaneously bore little resemblance to the bureaucratic rule of one-party states in the East. With each passing day of Allende’s mandate, common sense equations of socialism with one-party dictatorship and social regimentation, of independence with economic ruin, violence and upheaval were gradually chipped away. The anguish of the Québec left (M-Ls aside) in the face of the coup derived, in part, from a realistic understanding that Allende’s failure represented a major setback for their own struggle for socialism.

This temporary scrambling of ruling definitions of socialism was also what made the “Chilean experiment” so radically subversive, from the perspective of U.S. imperial state

managers. In the weeks following the coup, Québec-Presse ran a two-part editorial cartoon, depicting a gang of top-hatted, half-vermin half-man capitalists reacting to and plotting against Allende’s “unacceptable” election. “Each time a country became Marxist...” fumed one beastly capitalist to the others, “it became so through a bloody revolution / Individual liberty was crushed / We, to keep ourselves in place, had brandished the hideous spectre of blood, revolution and slavery.” Allende’s attempt to establish a Marxist government through democratic means threatened to make their usual fear-mongering tactics obsolete, exclaimed the pig-faced capitalist: “What a terrible example for other countries if he managed to succeed!” Marxist governments might start getting elected elsewhere if nothing was done about it. “We won’t allow that to happen,” declared his rat-faced friend. “We will force him to take the path of violence and repression, that way Marxism will always be associated with violence.” The cartoon showed how it was the capitalists who were ultimately forced to resort to repression and violence, and ended with the warning of similar “coups” (whether “d’état” or “de Brink’s”): “Capitalism is what it is ... keep your eye on it ...” While the cartoon’s caricature is perhaps crude (it is a cartoon, after all), it demonstrates the impressive accuracy with which Québec-Presse and the rest of the Québec left identified the motives behind the U.S.-backed coup.

Scholars of U.S. foreign policy have had far more difficulty understanding Nixon’s animus towards Allende. In the absence of conventional geopolitical or national security motives, historians have tended to explain the reactions of Nixon and Kissinger as a case of policymakers allowing emotions to overpower stated commitments to realism in foreign policy. Indeed, given the damage done to the U.S.’s international reputation by its clear involvement in fomenting the coup against a democratically-elected government and its support for the

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subsequent brutal Pinochet dictatorship, many consider the Nixon administration’s anti-Allende campaign to have been a foreign policy blunder. Robert Dallek, in his dual biography of Nixon and Kissinger, is mystified that Kissinger could present Nixon’s choice of what to do about Chile as “the most historic and difficult foreign affairs decision” of 1970. “Was Henry saying that Chile was more important than Vietnam, relations with Moscow or Peking, peace in the Middle East, or SALT? Apparently. ... For such staunch advocates of foreign policy realism as Nixon and Kissinger, it is difficult to understand their apocalyptic fears about an Allende government.” In the absence of credible national security concerns, Dallek concludes that the Nixon administration’s fear amounted to “nothing more than paranoia.”³ In his study of Henry Kissinger’s influence on U.S. foreign policy, Jussi Hanhimäki similarly argues that the response to Allende’s election in 1970 was “most clearly a sign of how even self-styled realists like Kissinger and Nixon could have an irrational knee-jerk response to a development that made little difference to the overall direction of the administration’s foreign policy.” The response to Allende’s victory was a vain and embarrassed “overreaction” to an event that “represented but a minor wound in the Nixon administration’s flesh.” Given the wave of anti-American sentiment in created in Latin America by Allende’s subsequent martyrdom, Hanhimäki concludes that “from a realist perspective the policy towards Chile in 1970 was a miserable failure.”⁴

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Figure 3: Québec-Presse graphically depicts U.S. ruling class motives behind the coup.

Figure 3 cont.

Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh is closer to the mark when he describes the overthrow of Allende as the “one notable foreign policy success for the Nixon-Kissinger team in 1973.”

5 Regarding U.S. motives, Hersh argues that Nixon “was primarily protecting the interests of his corporate benefactors, Jay Parkinson, Donald Kendall, and Harold Geneen.” According to Hersh, there is “compelling evidence that Nixon’s tough stance against Allende in 1970 was principally shaped by his concern for the future of the American corporations whose assets, he believed, would be seized by an Allende government.”

6 Kissinger, on the other hand, was in the thrall of a flawed “domino theory” and allowed his strongly anti-Communist world view to overrule his critical faculties.

7 Ideology and corporate influence, however, do not add up to a sufficient explanation for Hersh. In the absence of substantial (‘hard’) interests at stake to justify the extraordinary efforts deployed, Hersh is at a loss for ways to “explain or make more rational the White House hostility to Allende.”

8 Ultimately, Hersh judges the Chile operations to be a “Pyrrhic victory” whose meagre foreign policy gains were outweighed by the damage done to Kissinger’s reputation after the fact.

9 What these analyses fail to take seriously is the imperial framework within which the Nixon administration was operating, one in which the international consequences of the “grievous defeat” loomed large. “We are sliding into the position of Great Britain around World War I,” a pontificating Kissinger explained to Nixon (who nodded in agreement). “In the nineteenth century, they were so far ahead that no one could compete with them. It took them about thirty years to realize that they had become second-class.” The U.S. hard line against Chile was intended to do far more than simply frustrate and reverse Allende’s advances down the path

5 Hersh, The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House, 638.
6 Ibid., 270.
7 Kissinger was supposedly driven by “his world view and his belief that no action to stop the spread of communism was immoral.” Ibid., 296.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 638.
to socialism. Nixon and Kissinger felt that events around the world were perilously close to slipping out of their control, and they “feared that any concessions to Allende and his ilk in Latin America would lead to imperial decline,” writes historian Lubna Qureshi.\footnote{Qureshi, \textit{Nixon, Kissinger, and Allende: U.S. Involvement in the 1973 Coup in Chile}, 88.} What Nixon, Kissinger and the other U.S. imperial state managers feared above all were the anticipated regional and global consequences of the world’s first democratically-elected Marxist President, which threatened to establish a number of negative precedents. By undermining and overthrowing Allende, Nixon and his co-conspirators were determined to re-instil the fear of U.S. power globally, a fear that would wane dangerously, they worried, if Allende was allowed to proceed unobstructed. The damage done to the America’s global reputation was the price that had to be paid in order to re-establish imperial credibility and counter what Chomsky has called the “threat of a good example.”

From the very beginning, influencing not only the outcome of the Chilean experiment but also the world’s perception of it was a paramount concern for the Nixon administration. At Nixon’s request, the NSC had begun contingency planning in July 1970 in the event of an Allende victory in the September 1970 elections, and was already, at this early date, considering the “overthrow or prevention of the inauguration” of Allende by a CIA-backed coup. Such drastic action was necessary not because any “vital national interests” were at stake (the memorandum argued that there were not) but because an Allende electoral victory would represent “a definite psychological setback to the United States and a definite psychological advance for the Marxist idea.”\footnote{Dallek, \textit{Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power}, 232.} The memorandum echoed the emphasis placed by Kissinger on the more intangible elements of imperial power, over and above typical concerns such as military or economic strength. Writing in 1968, Kissinger argued that the “deepest problems of
equilibrium are not physical but psychological or moral. The shape of the future will depend ultimately on convictions which far transcend the physical balance of power.”

Reiterating this basic orientation during the later planning of the destabilization campaign, Nixon told the NSC on 6 November 1970 that it was crucial that Allende not be allowed to “consolidate himself and the picture projected to the world will be his success.” Making sure that Allende’s efforts to build socialism via parliamentary means were (and were understood to be) a spectacular failure was key to reversing the damage done to global perceptions.

Historians of U.S. foreign policy have tended to dismiss this focus on the seemingly nebulous, metaphysical elements of imperial power, treating such concerns as irrational or misguided. Hanhimäki contends that imperial grand strategy was far removed from U.S. motives for undermining Allende, which were “simple” and “had little to do with grand.” Dallek likewise dismisses “the fear that countries like Argentina, Brazil, and Italy would take their political direction from Allende's Chile” as “a mistaken calculation” that rested on “a fundamentally flawed assumption.” Politics, Dallek asserts, are ultimately a national affair, immune to the vagaries of goings-on abroad. “The domestic lives of nations are shaped by internal crosscurrents, not examples in distant lands.” Although invisible to historians unable to grasp the imperial nature of the U.S. state and trapped in a nation-centric conception of history, the example of distant Chile did in fact – albeit in subtle ways – insinuate itself into the internal crosscurrents of many different nations, from Italy to Brazil to Québec. If we understand U.S. hegemony in a Gramscian sense, as a matter of political leadership of the capitalist classes of other nations in the global capitalist system, as a kind of world order that is ruled not only by

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force but the elaboration of a global common sense, the threat posed by Allende’s regime and the reaction to it becomes more comprehensible.

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The reverberations of Allende’s U.S.-backed overthrow were truly far-reaching. The coup significantly altered the international conjuncture and, in doing so, tilted the national playing fields of many different countries, ultimately in directions favourable to American power. While some on the left were radicalized by the spectacular demonstration of U.S. imperial power, many others began to reconsider the realism of their political strategy in light of the outcome of the Chilean experiment. In the face of U.S. imperialism’s ability to turn Chile’s dream of democratic socialism into the nightmare of dictatorship, fear seeped into the pores of countless left political formations. For those committed to the peaceful, parliamentary road, the coup severely dampened hopes for achieving radical change without armed confrontation or bloodshed, and in several cases spurred a shift towards greater moderation and gradualism. Québec was one of many places in the world where the echoes of the coup d’état in Chile were heard.

The PQ was not the only provincial political formation in Canada disturbed by the implications of Allende’s downfall. According to journalist Rod Mickleburgh, the coup in Chile had “a profound impact” on BC’s New Democratic Party (NDP) Premier Dave Barrett. After 11 September 1973, Barrett “ordered flags flown at half-mast and began to wonder, darkly, about the fate of his own government, given the supportive role of the CIA in toppling Allende.” Peter McNelly worked for the NDP administration and recalled Barrett’s state of mind following the coup: “He was very upset about Allende’s overthrow. It brought home how governments could internally manipulate events in other countries. If they could [get rid of] Allende, what could
they do here?” Barrett’s anxiety was fuelled in part by the hostility of the U.S. financial press towards his government’s social democratic reforms. An April 1973 Barron’s editorial about the province was titled “Chile of the North?” and alleged that Barrett was going forward “with a Socialist program rivalling that of the Allende government in Chile.” After the Chilean coup, such comparisons took on ominous overtones. Much like Lévesque, cabinet minister Ernie Hall observed: “The CIA is everywhere else. Why not here?” “By 1975,” Mickleburgh writes, “Barrett’s concern had reached the point of discussing privately who should take over if he were assassinated. ‘If they want to get me, they will,’ he told confidantes.”17

The Brazilian left was pushed towards moderation by the example set by the Chilean coup. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a trade unionist, founding member of Brazil’s Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) and future president, once said: “I thought a lot about what happened with Allende in Chile.” The disastrous consequences of Chile’s political polarization from 1970 to 1973 persuaded Lula to push, during Constituent Assembly debates over Brazil’s 1988 constitution, for the inclusion of a provision for run-off elections between the top two presidential candidates. For Lula’s PT, Greg Grandin argues, “the coup in Chile reinforced the need to work with centrist parties to restore constitutional rule.”

Social issues weren’t completely sidelined, but attaining stability took precedence over class struggle ... Like Allende, Lula stood for president three times before winning at his fourth attempt. Unlike Allende, though, each time Lula ran and lost and ran again, he gave up a little bit more of the PT’s founding principles, so that the party went from pledging to overturn neoliberalism to promising to administer it more effectively.18

16 “The NDP had already aroused shock and anger south of the border with such radical measures as the Agricultural Land Reserve, nationalization of auto insurance, buying up pulp mills, and, particularly, boosting the export price of B.C. natural gas. There were dire mutterings that Communists were in charge.” Rod Mickleburgh, “Dave Barrett and Salvador Allende,” Mickleblog, 12 September 2013, http://mickleblog.wordpress.com/2013/09/12/dave-barrett-and-salvador-allende/
17 Ibid.
18 Grandin, “Don’t Do What Allende Did.”
The place where the fall of Allende created the biggest political earthquake was – as Kissinger had intended – Italy. The Italian left had been particularly attentive to developments in Chile and, like Allende, was confronted with a far right opposition that was not shy about using force to achieve its ends. From 1969-1972, Italy was struck by a wave of rising neo-Fascist street violence, part of a calculated “strategy of tension” not dissimilar to that pursued by the far right in Chile. This escalation of violence was mirrored on the left by the Red Brigades. For the leadership of the Partido Communista d’Italia (PCI), the gravity of threats from the right were further dramatized by the overthrow of parliamentary democracy in Chile, writes historian Geoff Eley: “The PCI leader Enrico Berlinguer drew the political moral. Invoking Togliatti's legacy, he urged the broadest democratic consensus to defend and extend the Republic. Chile warned against the ‘pressing danger of the nation being split in two,’ because antidemocratic forces always turn to violence when popular movements record fundamental gains.” To prevent a Chilean dénouement in Italy, Berlinguer called for uniting not only the left but also rallying the Christian Democrats to the “popular movement,” something Allende had been unable to do.

Opening Christian Democracy to the Left would secure the Republic against the Right, prevent society’s division into polarized blocs, and allow new progressive advance. ... This was Berlinguer’s “historic compromise” - rallying Italy’s three great popular traditions, Communism, socialism, and Catholicism, for renewed democratic change. ... Given existing signs – the MSI’s growth, right-wing terrorism, the Right’s “strategy of tension” – a socialist bloc might expect sabotage on a Chilean scale. For Berlinguer, “the central political problem in Italy” was avoiding that end.19

Berlinguer elaborated his theses in favour of the ‘historic compromise’ in a famous series of articles published in 1973 reflecting on the end of Allende’s UP government.20 What the PCI needed to offer was “not a leftist alternative, but a democratic alternative,” argued Berlinguer. As Perry Anderson explains, Chile was explicitly drawn on in order to convince the party to accept

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the leadership’s moderate turn represented by the ‘historic compromise’ and abandon the previous united left strategy:

Proposing this pact in 1973 soon after he became the new leader of the party, Berlinguer invoked the example of Chile, where Allende had just been overthrown, as a warning of the civil war that risked breaking out, were the left – Communists and Socialists combined – ever to try to rule the country on the basis of a mere arithmetical majority of the electorate.\(^{21}\)

The PCI’s bold reorientation was part of a wider strategic re-evaluation undertaken by many different Communist parties in the West, as Heraldo Munoz points out: “The European debate on Chile led to what would later become widely known as ‘Euro-Communism.’”\(^{22}\) Yet the Italian Communists’ turn to moderation failed to pave a democratic way to socialism. The alliance with the Christian Democrats proved to be a rather one-sided compromise. “The strategy ran into the sand. Rather than bringing structural reform, the Historic Compromise merely blunted the PCI’s challenge. ... By accepting the system’s premises – NATO, the DC, Catholicism, and capitalism – the PCI took a deck already stacked.” Despite some fleeting successes, the PCI’s new strategy proved to be a failure overall, electorally and politically, as the June 1979 elections revealed. “The Historic Compromise was rebuffed: Communists lost 1.5 million votes, dropping to 30.4 percent, while the DC steadied at 38.3 percent. The PCI had lost momentum, especially among militant workers, the poor in the south, and the young.”\(^{23}\)

Interestingly, René Lévesque held a high opinion of those who had drawn the same lessons as he had from the Chilean tragedy. When asked about his opinion of Eurocommunism, Lévesque professed that his knowledge of what was going on in these political formations was

\(^{21}\) Perry Anderson, “An Invertebrate Left,” *London Review of Books* Vol. 31 No. 5 (12 March 2009), 12-18, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v31/n05/perry-anderson/an-invertebrate-left; See also Tobias Abse’s article “Judging the PCI”: “The spectre of Chile—a ‘vertical fracture’ of society into two camps at war with each other, as the PCI leader presented it—was used to render this prospect palatable to the party’s rank-and-file.” Tobias Abse, “Judging the PCI,” *New Left Review* Vol. 1 No. 153 (September-October 1985).

\(^{22}\) Muñoz, *The Dictator’s Shadow: Life under Augusto Pinochet*, 125.

limited, but made a distinction between the “dogmatic, ideologically much harder socialism” of Southern Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal) and the “more evolutionary, more empirical” socialism of Nordic Europe. “Honestly, I admit that from this point of view, I am more of a Nordic.” Nonetheless, Lévesque expressed a favourable opinion of “the historic compromise accepted by the Communist Party in Italy.” Italian communism, Lévesque explained, “seems to want to adjust to a certain evolution of society, which would permit it to play the democratic game and to participate in government.” In an eerie echo of the PCI’s reaction to the coup in Chile, the official enshrinement of étapisme in the PQ’s platform was similarly presented as a necessary “historic compromise.”

George Katsiaficas has argued that 1968 was a year of interconnected, global uprisings, a moment when the “Eros effect” liberated previously repressed popular capacities and a contagion of revolt spread around the world. The Tet offensive in Vietnam, the May events in France and countless other challenges to the ruling order dramatically altered the calculations of leftists everywhere, making it seem practical to demand the impossible. While 1968 unleashed the revolutionary imagination of the New Left around the world, 1973 was the year the soixante-huitards’ celebration of agency dissipated on the hard shoals of structure. Behind the dampening of radical spirits, the usual culprits identified by analysts are the OPEC oil crisis, the end of the Breton Woods system, the advent of ‘stagflation’ and the definitive end of the post-war boom with the first global recession. This cold shower of capitalist reality undermined the conditions in which the New Left had flourished, and the long march of the neoliberal counterrevolution began. More than any other event of 1973, it was the coup d’état in Chile that symbolized the

revenge of the system, sending shockwaves of fear, anger and despair throughout the left. Activists across around the world understood the coup as a harbinger of the limits (and hypocrisies) of parliamentary democracy under capitalism, and realigned their strategies accordingly.
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