



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Chileans overthrow dictator Carlos Ibañez del Campo, 1931

July 21,

1931

to: July 26,

1931

Country: Chile

Location City/State/Province: *Santiago*

Goals:

To overthrow President Carlos Ibañez and return to a civilian government

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 062. Student strike
- 104. Professional strike
- 117. General strike
- 125. Boycott of government employment and positions

Methods in 4th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 117. General strike

Methods in 5th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 117. General strike

Methods in 6th segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 117. General strike

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Group characterization:

- Professionals
- students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Unión Civilista

Partners:

Students, Physicians, Lawyers, Labor Unions

External allies:

Not Known

Involvement of social elites:

Certain government officials and cabinet members supported the campaign and some even resigned in support

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- University Students

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Cabinet members
- Government officials
- Physicians

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Lawyers

Groups in 5th Segment:

- All professionals
- Laborers
- Merchants

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length: 1 day

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

The Ibáñez Regime

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

Students used arms to defend University building, shooting at Police Officers, some street riots. Demonstrators killed a police officer

Repressive Violence:

Police shot at students and demonstrators. Policed killed a doctor and at least two demonstrators.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

Opposition caused Ibáñez to resign as they had set out to do. They rid themselves of a dictator and reinstated a civil rule.

The opposition groups survived through the campaign.

Starting as a movement of Students and the Unión Civilista, the campaign grew to include the strikes of almost all professionals in Santiago as well as many blue-collar workers.

In February 1931, in the face of an economic crisis, the Chilean Congress granted President Carlos Ibáñez Del Campo authority to enact any necessary measures to keep Chile from further depression. As the value of exports dropped and unemployment rose, Ibáñez increased taxes, stopped public works projects, and cut governmental wages. He also announced that he would maintain order with military force if necessary.

These actions failed to curb the economic problems in Chile and opposition to Ibáñez's dictatorial rule grew. Government officials and citizens alike were calling for a return to civil government. In mid-July 1931 Ibáñez appointed a cabinet aimed at fixing the economic problems in Chile and initiating a return to civilian rule. Ibáñez, however, did not cooperate with the

decisions of this cabinet and after four days the cabinet resigned. The following cabinet resigned after only two days.

On July 21 university students and the organization Unión Civilista, led by professionals and members of the Radical Party, met separately in Santiago. Both groups began planning demonstrations and strikes against Ibáñez. Their main goal was for the resignation of Ibáñez and the reinstatement of civilian government. Citizens began demonstrations that day.

On July 22, the leaders of Unión Civilista called for a general strike of both laborers and professionals. Students took over university buildings and hung banners with the word “Libertad” from the windows. Many armed students fired from the buildings at police in the street until they ran out of ammunition.

The next day, in response to the killing of a young doctor by the police, the physicians in Santiago began a strike, pledging solidarity with other strikers and the students. This action shut down hospitals. Only emergency medical services remained available.

On July 24 one policeman and three demonstrators were killed in clashes between demonstrators and police forces. Lawyers joined the ranks of strikers, followed the next day by teachers, engineers, and merchants. Bank owners called to their employees to strike and to do so nonviolently, sending out a pamphlet that read: “Without arms, with ideals alone we will overthrow murderers and thieves... grasp the arm of passive resistance.” Several municipal government officials also resigned in protest of Ibáñez. By July 25, the strikers had shut down the city of Santiago. Several groups of laborers such as bakers and slaughterhouse workers also announced they would begin strikes two days later.

After learning that he had lost the support of much of his army, Ibáñez finally resigned on July 26 stating that he had no options but “to defend myself with fire and blood” and he did not want to continue holding his power by means of violence.

The struggle against Ibáñez can be split into two parts: the riots and violence by demonstrators, which Ibáñez was able to repress with his police force, and the strikes, which forced the closure of Chile’s capital city and halted the continued operation of the ruling body. The strikers had successfully forced Ibáñez’s resignation and catalyzed the reinstatement of civilian government when elections were held in December.

Research Notes

Influences:

Not Known

Sources:

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Nunn, Frederick. *Chilean Politics, 1920-1931*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1970, pp. 160-165.

Pike, Frederick. *Chile and the United States 1880-1962*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963, pp. 190, 195, 199.

Additional Notes:

Mainly students and professionals, such as physicians, lawyers, teachers, and engineers, took up the campaign. The role of blue-collar workers did not appear very strong. Several labor groups announced the intention to strike. Ibanez resigned before these strikes began.

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

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