

## In Brief

- Based on two years of intensive research (more than 200 interviews + archival work).
- Reinterprets the legacy of Salvador Allende in light of today's debates about Big Tech.
- Recovers the forgotten story of Latin America's struggle against ITT, the tech giant of the day.
- Traces how Allende's enemies used "Dark Tech" – the tools of surveillance, propaganda, and control – to overthrow his government.
- Argues that the focus on neoliberal economists around Pinochet – the [Chicago Boys](#) – is misplaced. Instead, it foregrounds the Santiago Boys, the socialist engineers around Allende.
- Explores the uncanny similarity between the set-up of Allende's [Project Cybersyn](#), a pioneering effort to use telexes and computers to manage the national economy, and Pinochet-era [Operation Condor](#), which used similar set-up to hunt down leftist dissidents.
- Offers a new perspective on what exactly happened on the day of the coup of September 11, 1973, and the role that "Dark Tech" played in it.
- Explores the complicity of American and British actors in the coup and subsequent legitimization of Pinochet's regime.
- Uncovers some unexpected influences behind the broader political project of The Santiago Boys, from [dependency theory](#) to the [Bauhaus-inspired](#) theories of design.
- Uses the story of Project Cybersyn to explore the broader themes of technocracy and class; the ambiguities of democratizing technology and expertise; and the invisible impact of Cold War on today's digital landscape.

## Synopsis

This is a nine-part exploration of the unlikely effort of Salvador Allende's youthful technocrats and engineers (the Santiago Boys) to build their own [socialist Internet](#). They do so by recruiting a prominent British tech guru, [Stafford Beer](#), to help them.

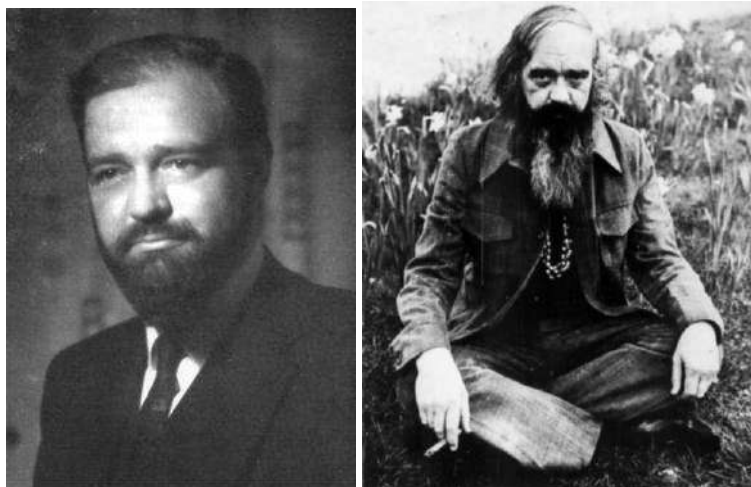


*The Operations Room of Project Cybersyn, Allende's socialist Internet.*

Beer proves a most unlikely candidate for that mission. A former British intelligence officer, a chum of Robert Maxwell, and a senior executive in IPC, then the largest publishing company in the world, Beer is anything but socialist. In fact, this cigar-smoking owner of a fancy mansion in

the Stockbroker Belt, drives a Rolls-Royce, has a fancy pool, and enjoys his membership in the prestigious Atheneum Club.

But then, one day in the summer of 1971, Beer gets a letter from Chile – a letter that eventually transforms him from a respected man of business into a socialist hippie. All of a sudden, he is building a fancy tech project for Allende, as the latter tries to survive the onslaught of the CIA, ITT, local right-wingers, and even some of Beer's own friends in Britain. After the Chilean adventure, Beer even emerges as a hero to counterculture (including to [Brian Eno](#)).



*Stafford Beer Before and After Chile*

Beer is recruited by Allende's youthful minister, Fernando Flores, who undergoes a [remarkable transformation](#) of his own, morphing from a leftist technocrat to a political prisoner to a Silicon Valley entrepreneur and [thinker](#) (his fruitful collaboration with [Terry Winograd](#), the dissertation advisor of Google's Larry Page, has left a profound impact on today's tech industry).

Remarkably, the unlikely contact between the two brought some unexpected outcomes: Beer quit the world of tech and business to become a leftist activist, while Flores quit leftist politics to become a tech entrepreneur.

In the meantime, something of a cult has emerged around Project Cybersyn. These days, there are even Cybersyn-inspired blankets [on sale online](#), and the project is regularly mentioned as part of discussions of what "digital socialism" means today. In light of the forthcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chilean coup in September 2023, it's time to reexamine it in depth.



*Fernando Flores as a young Marxist minister vs. tech entrepreneur in Silicon Valley*



Amnesty's campaign to get Flores out of Pinochet's prison; *New York Times's* [article](#) on post-coup explosion at ITT's HQ in Manhattan

The podcast is set in Latin America at the height of the Cold War, with occasional digressions to explore both well-known and unjustly forgotten events: the [1954 coup](#) in Guatemala and the role of the [United Fruit Company](#) in facilitating it; Nixon's 1958 [disastrous trip](#) across Latin America; the [1964 coup](#) in Brazil and that country's role in unseating Allende; the [1965-66 mass killings in Indonesia](#); the [Operation Mongoose](#) against Castro; the [assassination of Orlando Letelier](#) right in the heart of Washington; CIA's own use of Operations Rooms to destabilize foreign governments; the transfer of neoliberal ideas from Pinochet's Chile to Thatcher's UK.



Stafford Beer in later years

### Release

- Release date is July 22, 2023. It's a co-production of [Chora Media](#) and [Post-Utopia](#).
- The podcast will be accompanied by an extensively documented web-site, with transcripts of interviews, footnotes, and links
- The trailer and three teasers are already available [here](#). For any questions (including access to pilot episodes), please email [info@the-santiago-boys.com](mailto:info@the-santiago-boys.com)