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Solidarity for Chile, Transnational Activism and the Evolution of Human Rights

ABSTRACT

This article discusses British manifestations of opposition to Augusto Pinochet's regime including the Chile Solidarity Campaign, the Chile Committee for Human Rights and Amnesty International. It explores the intricacies of the evolution of human rights and its function as a political language by assessing their activities during the 1970s and 1980s. Chile was seen as a crucial moment in the "breakthrough" of a transnational politics of human rights, but assessing opposition to the Chilean regime also exposes a series of fractures within the transnational currents of the 1970s. At the heart of campaigns against the *junta* were a number of fissures, or points of tension; between "national" and "global"; between conceptualisation of human rights and solidarity and, perhaps most significantly, between progressive forms of transnationalism and alternative globalising forces with more ambiguous moral or political groundings. Chile helped expand the resonance of human rights, but also shows the complexities of this ascent, the ambiguities of this evolution and its legacies.

Keywords: *Chile, Human Rights, Solidarity Campaigns, social movements*

Following the overthrow of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity Government in September 1973 Chile became the focus of "one of the longest and most intense human rights campaigns" targeting a specific state.¹ Under Augusto Pinochet's rule, Chile was considered an international pariah, largely on human rights grounds.² Shocked by the coup, the deaths of tens of thousands, mass arrests, the annihilation of political opponents, continuous "disappearances", media censorship, emergency decrees and torture, human rights campaigns consistently scrutinised Chile. Its borders could not contain news of violations,

- 1 Jan Eckel: Under a Magnifying Glass: The International Human Rights Campaign Against Chile, in: Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (eds.): *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 1–28, p. 4.
- 2 Kim Christiaens/Idesbald Goddeeris/Magaly Rodriguez Garcia: A Global Perspective on the European Mobilisations for Chile (1970s-1980s), in: Kim Christiaens/Idesbald Goddeeris/Magaly Rodriguez Garcia (eds.): *European Solidarity with Chile*, Oxford 2014, pp. 7–46, p. 8.

prompting world-wide advocacy of human rights and exclamations of solidarity with the oppressed.³ The widespread activist responses meant Chile's impact was, arguably, second only to the Holocaust in the evolution of the 20th-century human rights movement.⁴ Anti-*junta* mobilisations were more geographically widespread than anti-Vietnam War movements, definitive of an earlier generation's radicalisation.⁵

This article assesses British manifestations of opposition to Augusto Pinochet's regime; namely the Chile Solidarity Campaign, the Chile Committee for Human Rights and Amnesty International. Samuel Moyn argues that alongside coups in Uruguay and Argentina, reactions to Chile helped human rights "crystallise in an organisational framework"; to Jan Eckel it was a "decisive caesurae" marking a new centrality of human rights.⁶ Such arguments stress the specific contextual settings in which human rights must be understood, building on a developing historiography directed towards unpicking the contingencies of human rights' ascent, viewing this less a teleological rise of moral universalisms and more the "unpredictable results of political contestation."⁷ Placing human rights in longer histories is possible, but risks "thinning" contextually specific meanings framed by rights rubrics at particular, significant moments.⁸ As Jan Eckel explains, the rise of human rights was less "homogenous and clear-cut" and more an "intricate and manifold shift"; mobilisations around Chile demonstrate such intricacies.⁹

At a conjuncture when human rights became organising considerations for activism and governments they inflected specific, but diverse, understandings. Anti-*junta* mobilisations show how different political agents — campaigners, political parties, and branches of government — all engaged with Chile through languages of human rights. Yet uniformity of terminology should not obscure the multiple different interpretations of rights available or contested assessments about how and where these might be protected,

- 3 Jan Eckel: *Under a Magnifying Glass: The International Human Rights Campaign Against Chile*, p. 323.
- 4 Thomas Wright: *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina and International Human Rights*, Lanham 2007, p. 227.
- 5 Jan Eckel: *Allende's Shadow, Leftist Furor, and Human Rights: The Pinochet Dictatorship in International Politics*, in: Kim Christiaens/Idesbald Goddeeris/Magaly Rodriguez Garcia (eds.): *European Solidarity with Chile*, Oxford 2014, pp. 67–92, p. 67.
- 6 Samuel Moyn: *The Last Utopia*, Cambridge 2010, p. 140; Jan Eckel: *The Rebirth of Human Rights from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s*, in: Jan Eckel/Samuel Moyn (eds.): *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, Philadelphia 2014, pp. 226–259, p. 233.
- 7 Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann: *Genealogies of Human Rights*, in: Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (eds.): *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 1–28, p. 4.
- 8 Micheline Ishay: *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the globalisation era*, Berkeley 2004; or Paul Gordon Lauren: *Visions Seen: The Evolution of International Human Rights*, Philadelphia, 2003.
- 9 Jan Eckel: *The Rebirth of Human Rights from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970*, p. 227.

promoted and delivered. Because human rights became so ubiquitous in responses to Chilean authoritarianism, the spaces where such concepts did not, or could not, intrude are striking and significant. Chile showed the permeation of human rights as a global moral language, but was also suggestive of spaces insulated from political, social, economic or cultural claims aligned with the rights discourse.

Assessing opposition to the Chilean regime exposes fractures within transnational currents of the 1970s even as human rights coalesced with older organising narratives vital to left wing politics. At the heart of the campaigns against the *junta* were a series of fissures, or points of tension; between “national” and “global”; between human rights and solidarity and perhaps most significantly between progressive forms of transnationalism and alternative globalising forces with more ambiguous moral or political groundings. It was within transnational forums less encumbered by public or civil society pressure, including trade, business and finance that anti-*junta*, human rights arguments fell on deaf ears.

Chilean campaigns not only incorporated “old” forms of movement activism with the “new” but also anticipated the type of fracture definitive of future “even newer social movements” which, in the context of a structural shift from welfarism to neoliberalism, have fused post-material concern for “life politics” with anxieties about economic distribution by targeting global-financiers, trading practices, economic governance, and transnational (later multinational) corporations.¹⁰ Here the relative capacity of potentially progressive forms of transnationalism, including human rights and solidarity, to define the increasingly “globalised” world emphasises the power of what Mark Mazower has labelled the “Real New International Economic Order” of the era which remade the rules of economic governance in the late 20th century.¹¹

Because the history of human rights is frequently an account of failure, it is vital to examine the limitations of such discourse; the meanings and spaces where human rights became relevant were specific, contested but also bounded at a time of “breakthrough.”¹² Anti-*junta* action had a shared target and language, but “transnationalism” generated

- 10 Nick Crossley: Even Newer Social Movements, in: *Organisation* 10:2 (2003), pp. 287–305; Richard Johnson: Optimism of the Intellect? Hegemony and Hope, in: *Soundings* 54 (2013), pp. 51–65; Matthew Hilton: Prosperity for all: Consumer Activism in an era of Globalisation, New York 2009, pp. 241–254; Stephen Kobrin: Multinational Corporations, the Protest Movement and the Future of Global Governance, in: Alfred Chandler/Bruce Mazlich (eds.): *Leviathans: Multinational Corporations and the New Global History*, Cambridge 2005, pp. 219–235.
- 11 Mark Mazower: *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*, London 2012, pp. 343–377.
- 12 Samuel Moyn: The 1970s as a Turning Point in Human Rights History, in: Jan Eckel/Samuel Moyn (eds.): *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, Philadelphia 2014, pp. 1–14, p. 3; Kenneth Cmiel: The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States, in: *Journal of American History* 86:3 (1999), pp. 1231–1259, p. 1245.

no linear politics. The moral universality of human rights had a wide appeal but also clouded uncertainties about “politics”, where rights could be articulated, at whom they were addressed and their implications. Moreover, framing human rights against such an obviously egregious state had implications for more general understandings of human rights within Britain, suggestive of the continued political and theoretical anxieties about the subject.

Transnationalism and Social Movements

Mobilisations about Chile demonstrate certain dynamics late 20th-century activism. According to Geoff Eley, new social movements offered space for a “reinvigorated” extra-parliamentary left including feminism, ecology, peace, third world solidarity, gay-lesbian rights, and anti-racism, running parallel to an older party politics seeking electoral victory.¹³ New social movements supposedly found contours beyond “welfare patterns” of material production, economic distribution, and security, towards culture, identity and human rights.¹⁴ Historians have, however, unpicked potentially reductive binaries between new social movements and older forms of left-wing mobilisation.¹⁵ Such binaries are further complicated by accounts of transnational action. For example, the capacity for mobilisations against apartheid in South Africa to operate in national and global spaces created a remarkable constellation of diverse activists.¹⁶ Anti-Pinochet campaigns

- 13 Geoff Eley: *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000*, Oxford 2002, pp. 460–461.
- 14 Jurgen Habermas: *Theory of Communicative action*, vol. 2: *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Cambridge 1992, p. 392; Claus Offe: *New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Policies*, in: *Social Research* 52:4 (1985), pp. 817–868, p. 832.
- 15 Stephen Brooke: *The Sphere of Sexual Politics: The Abortion Law Reform Association, 1930s to 1960s*, in: Nick Crowson/Matthew Hilton/James Mckay (eds.): *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, Basingstoke 2009, pp. 77–94; Christopher Moores: *The Progressive Professionals: The National Council for Civil Liberties and the Politics of Activism in 1960s Britain*, in: *Twentieth Century British History* 20:4 (2009), pp. 538–560.
- 16 Rob Skinner: *The Anti-Apartheid Movement: Pressure Group Politics, International Solidarity and Transnational Activism*, in: Nick Crowson/Matthew Hilton/James Mckay (eds.): *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, Basingstoke 2009, pp. 129–146; Simon Stevens: *Why South Africa? The Politics of Anti-Apartheid Activism in Britain in the Long 1970s*, in: Jan Eckel/Samuel Moyn (eds.): *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, Philadelphia 2014, pp. 204–225. See also Rob Skinner’s article “‘Every Bite Buys a Bullet’: Sanctions, Boycotts, and Solidarity in Transnational Anti-Apartheid Activism” in this volume.

similarly aligned domestic political critiques with transnational concerns.¹⁷ Like anti-apartheid politics, the rhetoric of human rights and solidarity had globalising capacities, not always reconcilable with arguments for national liberation made by opposition within both South Africa and, albeit less straightforwardly, within Chile.¹⁸ Although forms of transnational solidarity proved fertile ground for bringing together activists they were also sites of contradictory impulses.

The main vehicle co-ordinating a British response was the Chile Solidarity Campaign, established by the anti-colonial organisation Liberation (formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom), it worked at offices borrowed from the London co-operative movement.¹⁹ The Chile Solidarity Campaign drew heavily on the traditional left, especially the trade union movement, Labour Party, Communist Party, the cooperative movement, as well as International Socialist and Marxist Groups.²⁰ Indicative of its constituencies, the Chile Solidarity Campaign advertised in *The Morning Star*, *Tribune*, *Labour Weekly*, *New Statesman*, *The Leveller*, *Spare Rib*, *Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Challenge*, and *Voice*.²¹ An early trade union conference received delegates from unions, trade councils and constituency Labour Parties.²² A membership survey in 1983 recorded only 240 individual members, but a vast affiliated membership.²³

Within the anti-Chile coalitions, then, the Third World solidarity of the new social movement overlapped with older labour politics. Early slogans included, “support the struggle of the Chilean People”, “Democratic Rights for the Chilean People”, “Release the prisoners, stop the slaughter”, “Break off Diplomatic Relations with Chile”, “Stop aid, stop credit for the junta”, and “Solidarity with the struggle for popular unity and all those struggling against the fascist junta.”²⁴ The Chile Solidarity Campaign argued that no aid or assistance be given to Chile, no renegotiation of debts should occur, trade should

- 17 Simon Stevens: *Why South Africa? The Politics of Anti-Apartheid Activism in Britain in the Long 1970s*, p. 225.
- 18 Rob Skinner: *Struggles on the Page: British Antiapartheid and Radical Scholarship*, in: *Radical History Review* 119 (2014), pp. 216–231.
- 19 C.D. Crabbie to Peter Summerscale, 6 December 1974, Records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, National Archives, Kew [Hereafter FCO], FCO 7/2608.
- 20 List of Affiliates, July 1974, Labour Archive, People’s History Museum, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 12/4; Chile Solidarity Campaign, 15 March 1974, FCO 7/2608.
- 21 National Demonstration, 20 September 1981, Archive and Study Centre, People’s History Museum, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers [Hereafter Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers], CSC 13/7.
- 22 Mike Gatehouse to Jo Richardson, 29 October 1973, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/5; Mike Gatehouse to Ron Hayward, 4 May 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/5; Mike Gatehouse to Brian Firth, 28 May 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/5.
- 23 Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers Annual Report 1983, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/13.
- 24 Steve Nash to Len Murray 16 October 1973, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 13/2.

cease, and diplomatic relations should end.²⁵ It was highly critical of the government, media and the so-called “liberal community.”²⁶ The Foreign Office considered it under a “strong Communist influence.”²⁷

Aligning different generations and activists with different social and cultural backgrounds was, however, challenging; it was “difficult for trade unionists and students to work together”, wrote the Chile Solidarity Campaign’s organiser, Mike Gatehouse. He found difficulties could be minimised by allowing participation from all accepting the Chile Solidarity Campaign’s aims, but by making it clear that the labour movement was in charge.²⁸ As the Chile Solidarity Campaign sought to extend its appeal, reporting that it had united “a broad sector of the left [...] in a way that doesn’t happen too often” but wished to recruit “the liberal and wealthier sectors of the British public”, human rights became more significant in its rhetoric and activities.²⁹ It established a Chile Relief Fund targeting humanitarian bodies like the World Council of Churches and Christian Aid.³⁰ Deciding that it needed to appeal “to all progressive sectors”, especially churches and a “broad liberal public”, it helped create a specific Chile Committee for Human Rights and expanded its own cultural work.³¹

The value of mobilising around human rights, as opposed to solidarity, was that it evoked broad moralistic “agreement.” The Chile Committee for Human Rights was a registered charity, designed to be “less political.”³² The Chile Committee for Human Rights explained that its solidarity extended beyond union politics to all Chileans, operating “on a non-political, purely humanitarian basis.”³³ Representatives from the World University Service, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, Christian Aid, the Quakers, the United Nations Association, War on Want and the Chile Solidarity Campaign were executive members and it focussed on torture, detention, exile, and executions. This followed human rights as conceptualised by Amnesty based on political prisoners, the right to fair trial and opposition to torture.³⁴ Unlike the Chile Solidarity Campaign, the Chile Committee for Human Rights associated with “any group irrespective of its

25 Mike Gatehouse to Brian Firth, 28 May 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/5.

26 Mike Gatehouse to Harry Moorhouse, 26 January 1974, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 13/5.

27 Chile Solidarity Campaign, 15 March 1974, FCO 7/2608.

28 Mike Gatehouse to Brian Firth, 28 May 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers, CSC 26/5.

29 Mike Gatehouse to Harry Watson, 11 January 1974, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 13/5.

30 Mike Gatehouse to Harry Watson, 11 January 1974, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 13/5.

31 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Programme of activity for the Campaign 1974–1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/4.

32 Chile Solidarity Campaign, Annual Report 1976, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/12.

33 Chile Committee for Human Rights, Secretary’s Report, September 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 5/1;

34 Jonathan Power: *Like Water on a Stone: The Story of Amnesty International*, London 2001, pp. 112–113, p. 137.

ideological, religious or political stance”, working with La Vicaria de la Solidaridad, the Catholic body within Chile providing details on repression and supporting the families of the “disappeared.”³⁵

The Chile Solidarity Campaign also endeavoured to gain momentum outside unionism by promoting Chilean culture and arts. Performances and tours by Chilean theatre companies were organised, poetry readings took place in the National Theatre, screenings of Chilean films were held at the National Film Theatre, and Chilean music tours were organised. Delegations of Chilean unionists, often refugees, offered emotive descriptions of repression, building the “imagined community” of solidarity.³⁶ It hoped that cultural connections between musicians and artists would not only bring together those in Chile and the United Kingdom, but also bridge activist divisions within the movement. Despite the visibility of Chilean concerts, recordings, tours and events, these did not always resolve such strains. The Chile Solidarity Campaign found that cultural events largely excluded working class solidarities, suggesting that they “did not seem to reach the right audiences”, engaging “easy-to-reach liberal audiences.”³⁷

To large sections of the left, the politics of Chile mattered as much as the human suffering taking place there. Chile was evocative because it could be accommodated within historic narratives of anti-fascist struggle and more contemporary anxieties about the shifting political economies and moral sensibilities of “Thatcherism.” One Labour MP wrote, “Chile affected me more directly, than anything since Spain [...] because both things were so identical”; Jack Jones from the Transport and General Workers Union commented, “I doubt whether any British government since the war has encountered quite such a conjuncture in its dealings with a foreign government.”³⁸ At the same time, Mike Gatehouse wrote that Chile tested “remedies for Britain that Sir Keith Joseph appears to have in mind” and Norman Tebbit’s Youth Opportunities Programme was

35 Chile Committee for Human Rights, Secretary’s Report, September 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 5/1; Commentary on the characteristics of and principals of the CCHR, 22 April 1981, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 5/1.

36 For work outlining different strategies for constructing solidarity across spaces see Diamaid Kelliher: *Constructing a Culture of Solidarity: London and the British Coalfields in the Long 1970s*, in: *Antipode* 49 (2017), pp. 106–124; Lucy Delap: *Feminist Bookshops, Reading Cultures and the Women’s Liberation Movement in Great Britain, c. 1974–2000*, in: *History Workshop Journal* 81 (2014), pp. 171–196.

37 Chile Solidarity Campaign, *Annual Report 1976*; Chile Solidarity Campaign Programme by areas of work, 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/5.

38 Norman Buchan to James Callaghan, 14 March 1974, FCO 7/2608; Jack Jones to Harold Wilson, 16 July 1975, Prime Ministers Departments Files, The National Archives, Kew, [Hereafter PREM] PREM 16/758.

compared with the Chilean Minimum Employment Plan.³⁹ Chile became symbolic for opposition to privatisation and monetarism with the Chile Solidarity Campaign claiming “monetarism means political, economic, and physical repression.”⁴⁰ By 1981, the Foreign Office observed that arms, business and monetarism were anti-*junta* activists’ “new tunes”.⁴¹ Harnessing anti-American sentiments, especially before and after Carter’s presidency, the Chile Solidarity Campaign raised questions about United States military, political and corporate involvement in undermining and overthrowing Salvador Allende and challenged President Reagan’s anti-communist campaigning.⁴² In addition, the resumption of the sale of arms to Chile in 1980 brought the Chile Solidarity Campaign into a more general opposition to the arms trade including the Campaign Against the Arms Trade.⁴³

At a rally in 1985, the multiple strands of leftist interest in Chile were articulated by the Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn. He explained that Augusto Pinochet held power because of multinational corporations, the international arms trade, the United States and Britain. He stated, “[W]e don’t want constructive dialogue; we want solidarity with the people of Chile and an end to the relationship with the fascist government in Chile.”⁴⁴ Articulating Chile Solidarity Campaign’s arguments and the mantra of solidarity, Jeremy Corbyn stressed that the Labour Party should bring peace and prosperity to Britain but also “support those people in Third World countries struggling for their freedom and salvation.”⁴⁵

39 Mike Gatehouse to F.J. Marsden, 3 August 1977, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 23/3; Chile Solidarity Campaign Annual General Meeting, 27 February 1982, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/13.

40 Chile Solidarity Campaign Annual Report 1981, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/12.

41 R.M. Smith (South American Department) to R.A.E. Gordon, 30 July 1981, FCO 7/3904; I. Knight Smith (South America Department) to Robert Gordon (Santiago), 3 September 1981, FCO 7/3904; I. Knight Smith to Robert Gordon, 2 September 1981, FCO 7/3904; Alex Kitson to Candidates, 2 October 1974, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/5.

42 Mike Gatehouse to Brian Firth, 28 May 1975; Chile Solidarity Campaign Annual Report 1981.

43 Call on the Prime Minister by Professor Schweitzer, 23 March, 1982, PREM 19/1424; Richard Luce to Frank Dobson, 30 October 1981, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/6; Quentin Given to P.M. Green, 28 June 1984, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 15/8.

44 Jeremy Corbyn, Speech to the Chile Campaign Rally, 14 September 1985, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/13.

45 Jeremy Corbyn, Speech to the Chile Campaign Rally, 14 September 1985, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/13.

Transnational Ideas and Nation States

The scale and range of activists involved with the opposition to Chile were suggestive of the potential for activism bounded in solidarity, humanitarianism, liberal internationalism and human rights to transcend the parameters of the nation state.⁴⁶ Yet given the grave developments in Chile, building such networks and making such links was, perhaps, the easier part. Turning action into effect, the Chile Solidarity Campaign and linked movements found national and transnational forums offered certain opportunities, but also significant obstacles. Given the state's position as the "principal violator and essential protector" of human rights, it made sense that the nation became the focus of anti-*junta* groups.⁴⁷ However, opposing an intransigent and "stable" state meant that pressure from abroad could not mediate repression.⁴⁸ Because of the profound abuses in Chile and the complexity of external involvement, movements sought to engage wherever they could; international, transnational and national pressure did not so much clash, but all became platforms for engagement. Even so, with military power a major hindrance to transnational pressure it was through the British state that most traction was gained and where the Chile Solidarity Campaign focussed much of its campaigning.

The Chile Solidarity Campaign's reliance on the Labour Party as a vehicle for delivering change demonstrated how transnational was bound with national. In opposition, the Labour Party opposed the *junta*. Its leader Harold Wilson argued that Edward Heath's Conservative Government supported the new regime with ill-judged haste, even suggesting that it was, effectively, supporting fascism. The Labour Party Conference in 1974 committed support to Popular Unity, opposed aid and trade with Chile and demanded prisoner release.⁴⁹ Significant policy shifts occurred between 1974 and 1979 under Labour with Chile treated as a special case, definitive of the effort to "hold the line" on human rights by setting an example to parts of the world where national interests would not allow it to be forthright, including the Eastern Block.⁵⁰ Numerous Labour MPs were interested in the Chile Solidarity Campaign including Judith Hart, the Minister for Overseas Development, who served on its executive whose son worked for

46 Patrick Kennedy: "Magic Words": The Advent of Transnational Human Rights Activism in Latin America's Southern Cone in the Long 1970s', in: Eckel & Moyn (eds): *The Breakthrough*, pp. 88–106

47 Jack Donnelly: *Universal Human Rights: In Theory and Practice* Second Edition, London 2003, p. 15.

48 Thomas Wright: *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina and International Human Rights*.

49 Statement by the National Executive of the Labour Party, 30 September 1973, FCO 7/26068.

50 Record of the Minister of State's Meeting to discuss policy towards Chile, 21 December 1974, FCO 58/1169.

the organisation.⁵¹ Labour MPs, particularly from the Tribune Group, closely monitored policy and, according to the Foreign Office, generated “considerable Parliamentary pressure.”⁵² Days after taking office, Labour announced the cessation of aid to Chile and banned export licences on arms. It refused to reschedule debt payments and offered asylum to 1,100 refugees.⁵³ Such measures were tougher than many offered by other European countries.⁵⁴ Yet, the Labour Government found “bilateral approaches” on human rights largely symbolic.⁵⁵ A policy review in 1977 conceded, “external pressure has not so far had an immediate effect in promoting genuine and substantial change”, concessions towards human rights were “largely cosmetic” and did not represent any real “change of heart” in the *junta*.⁵⁶

Moreover, such trends were reversed by the Conservative electoral victory of 1979, “normalisation” became the new Government’s priority.⁵⁷ Ambassadorial relations, cut off following the torture of British nurse Sheila Cassidy in 1975, were restored in February 1980, the arms ban was lifted in July.⁵⁸ All but one of a Chile Solidarity Campaign list of “Seven Deadly Sins”—including the restoration of export guarantees, resumption of Ambassadorial relations, exchange of officials, limiting refugees, appointment of military *attachés*, ending arms bans and aid to Chile—were “committed” by the new Government.⁵⁹ Although such shifts were depressing for the Chile Solidarity Campaign, it nonetheless ensured that Chile remained a somewhat special case. The Foreign Office grudgingly admitted that political and public concern meant the Chile Solidarity Campaign could not be entirely rebuffed.⁶⁰ Certainly, relations between Chile and Britain were closer under the Thatcher administration, but the Foreign Office noted how rapprochement was “shadowed by human rights factors” and amelioration would “lack substance until there were improvements in its [Chile’s] human rights record.”⁶¹

- 51 Hugh Carless: Note on Chile Solidarity Campaign, 19 March 1974, FCO 7/2608.
- 52 J.R. James (United Nations Department) to D Broad (UK Mission at the United Nations), 15 February 1975, FCO 61/1410.
- 53 Harold Wilson to Jack Jones, 24 September 1975, PREM 16/758; Background notes, Meeting with the Chile Solidarity Campaign, 16 January 1978, FCO 7/3611.
- 54 Briefing, Anglo-Chilean Relations following the Falklands, 12 July 1982, FCO 7/4184; Policy Towards Chile, 1976, FCO 58/1169.
- 55 Ted Rowlands to Neil Kinnock, 31 March 1977, FCO 58/1169; D. Ennals visit to the USA, September 1975, FCO 58/1170.
- 56 South American Department, Policy Towards Chile, April 1977, Department of Overseas Development, The National Archives, Kew [Hereafter OD] OD 28/415.
- 57 Background Note: Chile Solidarity Campaign, 1979, FCO 7/3611.
- 58 Call on the Prime Minister by Professor Schweitzer, 23 March 1983, PREM 19/1424.
- 59 Chile Solidarity Campaign to Constituency Labour Parties, 2 June 1979, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/6.
- 60 J.B. Ure to Nicholas Ridley, 13 August 1979, FCO 7/3611.
- 61 Eldon Griffiths to Nicholas Ridley, 12 March 1981, FCO 7/3903.

By taking on multiple different strategies and targeting Governments, political parties as well as promoting diverse action, opposition towards Chile did not insist on taking cultural, expressive or emotional forms of politics or entirely revolve around trade unionism. On one level, the Chile Solidarity Campaign understood that human rights had to be institutionalised into judicial or state-led forms because the nation-state was the problem. Unable to influence Chile directly, the Chile Solidarity Campaign and the Chile Committee for Human Rights needed the British state to generate pressure against Chile at a bilateral level, but also within the United Nations. Even so, despite strong associations with the Labour Party, there was no straightforward diffusion of the Chile Solidarity Campaign's agenda into British policy which continued to be mediated through party and diplomatic considerations. In both cases, the transnational or global pulls of human rights languages, once more, culminated in discussion about state structures, diplomacy and national institutions.⁶²

Activism and Transnational Spaces

Although anti-*junta* activists exerted some influence on policy, especially when viewed sensitively by Ministers, their capacity to influence was often limited to those channels under the nation state's influence. Outside of such settings different transnational flows, networks, forces and institutions undermined efforts to isolate Chile. Transnational processes were multiple, with no fixed political trajectory, pulling in different directions often outside diplomatic or government control.⁶³ Certain developments associated with globalisation helped the anti-*junta* arguments; media and communication networks ensured news spread, refugees including politicians, and musicians appeared on multiple cultural and political platforms.⁶⁴ However, alternative global networks of commodity circuits, trade, international law, and the precedents established in the institutions of governance and finance thwarted the anti-*junta* movement, allowing its objections to be characterised as “unrealistic.”⁶⁵ Any “breakthrough” of the 1970s was, therefore, specific

62 Mark Mazower: The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, in: *Historical Journal* 47:2 (2004), pp. 379–398.

63 Bruce Mazlish: *The New Global History*, London 2006, p. 13.

64 Michel Ogrizek: *The Media-Driven Humanitarian Response: Public perceptions and humanitarian realities as two faces of the same coin*, in: Augusto López-Claros/Silvia Hidalgo (eds.): *Humanitarian Response Index 2007: Measuring Commitment to Best Practice*, Basingstoke 2008, pp. 65–73, p. 65; Andrew Jones: *British Humanitarian NGOs and the Disaster Relief Industry*, PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham 2014, pp. 20–27.

65 Jan Eckel: *Allende's Shadow, Leftist Furor, and Human Rights: The Pinochet Dictatorship in International Politics*, p. 75.

and partial. While human rights generated discussion of moral universalisms and offered a “dramatic and radical transformation” of international relations, powerful spaces and locations were resistant or disinterested in such developments. Human rights, if at all present such spheres, were decidedly not trumps transcending financial or economic incentives.⁶⁶

The Chile Solidarity Campaign advocated a “Nothing for Pinochet, Nothing from Pinochet” policy, aspiring to cut all trade, credit, and loans. This was not taken seriously by Labour or Conservative governments, despite the Labour Party’s International Committee and MPs arguing for a complete embargo. Against such arguments, the Government noted that commodity markets required protection. Seventy-five per cent of copper was imported from Chile and there were few alternative providers of blister copper.⁶⁷ With firms seemingly reliant on Chile, a copper deficit potentially risked employment; cessation of trade endangered United Kingdom shipping which moved 100,000 tonnes of Chilean copper annually.⁶⁸ Even the Royal Mint stressed the importance of copper for currency flow, conjuring up the spectre of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries’ oil embargo.⁶⁹

Because trade required protection, the British Ambassador in Santiago maintained that pressure should be confined to removing aid and “protesting” about human rights.⁷⁰ The Labour Government discovered that boycotts violated trade terms, potentially breaching the General Agreement on Trade Tariffs, and were irreconcilable with European Economic Community trading rules.⁷¹ It was difficult to find precedents for extensive trade restriction, a previous embargo on Rhodesia operated through the United Nations and was grounded on international peace and security, contrastingly, the *junta* largely threatened its own population.⁷²

66 Paul Gordon Lauren: *Visions Seen*, p. 3; Michael Ignatieff: *The Warriors Honor: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*, New York 1997, p. 8; for rights as “trumps” see Ronald Dworkin: *Taking Rights Serious*, London 1977.

67 Annual General Meeting: Draft Programme of Activities for 1979, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 13/7; Brief for the Secretary of State for Trade’s meeting with members of the International Committee of the Labour Party, 17 January 1977, OD 28/415; Annual General Meeting, Draft Programme of Activities for 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 23/2; Meeting with the International Committee of the Labour Party NEC to discuss Chile, OD 28/415.

68 James Callaghan to British Embassy, 2 April 1974, Department of Trade Papers, National Archives Kew [Hereafter T] T 362/14; Michael Meacher to George Micklethwaite, 26 November 1976, OD 28/415.

69 J. Kelly: Royal Mint Copper Supplies, 16 April 1974, T 362/14.

70 R. Seconde to Foreign Office, 2 April 1974, T 364/14.

71 Background Notes, Meeting with the Chile Solidarity Campaign, 16 January 1979, FCO 7/3611.

72 Michael Meacher to George Micklethwaite, 26 November 1976.

Under such circumstances, the Chile Solidarity Campaign aimed to obstruct trade through trade union “blacking.”⁷³ Yet, with high levels of unemployment in ports and docks, “blacking” risked jobs. Critical of “communist” posturing, union leaders noted that the Soviet Union imported Chilean copper despite the *junta*. “Blacking” occurred in Liverpool following a delegation of Chilean dockers, but waned when union members were threatened with dismissal.⁷⁴ Even when action looked effective, for example in the case of the “blacking” Chilean Air Force engines refurbished by Rolls Royce and submarines sold prior the coup, international law and the threat to trading reputations at a time of economic uncertainty curtailed efforts to block the return of military equipment.⁷⁵ Under the Labour Government medium term credit guarantees were not granted for exports on “political grounds”, but there was little capacity or motivation to limit private trade.⁷⁶ As Foreign Secretary, David Owen noted that restrictions and sanctions aided competitors which he viewed as more damaging to Britain than Chile.⁷⁷ A Chile Solidarity Campaign turn towards consumer boycotts also had little effect. Although consumer protests raised publicity and allowed participation from “housewives, students, old-age pensioners, local labour parties and cooperative groups”, the Chile Solidarity Campaign noted that boycotts were difficult to sustain and explain.⁷⁸ Symbolic of its incapacity to affect global commodity and trade patterns, the Chile Solidarity Campaign observed that the Chilean economic collapse in 1982 did more to reduce trade between the two nations than its campaigning.⁷⁹

73 Document on Copper Boycott, August 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 16/1.

74 Notes on a Meeting in Transport House, 12 July 1976, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 16/3.

75 Ted Rowlands to Mike Gatehouse, 20 November 1975, FO 7/2795; Chile Solidarity Campaign Annual Report, 1976, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/12; J Harold Wilson to Jack Jones, 16 July 1975, PREM 16/758; D.J. Wright (Ministry of Defence), Chile Arms Sales, 21 April 1980, PREM 19/1424; James Callaghan, Cabinet Policy Towards Chile: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, undated, T 362/14; Mike Gatehouse to Lionel Murray, 16 July 1974, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 23/3.

76 The Department of Trade suggested that it align its position with those of France, West Germany and the United States, Department of Trade Policy on Chile, 21 October 1977, PREM 15/1532; David Owen to James Callaghan, 27 October 1977 PREM 15/1532.

77 David Owen to Lord Avebury, 3 August 1977, PREM 16/1532; Meeting with Sra Allende 14 September 1977, FCO 7/3298.

78 Trade Union Report to Executive, 22 July 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/10.

79 Chile Solidarity Campaign Annual Report 1982, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/13.

Private investment into Chile paid even less attention to human rights. By 1979, the Chile Solidarity Campaign found that investment, not trade, stabilised and legitimised Augusto Pinochet.⁸⁰ Banks, including British firms, supported the regime.⁸¹ A high profile campaign launched against Lloyd's Bank, estimated to have loaned 200 million Dollars to the Chilean state, claimed that "Lloyds Bank funds Terrorists!", but this was largely ignored.⁸² Here, the limits of operating largely through the national state became clear; the scale of investment by Lloyds alone significantly dwarfed government cuts in aid.⁸³ The Transnational Institute, an American research organisation, reported a flush of overseas investments following the coup which sustained the regime, implying international endorsement of Augusto Pinochet's "stability."⁸⁴ Even so, United Kingdom governments claimed little room to intervene, aside from stressing the need to be "mindful" of human rights, because loans made via the Eurodollar market required no government authorisation when not impacting reserves or balance of payments.⁸⁵

Non-governmental organizations and protest movements were not, therefore, the sole transnational actors mobilising around Chile. The Rothschild's—the first business to be given medium-term cover Export Credit Guarantees once the Conservative Party shifted policy—made direct phone calls to the Foreign Office to encourage commercial interests in Chile.⁸⁶ The British Chamber of Commerce for Chile, representing various British subsidiaries in Santiago, lobbied Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties as well as *The Times* and *The Telegraph* in defence of Augusto Pinochet, making a "business" case for expanded trade. The British Chamber of Commerce for Chile unconvincingly argued that human rights were protected under the Augusto Pinochet regime.⁸⁷ The Chile

80 Record of a Meeting with representatives from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, 16 January 1979, FCO 7/3298.

81 Mike Gatehouse to Marsden, 3 August 1977.

82 Chile Luca: Magazine of the Chile Solidarity, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/12

83 Mike Gatehouse to David Owen, 12 July 1977, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 25/1.

84 Isabel Letelier/Michael Moffitt: Supporting Repression: Multinational Banks in Chile, in: *Race and Class* 20:2 (1978), pp. 111–128.

85 Ted Rowlands to Stan Newens, 5 June 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign 23/3; Evan Luard to H.J. Barnard 8 August 1977, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 25/1.

86 J. B. Ure to R. Fearn, 28 May 1981, FCO 7/3903; Chile Solidarity Campaign Annual Report, 1980, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/12.

87 British Chamber of Commerce in Chile to Harold Wilson, 29 March 1974, PREM 16/13; British Chamber of Commerce in Chile to Harold Wilson, 25 June 1974, PREM 16/13; It also lobbied MPs associated with the Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers to object to campaigns about boycotting Chilean goods. Eric W. Anyon to Maureen Colquhoun, 20 February 1976, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 16/3.

Solidarity Campaign viewed the British Chamber of Commerce for Chile as particularly malevolent because its Honorary President was the British Ambassador, confirming its negative assessment of the Embassy.⁸⁸

Despite being established at the supposed apogee of human rights after the Second World War, transnational institutions of governance also proved resilient to human rights arguments. The Chile Solidarity Campaign could not persuade the World Health Organisation to discuss human rights because it would not address the “political dimensions of health care.”⁸⁹ Although the Chile Solidarity Campaign persuaded Britain to abstain on Chile loans at the World Bank and IMF in 1975, the Government could not oppose these because only economic considerations could be taken into account on lending decisions.⁹⁰ Out of a “respect for tradition” that lending would not “be influenced by political considerations” a 52 million Dollar loan was approved in 1976.⁹¹ Similarly, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development directed 22 million Pounds into Chile’s copper industry explaining that it was “unobjectionable” from an economic standpoint.⁹²

In the United Nations, human rights issues were largely articulated through the General Assembly. United Kingdom diplomats tried to generate pressure at the United Nations, but this was balanced with a desire to counter the Soviet Union and Eastern Block’s efforts to use Chile as a test-case which, they felt, served “no humanitarian purpose.”⁹³ The United Kingdom Government argued that human rights had to be articulated from a “humanitarian middle ground” and tried to engineer Chilean consent for an independent human rights commission, mediating Soviet influence and balancing condemnatory language.⁹⁴ Although the United Nations was something of a “dog without teeth” on human rights issues, the United Nations emphasis on Chile generated substantial information on the *junta*’s crimes, becoming a “virtual glasshouse where almost nothing

88 Mike Gatehouse to Maureen Colquhoun, 28 February 1976, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 16/3.

89 Roland Moyle to Martin Flannery, 10 July 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 29/2; Chile Solidarity Campaign, Annual Report 1979, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 1/12.

90 British Government Policy on Chile, December 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/7.

91 Brief of the Secretary of State for Trade’s meeting with members of the International Committee of the Labour Party, 17 January 1977; for the World Bank see Paul Kennedy: *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*, New York 2006, pp. 116–119.

92 James Callaghan to UK Director of the IMF/IBRD, 26 January 1976, PREM 16/758.

93 Agenda Item 7: Study of Reported Violations of Human Rights in Chile, 26 January 1976, FCO 61/1410. Jan Eckel: *Under a Magnifying Glass: The International Human Rights Campaign Against Chile*, p. 329.

94 P.M. Maxey (United Nations Department): *Chile and the Human Rights Commission*, 31 January 1975, FCO 61/1410.

could be hidden from the human gaze.”⁹⁵ But as the Foreign Office noted in 1977, as Augusto Pinochet seemed stable and unlikely to be ousted, the United Nations had no immediate effect in promoting genuine or substantive changes.⁹⁶

Responses to the *junta* delineated not just which rights were articulated but the processes, institutions and forums where human rights could be ignored and how these related to alternative political or economic concerns. The persistence of trade, commerce and lending to Chile was demonstrative of a more general trend for the economy to be bracketed off from the sphere of political choice in the late 20th century.⁹⁷ Chile was a definitive moment for both the ascent of human rights and the increased power of multinational corporations, suggesting the complexities of transnational currents.⁹⁸ Even before Salvador Allende’s Government, Chile was a site of different forms of solidarity from that articulated by the Chile Solidarity Campaign; between businesses, economists, an archipelago of neoliberal think-tanks and economic foundations, as well as the military and intelligence services.⁹⁹ In sites with some level of democratic accountability human rights were most consistently articulated; in trade and finance, these were an optional, moral language dependant the consciousness of such non-governmental agents.

Contested Histories of Human Rights

The language of human rights, at the moment of its “breakthrough” was translated in different ways different places, its accompanying ethical considerations were never clear-cut. Campaigners needed to reconcile human rights’ appeal across the political spectrum with a specific desire for solidarity with left-wing opposition, as well as making demands on policy-makers. Meanwhile, British governments found that human rights provided a language to level criticism towards the Chilean regime, but given the lack of clarity on mechanisms and enforcement strategies, this also enabled a degree of obfuscation and mediation to the interests of trade, finance and diplomacy. To the Chile Solidarity Campaign, the value of human rights as a framework through which a left-wing politics might be articulated was not always obvious, nor was it certain that human rights were

95 Paul Kennedy: *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*, p. 188; Jan Eckel: *Under a Magnifying Glass: The International Human Rights Campaign Against Chile*, p. 332.

96 South America Department, *Policy Towards Chile*, April 1977.

97 Geoff Eley: *Historicizing the Global: Giving the Present a Name*, in: *History Workshop Journal* 63 (2007), pp. 154–188, p. 173.

98 Matthew Hilton: *Prosperity for all: Consumer Activism in an era of Globalisation*, pp. 214–217.

99 Karin Fischer: *The Influence of Neoliberals in Chile before, during, and after Pinochet*, in: Philip Mirowski/Dieter Plehwe (eds.): *The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, London 2009.

reconcilable with socialism. As Shirin Hirsch's study of the Chile Solidarity Campaign suggests, competing internationalisms existed within the movement. Solidarity, framed through trade unionism contrasted with a universal rights ideal reaching beyond left-wing movements.¹⁰⁰

Part of this ambiguity was that human rights were often defined by the development of Amnesty. Its success created a saliency of human rights, but also framed these in relation to specific types of rights, initially those of political prisoners. Amnesty's founding ambitions were about prisoners of conscience and the right to fair trial. During the 1970s, partly in response to Chile, these expanded to encompass the death penalty, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment.¹⁰¹ This focus provided clarity of purpose; reporting on Chile was detailed and precise, emotive and compelling. Written testimonies of torture-victims, images and details of the "disappeared" and their families were circulated around members, accompanied by statistical evidence documenting the scale of authoritarianism.¹⁰²

Chile did provoke Amnesty to reflect on its political positioning. A discussion document produced by Dick Barbour-Might, a political scientist and member of both Amnesty International and the Chile Solidarity Campaign who had been imprisoned in the National Stadium during the coup, emphasised this tension. Barbour-Might argued to Amnesty supporters that the economic and social base of Augusto Pinochet's regime meant it was reliant on terror, the support of international relationships between financial institutions, business interests, governments and corporations in Europe and North America provided tacit endorsement of torture. Arguing for an extension of pressure, the report suggested that, while "invaluable", efforts to release prisoners and spread awareness of torture did not challenge "the viability of the system in which torture, imprisonment and disappearance are common occurrences" or the "system that of necessity brings about the violation of human rights."¹⁰³ Despite this intervention, Amnesty continued to rely on a moral authority, which it conceptualised as distinct from political authority, it did not report or scrutinise Chile according to the terms set out by Barbour-Might.¹⁰⁴

100 Shirin Hirsch: *The United Kingdom: Competing Conceptions of Internationalism*, in: Kim Christiaens/Idesbald Goddeeris/Magaly Rodriguez Garcia (eds.): *European Solidarity with Chile*, Oxford 2014 pp. 145–164, p. 146.

101 Jonathan Power: *Like Water on a Stone: The Story of Amnesty International*, London 2001, pp. 112–113, 137.

102 Amnesty International reports on Chile from the 1970s and 1980s can be found in the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick.

103 Dick Barbour-Might, *Chile: Pressure Against the Regime*, 10 August 1976, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, Mss 34/4/1/CH17.

104 Stephen Hopgood: *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International*, London 2006, pp. 207–214.

Amnesty's record of human rights abuses in Chile were essential in raising awareness across the world and across political divisions, but were also difficult to reconcile with the Chile Solidarity Campaign's programmes. At a meeting of the Human Rights Co-ordination Committee for Latin America in 1977, the Chile Solidarity Campaign suggested that "human rights" excluded the "political" concluding that "human rights was fairly meaningless."¹⁰⁵ Although the Chile Solidarity Campaign emphasised human rights at its foundation, it also objected to Foreign Office statements which noted that policy should reflect human rather than democratic rights.¹⁰⁶ To the Chile Solidarity Campaign these were different; the latter were more vital, because their fulfilment pre-supposed the *junta's* collapse. The Chile Solidarity Campaign worried that human rights improvements permitted a "normalisation of relations" without challenging economic methods and absence of democracy.¹⁰⁷ Improving human rights was important, but unless defined properly this could protect Augusto Pinochet without aiding the Chilean left.

The tension between solidarity and human rights came to a head at the Chile Solidarity Campaign's Annual General Meeting in 1978. The Northampton, Sheffield and Stockport branches challenged the value of human rights campaigning. Northampton felt that solidarity risked becoming an "amorphous non-expression of the Chilean people which we pick out of the air"¹⁰⁸ and that human rights terms were appropriate for Amnesty, but fell short of committing to a resistance movement. Human rights, it reflected, drew in non-political members, observing the appearance of individuals at meetings who "thought they were in a Human Rights Group supporting, we suppose, Liberals and Conservatives!" Although human rights appealed, they were an obscuring tactic of "the ruling class in Chile" and its "Imperialist paymasters", hiding an "authentic" politics of solidarity.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the Stockport branch wished to be disassociated from "humanitarian" approaches which risked earning "support of Liberals, Tories."¹¹⁰

Even so, the Chile Solidarity Campaign increasingly self-identified as a human rights group by the 1980s. It noted that the Carter Administration's preoccupations with human rights provided opportunities for publicising violations and were becoming a

105 Minutes: Human Rights Coordination Committee Meeting, 24 November 1977, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 5/1.

106 In 1976 the Chile Solidarity Campaign complained that the Foreign Office "still insist that their objective is only the restoration of **human** rights (**not** political or democratic) rights", Notes for meeting with Crosland, 29 April 1976, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 5/1.

107 British Government Policy on Chile, December 1975, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 26/7.

108 A Contribution by Northampton CSC to the debate within the CSC, July 1978, CSC 13/8.

109 Contribution by Northampton Chile Solidarity Campaign, July 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 13/8.

110 Stockport Chile Solidarity Committee to Affiliates, June 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 13/8.

“lever which must eventually crack open his [Augusto Pinochet’s] regime.”¹¹¹ But when discussing human rights, the Chile Solidarity Campaign emphasised the need to expand definitions of human rights to reflect the Madrid Declaration for the Freedom of Chile, a joint statement of solidarity movements, which explained, “the defence of Human Rights must of necessity include the defence of the political, social and economic rights”, because “these are the indispensable basis for the self-determination of peoples and for their possibility to a life of freedom and dignity.”¹¹²

The Chile Solidarity Campaign and Amnesty were not, however, the only agents defining human rights. Although offering a very different response to the *junta*, the Conservative Party also explained its policies through human rights arguments. Richard Luce, the Party spokesman on Foreign Affairs, explained that a conservative vision of human rights targeted people, not institutions. Reflecting the Chile Solidarity Campaign’s anxieties, Richard Luce argued that human rights should be restricted to “humanitarian concern.”¹¹³ He outlined distinctions between human rights containing an implied critique of authoritarian governments and more specific efforts to protect people subject to authoritarian governments. According to the latter, the authority of the Chilean state was not challenged, the state’s conduct was. Richard Luce explained that under such a framework, non-governmental organizations had to be “politically objective.” Moreover, by dealing with people not systems, Conservatives suggested that human rights protection required flexibility. Human rights might factor into diplomatic relations, but would also be balanced with historic and trading links, political and strategic considerations. Richard Luce argued a relativist case; “Cambodia requires different treatment to South Africa or Chile.”¹¹⁴ For the Conservative Party, suspending arms and trade were ineffective in improving rights standards; more important was a healthy bilateral relationship. Perhaps Richard Luce was being more honest about the limitations of any universal notion of human rights than the Labour Government. Although there were differences in policy between the two Governments, human rights were, in the actions of both parties, viewed in relation to other Ministerial considerations.

Labour and Conservative governments, along with different anti-*junta* campaigners all deployed human rights to articulate criticisms of Chile, but there was little coherent explanation for what a world shaped around human rights looked like and which spaces human rights could legitimately permeate. Rather than thinking about human rights entering global political language as a “last utopia”; the response to Chile suggested they

111 Annual General Meeting, Draft Programme of activities for 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers CSC 23/2.

112 Annual General Meeting, Draft Programme of Activities for 1979, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers, 13/7.

113 Richard Luce to Frank Dobson, 30 October 1981.

114 Extract from a speech by Richard Luce, 27 November 1978, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers 25/5.

were a last, and often vague, resort. Sufficiently flexible to be packaged with different meanings and caveats, different rights were selected according to the sensibilities and priorities of those deploying the concept. If common ground emerged on torture, political prisoners and state repression, little agreement existed on the channels and relative weight given to human rights. Chile highlights the rise of concepts of human rights, but also shows the craggy ascent, exposing pitfalls, gorges and ravines where utopian visions fell away, disappearing from, or never fully coming into view.

Conclusions

On-going controversies surrounding human rights' evolution must also be seen in the context of the moment of their "breakthrough." Samuel Moyn's argument that human rights have become a "Last Utopia" through which all moral and political concerns are reformulated should not obscure the ways in which critiques of human rights were also products of this "breakthrough."¹¹⁵ To the developing world, the demarcation of human rights from financial governance was a central plank of contention within arguments about the "right to development."¹¹⁶ Critics of non-governmental organizations argued that human rights mobilisations have sustained and furthered a global capitalist project by masquerading as "a community face"¹¹⁷, offering false universalistic identities obscuring and legitimising imperialism, intervention and neo-colonialism.¹¹⁸ To conservative critics within the United Kingdom, human rights become controversial when they deviate from a "Chilean paradigm", and stop targeting authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, becoming domestic and political. Campaigns like those against Chile framed human rights in relation to obvious moral outrages and a "tradition of rescuing people."¹¹⁹ The transnational origins of human rights saliency continue to resonate, feeding into the backlash against the United Kingdom's human rights legislation introduced in the late

115 Samuel Moyn: *The Last Utopia*, pp. 220–23.

116 Matthew Hilton: *International Aid and Development NGOs in Britain and Human Rights since 1945*, in: *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 3:3 (2012), pp. 449–472.

117 James Petras: *Imperialism and NGOs*, in: *Latin America, Monthly Review* 49 (1997), pp. 10–27.

118 Jean Bricmont: *Humanitarianism Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War*, New York 2006; Lori Allen: *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights: Cynicism and Politics in Occupied Palestine*, Stanford 2013; Stephen Hopgood: *The Endtimes of Human Rights*, Cornell 2013.

119 For a tradition of rescue see Tom Buchanan: *Human Rights Campaigns in Modern Britain*, in: Nick Crowson/Matthew Hilton/James McKay (eds.): *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-state Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, London 2009, pp. 113–128.

1990s.¹²⁰ Although non-governmental organizations and campaigners see the Human Rights Act of 1998 as a crucial mechanism for protecting civil liberties, welfare rights and freedoms for minority groups, the legislation is attacked because “human rights have been cut adrift from their moorings” which is to say that they have expanded beyond serving as tools to scrutinise the egregious offences of an authoritarian state.¹²¹ Placing human rights within historical contexts helps understand contemporary criticisms, but also offers different explanation as to why human rights became compelling in the first place. It was not because the “moorings” were secure and fixed that rights appealed. Even in the case of Chile human rights were understood in different ways. It was not even because of their implicit moralism that human rights carried great weight; rather their conceptual fuzziness helps understand their ascent; less a utopia and more a menu, human rights were simultaneously ciphers for “politicisation” and “de-politicisation”; stability could be articulated in the same terms as solidarity.

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120 For a right-wing critique of human rights culture within the United Kingdom see Dominic Raab: *The Assault on Liberty: What went wrong with rights*, London 2009.

121 Dominic Raab: *The Assault on Liberty: What went wrong with rights*, p. 237.