

# Solidarity for Chile, transnational activism and the evolution of human rights

Moore, Christopher

DOI:

[10.13154/mts.57.2017.115-136](https://doi.org/10.13154/mts.57.2017.115-136)

License:

None: All rights reserved

*Document Version*

Peer reviewed version

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Moore, C 2017, 'Solidarity for Chile, transnational activism and the evolution of human rights', *Moving the Social: Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements*, vol. 57, pp. 115 – 136.  
<https://doi.org/10.13154/mts.57.2017.115-136>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

Checked for eligibility: 08/07/2019

**General rights**

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

**Take down policy**

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

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

Christopher Moores

**Abstract:** This article discusses British manifestations of opposition to Pinochet's regime including the Chile Solidarity Campaign (CSC), the Chile Committee for Human Rights (CCHR) and Amnesty International (AI). It explores the intricacies of the evolution of human rights and its position as a political language through assessing their activities on Chile 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 series of fissures, or points of tension; between "national" and "global"; between conceptualization of human rights and solidarity and, perhaps most significantly, between progressive forms of transnationalism and alternative globalizing 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.

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.<sup>1</sup> Under Augusto Pinochet's rule, Chile became an international pariah, largely on human rights grounds.<sup>2</sup> 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 scrutinized Chile. Its borders could not contain news of violations, prompting

---

<sup>1</sup> Jan Eckel, "Under a Magnifying Glass": The International Human Rights Campaign Against Chile' in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, 2011, pp. 1-28, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

world-wide advocacy of human rights and exclamations of solidarity with the oppressed.<sup>3</sup> The widespread activist responses meant Chile's impact was, arguably, second only to the Holocaust in the evolution of the twentieth century human rights movement.<sup>4</sup> Anti-junta mobilizations were more geographically widespread than anti-Vietnam War movements, definitive of an earlier generation's radicalization.<sup>5</sup>

This article assesses British manifestations of opposition to Pinochet's regime; namely the Chile Solidarity Campaign (CSC), the Chile Committee for Human Rights (CCHR) and Amnesty International (AI). 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.<sup>6</sup> 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".<sup>7</sup> Placing human rights in longer histories is possible, but risks "thinning" contextually specific meanings framed by rights rubrics at particular, significant moments.<sup>8</sup> As Eckel explains, the rise of human rights was less "homogenous and clear-cut" and more an "intricate and manifold shift"; mobilizations around Chile demonstrate such intricacies.<sup>9</sup>

At a juncture when human rights became organizing considerations for activism and governments they inflected specific, but diverse, understandings. Anti-junta mobilizations

---

<sup>3</sup> Eckel, "Under a Magnifying Glass", p. 323.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina and International Human Rights*, Lanham, 2007, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 140; Eckel, *The Rebirth of Human Rights from the Spirit of Morality: Explaining the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s*, in: Eckel and Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough*, Philadelphia, 2014, pp. 226-259, p. 233.

<sup>7</sup> Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Genealogies of Human Rights*, in: Hoffmann (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 1-28, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the globalization era*, Berkeley, 2004; or Lauren, *Visions Seen*.

<sup>9</sup> Eckel, *The Rebirth of Human Rights*, p. 227.

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, promoted and delivered. Because human rights became 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 organizing 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 globalizing 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 where 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.<sup>10</sup> Here, the relative capacity of potentially progressive forms of transnationalism, including human rights and solidarity, to define the increasingly ‘globalized’ world emphasizes the power of what Mark Mazower has labelled the “Real New

---

<sup>10</sup> Nick Crossley, *Even Newer Social Movements*, in: *Organization 10: 2* (2003), pp. 287-305; Richard Johnson, *Optimism of the Intellect? Hegemony and Hope*, in: *Soundings 54* (Summer 2013), pp. 51-65; Matthew Hilton, *Prosperity for all: Consumer Activism in an era of Globalization*, 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.

International Economic Order” of the era which remade the rules of economic governance in the late twentieth century.<sup>11</sup>

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”.<sup>12</sup> Anti-junta action had a shared target and language, but “transnationalism” generated no linear politics. The moral universality of human rights appealed but clouded uncertainties about their “politics”, where they should be articulated, who they were for and their implications. Moreover, framing human rights against such an obviously egregious state had implications for more general understanding 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 twentieth 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.<sup>13</sup> New social movements supposedly found contours beyond “welfare patterns” of material production, economic distribution, and security, towards culture, identity and human rights.<sup>14</sup> Historians have, however, unpicked potentially reductive binaries between new social movements and older forms of left-wing mobilization.<sup>15</sup> Such binaries are further

---

<sup>11</sup> Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea*, London, 2012, pp. 343-377.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Moyn, *The 1970s as a Turning Point in Human Rights History*, in; Jan Eckel and Sam 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.

<sup>13</sup> Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-2000*, Oxford, 2002, pp. 460-461.

<sup>14</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative action – volume 2*, 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.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

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.<sup>16</sup> Anti-Pinochet campaigns similarly domestic political critiques aligned with transnational concerns.<sup>17</sup> Like Anti-Apartheid politics, the rhetoric of human rights and solidarity had globalizing capacities, not always reconcilable with arguments for national liberation made by opposition within both South Africa and, albeit less straightforwardly, within Chile.<sup>18</sup> 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 (CSC) established by the anti-colonial organisation Liberation (formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom), it worked at offices borrowed from the London co-operative movement.<sup>19</sup> The CSC 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.<sup>20</sup> Indicative of its constituencies, the CSC advertised in *The Morning Star*, *Tribune*, *Labour Weekly*, *New Statesman*, *The Leveller*, *Spare Rib*, *Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Challenge*, and *Voice*.<sup>21</sup> An early trade union conference received delegates from unions, trade councils and constituency Labour Parties.<sup>22</sup> A membership survey in 1983 recorded only 240 individual members, but a vast affiliated membership.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> 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 and Sam Moyn (eds), *The Breakthrough: Human Rights in the 1970s*, Philadelphia, 2014, pp. 204-225

<sup>17</sup> Stevens, *Why South Africa?*, p. 225.

<sup>18</sup> Rob Skinner, *Struggles on the Page: British Antiapartheid and Radical Scholarship*, in; *Radical History Review* 119 (2014), pp. 216-231.

<sup>19</sup> C.D. Crabbie to Peter Summerscale, 6 December 1974, FCO 7/2608.

<sup>20</sup> List of Affiliates, July 1974, Labour Archive, People's History Museum, Chile Solidarity Campaign Papers [hereafter CSC] CSC 12/4; Chile Solidarity Campaign, 15 March 1974, FCO 7/2608.

<sup>21</sup> National Demonstration, 20 September 1981, CSC 13/7.

<sup>22</sup> Mike Gatehouse to Jo Richardson, 29 October 1973, CSC 26/5; Mike Gatehouse to Ron Hayward, 4 May 1975, CSC 26/5; Mike Gatehouse to Brian Firth, 28 May 1975, CSC 26/5.

<sup>23</sup> CSC Annual Report 1983, CSC 1/13.

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”.<sup>24</sup> The CSC argued that no aid or assistance be given to Chile, no renegotiation of debts should occur, trade should cease, and diplomatic relations should end.<sup>25</sup> It was highly critical of the government, media and the so-called “liberal community”.<sup>26</sup> The Foreign Office considered it under a “strong Communist influence”.<sup>27</sup>

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 CSC’s organizer, Mike Gatehouse. He found difficulties could be minimised by allowing participation from all accepting the CSC’s aims, but by making it clear that the labour movement was in charge.<sup>28</sup> As the CSC 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. It established a Chile Relief Fund targeting humanitarian bodies like the World Council of Churches and Christian Aid.<sup>29</sup> Deciding that it needed to appeal “to all progressive sectors”, especially churches and a “broad liberal public”, it decided to help create a specific Chile Committee for Human Rights (CCHR) and expand its own cultural work.<sup>30</sup>

The value of mobilizing around human rights, as opposed to solidarity, was that it evoked broad moralistic “agreement”. The CCHR was a registered charity, designed to be “less political”.<sup>31</sup> The CCHR explained that its solidarity extended beyond union politics to all Chileans, operating “on a non-political, purely humanitarian basis”. Representatives from the

---

<sup>24</sup> Steve Nash to Len Murray 16 October 1973, CSC 13/2.

<sup>25</sup> Gatehouse to Firth, 28 May 1975.

<sup>26</sup> Mike Gatehouse to Harry Moorhouse, 26 January 1974, CSC 13/5.

<sup>27</sup> Chile Solidarity Campaign, 15 March 1974.

<sup>28</sup> Gatehouse to Firth, 28 May 1975.

<sup>29</sup> Mike Gatehouse to Harry Watson, 11 January 1974, CSC 13/5.

<sup>30</sup> Chile Solidarity Campaign, Programme of activity for the Campaign 1974-1975, CSC 1/4.

<sup>31</sup> CSC, Annual Report 1976, CSC 1/12.

World University Service, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), Christian Aid, the Quakers, the United Nations Association, War on Want and the CSC were executive members and it focussed only on torture, detention, exile, and executions. This followed human rights as conceptualized by Amnesty based on political prisoners, the right to fair trial and opposition to torture.<sup>32</sup> Unlike the CSC, the CCHR associated with “any group irrespective of its 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”.<sup>33</sup>

The CSC 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 organized. Delegations of Chilean unionists, often refugees, offered emotive descriptions of repression, building the “imagined community” of solidarity. It hoped that cultural connections between musicians and artists would not bring together those in Chile and the UK, but also bridge activist divisions within the movement. Despite the visibility of Chilean concerts, recordings, tours and events, these did not always resolve the strains. The CSC 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”.<sup>34</sup>

To large sections of the left, the politics of Chile mattered as well as human suffering. 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”.<sup>35</sup> At

---

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Power, *Like Water on a Stone: The Story of Amnesty International* (London, 2001) , pp. 112-113, 137.

<sup>33</sup>Chile Committee for Human Rights, Secretary’s Report, September 1975, CSC/5/1; Commentary on the characteristics of and principals of the CCHR, 22 April 1981, CSC 5/1.

<sup>34</sup>CSC, Annual Report 1976; CSC Programme by areas of work, 1975, CSC 1/5.

<sup>35</sup> 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.

the same time, 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 compared with the Chilean Minimum Employment Plan.<sup>36</sup> Chile became symbolic for opposition to privatisation and monetarism with the CSC claiming “monetarism means political, economic, and physical repression”.<sup>37</sup> By 1981, the Foreign Office observed that arms, business and monetarism were anti-junta activists’ “new tunes”.<sup>38</sup> Harnessing anti-American sentiments, especially before and after Carter’s presidency, the CSC raised questions about US military, political and corporate involvement in undermining and overthrowing Allende and challenged President Reagan’s anti-communist campaigning.<sup>39</sup> In addition, the resumption of the sale of arms to Chile in 1980 brought the CSC into a more general opposition to the arms trade including the Campaign Against the Arms Trade.<sup>40</sup>

At a rally in 1985, the multiple strands of leftist interest in Chile were articulated by the Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn. He explained that Pinochet held power because of multinational corporations, the international arms trade, the USA 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”. Articulating CSC’s arguments and the mantra of solidarity, 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”.<sup>41</sup>

## Transnational Ideas and Nation States

---

<sup>36</sup> Mike Gatehouse to F.J. Marsden, 3 August 1977, CSC 23/3; CSC Annual General Meeting, 27 February 1982, CSC 1/13.

<sup>37</sup> CSC Annual Report 1981, CSC 1/12.

<sup>38</sup> 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, CSC 26/5.

<sup>39</sup> Gatehouse to Firth, 28 May 1975; CSC Annual Report 1981.

<sup>40</sup> Call on the Prime Minister by Professor Schweitzer, 23 March, 1982, PREM 19/1424; Richard Luce to Frank Dobson, 30 October 1981, CSC 26/6; Quentin Given to P.M. Green, 28 June 1984, CSC 15/8.

<sup>41</sup> Jeremy Corbyn, Speech to the Chile Campaign Rally, 14 September 1985, CSC 26/13.

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.<sup>42</sup> Yet given the grave developments in Chile, building such networks and making such links was, perhaps, the easier part. Turning action into effect, the CSC 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.<sup>43</sup> However, opposing an intransigent and "stable" state meant that pressure from abroad could not mediate repression.<sup>44</sup> Because of the profound abuses in Chile and the complexity of external involvement, movements sought engaged 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 CSC focussed much of its campaigning.

The CSC'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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> Numerous Labour MPs were interested in the CSC including Judith Hart, the Minister for Overseas Development, who served on its executive whose son worked for the organization.<sup>47</sup> Labour MPs, particularly from the Tribune Group closely monitored policy and, according to the Foreign Office, generated "considerable Parliamentary pressure".<sup>48</sup> Days after taking office,

---

<sup>42</sup> Kennedy, "Magic Words", pp 88-106.

<sup>43</sup> Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights: In Theory and Practice* Second Edition, London, 2003, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America*.

<sup>45</sup> Statement by the National Executive of the Labour Party, 30 September 1973, FCO 7/26068.

<sup>46</sup> Record of the Minister of State's Meeting to discuss policy towards Chile, 21 December 1974, FCO 58/1169.

<sup>47</sup> Hugh Carless, Note on Chile Solidarity Campaign, 19 March 1974, FCO 7/2608.

<sup>48</sup> J.R. James (UN Department) to D Broad (UK Mission at the UN), 15 February 1975, FCO 61/1410.

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.<sup>49</sup> Such measures were tougher than many offered by other European countries.<sup>50</sup> Yet, the Labour Government found “bilateral approaches” on human rights largely symbolic.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover, such trends were reversed by the Conservative electoral victory of 1979, “normalisation” became the new Government’s priority.<sup>53</sup> 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.<sup>54</sup> All but one of a CSC 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.<sup>55</sup> Although such shifts were depressing for the CSC, it nonetheless ensured that Chile remained a somewhat special case. The Foreign Office grudgingly admitted that political and public concern meant the CSC could not be entirely rebuffed.<sup>56</sup> 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”.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> 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.

<sup>50</sup> Briefing, Anglo-Chilean Relations following the Falklands, 12 July 1982, FCO 7/4184; Policy Towards Chile, 1976, FCO 58/1169.

<sup>51</sup> Ted Rowlands to Neil Kinnock, 31 March 1977, FCO 58/1169; D. Ennals visit to the USA, September 1975, FCO 58/1170.

<sup>52</sup> South American Department, Policy Towards Chile, April 1977, Department of Overseas Development, The National Archives, Kew [Hereafter OD] OD 28/415.

<sup>53</sup> Background Note: Chile Solidarity Campaign, 1979, FCO 7/3611.

<sup>54</sup> Call on the Prime Minister by Professor Schweitzer, 23 March 1983, PREM 19/1424.

<sup>55</sup> CSC to Constituency Labour Parties, 2 June 1979, CSC 26/6.

<sup>56</sup> J.B. Ure to Nicholas Ridley, 13 August 1979, FCO, 7/3611.

<sup>57</sup> 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 remain cultural, expressive or emotional forms politics or entirely revolve around trade unionism. On one level, the CSC understood that human rights had to be institutionalized into judicial or state-led forms because the nation-state was the problem. Unable to influence Chile directly, the CSC and CCHR needed the British state to generate pressure against Chile at a bilateral level, but also the UN. Even so, despite strong associations with the Labour Party, there was no straightforward diffusion of the CSC'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.<sup>58</sup>

## 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.<sup>59</sup> Certain developments associated with globalization helped the anti-junta arguments; media and communication networks ensured news spread, refugees including politicians, musicians appeared on multiple cultural and political platforms.<sup>60</sup> 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".<sup>61</sup> Any "breakthrough" of the 1970s was, therefore, specific and partial. While human rights

---

<sup>58</sup> Mark Mazower, *The Strange Triumph of Human Rights*; in, *Historical Journal* 47:2, 2004, pp. 379-398.

<sup>59</sup> Bruce Mazlish, *The New Global History*, London, 2006, p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> Michel Ogrizek, *The Media-Driven Humanitarian Response: Public perceptions and humanitarian realities as two faces of the same coin*, in: Augusto López-Claros and 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.

<sup>61</sup> Eckel, *Allende's Shadow*, p. 75.

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.<sup>62</sup>

The CSC 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.<sup>63</sup> With firms seemingly reliant on Chile, a copper deficit potentially risked employment; cessation of trade endangered UK shipping which moved 100,000 tonnes of Chilean copper annually.<sup>64</sup> Even the Royal Mint stressed the importance of copper for currency flow, conjuring up the spectre of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries’ (OPEC) oil embargo.<sup>65</sup>

Because trade required protection, the British Ambassador in Santiago maintained that pressure should be confined to removing aid and “protesting” about human rights.<sup>66</sup> The Labour Government discovered that boycotts violated trade terms, potentially breaching the General Agreement on Trade Tariffs (GATT) and were irreconcilable with European Economic Community trading rules.<sup>67</sup> It was difficult to find precedents for extensive trade restriction, a previous embargo on Rhodesia operated through the UN and was grounded on

---

<sup>62</sup> Paul Gordon Lauren, *Visions Seen: The Evolution of International Human Rights*, Philadelphia, 2003, 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.

<sup>63</sup> Annual General Meeting, Draft Programme of Activities for 1979, CSC 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, CSC 23/2; Meeting with the International Committee of the Labour Party NEC to discuss Chile, OD 28/415.

<sup>64</sup> 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.

<sup>65</sup> J. Kelly, Royal Mint Copper Supplies, 16 April 1974, T 362/14.

<sup>66</sup> R. Seconde to Foreign Office, 2 April 1974, T 364/14.

<sup>67</sup> Background Notes, Meeting with the Chile Solidarity Campaign, 16 January 1979.

international peace and security, contrastingly, the junta largely threatened its own population.<sup>68</sup>

Under such circumstances, the CSC aimed to obstruct trade through trade union “blacking”.<sup>69</sup> Yet, with high levels of unemployment in ports and docks, “blacking” risked jobs. Critical of “communist” posturing, union leaders noted that the USSR 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.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> As Foreign Secretary, David Owen noted that restrictions and sanctions aided competitors which he viewed as more damaging to Britain than Chile.<sup>73</sup> A CSC 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 CSC noted that boycotts were difficult to sustain and explain.<sup>74</sup> Symbolic of its incapacity to affect global commodity and trade patterns, the CSC observed

---

<sup>68</sup> Michael Meacher to George Micklethwaite, 26 November 1976.

<sup>69</sup> Document on Copper Boycott, August 1975, CSC 16/1.

<sup>70</sup> Notes on a Meeting in Transport House, 12 July 1976, CSC 16/3

<sup>71</sup> Ted Rowlands to Mike Gatehouse, 20 November 1975, FO 7/2795; CSC Annual Report, 1976, CSC 1/12; J Harold Wilson to Jack Jones, 16 July 1975, PREM 16/758; DJ 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, CSC 23/3.

<sup>72</sup> The Department of Trade suggested that it align its position with those of France, West Germany and the USA, Department of Trade Policy on Chile, 21 October 1977, PREM 15/1532; David Owen to James Callaghan, 27 October 1977 PREM 15/1532.

<sup>73</sup> David Owen to Lord Avebury, 3 August 1977, PREM 16/1532; Meeting with Sra Allende 14 September 1977, FCO 7/3298.

<sup>74</sup> Trade Union Report to Executive, 22 July 1978, CSC 1/10.

that Chilean economic collapse in 1982 did more to reduce trade between the two nations than its campaigning.<sup>75</sup>

Private investment into Chile paid even less attention to human rights. By 1979, the CSC found that investment, not trade, stabilised and legitimised Pinochet.<sup>76</sup> Banks, including British firms, supported regime.<sup>77</sup> A high profile campaign launched against Lloyd's Bank, estimated to have loaned \$200 million to the Chilean, claimed that "Lloyds Bank funds Terrorists!", but this was largely ignored.<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup> The Transnational Institute, an American research organization, reported a flush of overseas investments following the coup which sustained the regime, implying international endorsement of Pinochet's "stability".<sup>80</sup> Even so, UK 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.<sup>81</sup>

NGOs and protest movements were not, therefore, the sole transnational actors mobilizing 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.<sup>82</sup> The British Chamber of Commerce for Chile (BCCC), representing various British subsidiaries in Santiago, lobbied Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties as well as *The Times* and *The Telegraph* in defence of Pinochet, making a "business" case for expanded trade. The BCCC unconvincingly argued that human rights were protected under the Pinochet regime.<sup>83</sup> The CSC viewed the BCCC as

---

<sup>75</sup> CSC Annual Report 1982, CSC 1/13.

<sup>76</sup> Record of a Meeting with representatives from the Chile Solidarity Campaign, 16 January 1979, FCO 7/3298.

<sup>77</sup> Gatehouse to Marsden, 3 August 1977.

<sup>78</sup> *Chile Luca: Magazine of the Chile Solidarity*, CSC 1/12

<sup>79</sup> Mike Gatehouse to David Owen, 12 July 1977, CSC 25/1.

<sup>80</sup> Isabel Letelier and Michael Moffitt, 'Supporting Repression: Multinational Banks in Chile', in: *Race and Class* 20: 2 (1978), pp. 111-128.

<sup>81</sup> Ted Rowlands to Stan Newens, 5 June 1978, CSC 23/3; Evan Luard to H. J. Barnard 8 August 1977, CSC 25/1.

<sup>82</sup> J. B. Ure to R. Fearn, 28 May 1981, FCO 7/3903; CSC Annual Report, 1980, CSC 1/12.

<sup>83</sup> 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 CSC

particularly malevolent because its Honorary President was the British Ambassador, confirming its negative assessment of the Embassy.<sup>84</sup>

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 CSCs could not persuade the World Health Organisation to discuss human rights because they could not address the “political dimensions of health care”.<sup>85</sup> Although the CSC 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.<sup>86</sup> Out of a “respect for tradition” that lending would not “be influenced by political considerations” a \$52 million loan was approved in 1976.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) directed £22 million into Chile’s copper industry explaining that it was “unobjectionable” from an economic standpoint.<sup>88</sup>

In the United Nations, human rights issues were largely articulated through the General Assembly. UK diplomats tried to generate pressure at the UN, 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”.<sup>89</sup> The UK 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.<sup>90</sup> Although the UN was something of a “dog without teeth” on human rights issues, the UN emphasis on Chile generated substantial information on the junta’s crimes, becoming a “virtual glasshouse where almost nothing could be hidden

---

to object to campaigns about boycotting Chilean goods. Eric W. Anyon to Maureen Colquhoun, 20 February 1976, CSC 16/3.

<sup>84</sup> Mike Gatehouse to Maureen Colquhoun, 28 February 1976, CSC 16/3.

<sup>85</sup> Roland Moyle to Martin Flannery, 10 July 1978, CSC 29/2; Chile Solidarity Campaign, Annual Report 1979, CSC 1/12.

<sup>86</sup> British Government Policy on Chile, December 1975, CSC 26/7.

<sup>87</sup> 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 Kennedy, Parliament of Man, pp. 116-119.

<sup>88</sup> James Callaghan to UK Director of the IMF/IBRD, 26 January 1976, PREM 16/758.

<sup>89</sup> Agenda Item 7: Study of Reported Violations of Human Rights in Chile, 26 January 1976, FCO 61/1410. Eckel, “Under a Magnifying Glass”, p. 329.

<sup>90</sup> P.M. Maxey (UN Department), ‘Chile and the Human Rights Commission’, 31 January 1975, FCO 61/1410.

from the human gaze”.<sup>91</sup> But as the Foreign Office noted in 1977, as Pinochet seemed stable and unlikely to be ousted, the UN had no immediate effect in promoting genuine or substantive changes.<sup>92</sup>

Responses to the junta delineated not just which rights were articulated but the processes, institutions and forums where human rights could be not considered 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 twentieth century.<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup> Even before Allende’s Government, Chile was site to different forms of solidarity from those articulated by the CSC; between businesses, economists, an archipelago of neoliberal think-tanks and economic foundations, as well as the military and intelligence services.<sup>95</sup> 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, while enabling a degree of obfuscation and mediation to the interests

---

<sup>91</sup> Kennedy, *Parliament of Man*, p. 188; Eckel, ““Under a Magnifying Glass””, p. 332.

<sup>92</sup> South America Department, *Policy Towards Chile*, April 1977.

<sup>93</sup> Geoff Eley, *Historicizing the Global: Giving the Present a Name*, in: *History Workshop Journal* 63 (Spring 2007), pp 154-188, p. 173.

<sup>94</sup> Hilton, *Prosperity for All*, pp. 214-217.

<sup>95</sup> 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.

of trade, finance and diplomacy. To the CSC, 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 reconcilable with socialism. As Shannon Hirsch's study of the CSC suggests, competing internationalisms existed within the movement. Solidarity, framed through trade unionism contrasted with a universal rights ideal reaching beyond left-wing movements.<sup>96</sup>

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.<sup>97</sup> 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.<sup>98</sup>

Chile did provoke Amnesty to reflect on its political positioning. A discussion document produced Dick Barbour-Might, a political scientist and member of both AI and the CSC 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 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".<sup>99</sup> Despite this intervention, Amnesty continued to rely on a moral

---

<sup>96</sup> Shirin Hirsch, 'The United Kingdom: Competing Conceptions of Internationalism', p. 146.

<sup>97</sup> Jonathan Power, *Like Water on a Stone: The Story of Amnesty International* (London, 2001) ,pp. 112-113, 137

<sup>98</sup> Amnesty International reports on Chile from the 1970s and 1980s can be found in the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick.

<sup>99</sup> Dick Barbour –Might, Chile: Pressure Against the Regime, 10 August 1976, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, [hereafter MRC], Mss 34/4/1/CH17.

authority, which it conceptualized as distinct from political authority, it did not report or scrutinize of Chile the terms set out by Barbour-Might.<sup>100</sup>

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 CSC's programmes. At a meeting of the Human Rights Co-ordination Committee for Latin America in 1977, the CSC suggested that "human rights" excluded the "political" concluding that "human rights was fairly meaningless".<sup>101</sup> Although the CSC emphasized human rights at its foundation, it also objected to Foreign Office statements which stated that policy should reflect human rather than democratic rights.<sup>102</sup> To the CSC these were different; the latter were more vital, because their fulfilment pre-supposed the junta's collapse. The CSC worried that human rights improvements permitted a "normalisation of relations" without challenging economic methods and absence of democracy.<sup>103</sup> Improving human rights was important, but unless defined properly this could protect Pinochet without aiding the Chilean left.

The tension between solidarity and human rights came to a head at the CSC's Annual General Meeting in 1978. 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" 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.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, the Stockport branch wished to be disassociated from "humanitarian" approaches which risked earning "support of Liberals, Tories".<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Stephen Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame*, London, 2006, pp. 207-214

<sup>101</sup> Minutes: Human Rights Coordination Committee Meeting, 24 November 1977, CSC 5/1.

<sup>102</sup> In 1976 the CSC 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, CSC 5/1.

<sup>103</sup> British Government Policy on Chile, December 1975, CSC 26/7.

<sup>104</sup> Contribution by Northampton CSC, July 1978, CSC 13/8

<sup>105</sup> Stockport Chile Solidarity Committee to Affiliates, June 1978, CSC 13/8.

Even so, the CSC 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 "lever which must eventually crack open his [Pinochet's] regime".<sup>106</sup> But when discussing human rights, the CSC emphasized the need to expand definitions of human rights began 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".<sup>107</sup>

The CSC and Amnesty were not, however, the only ones 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 CSC's anxieties, Luce argued that human rights should be restricted to "humanitarian concern".<sup>108</sup> He outlined distinctions between human rights containing an implied critique of authoritarian governments and more specific efforts to protect people within authoritarian governments. According to the latter, the authority of the Chilean state was not challenged, the state's conduct was. Luce explained that under such a framework, NGOs 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. Luce argued a relativist case; "Cambodia requires different treatment to South Africa or Chile".<sup>109</sup> For the Conservative Party, suspending arms and trade were ineffective in improving rights standards; more important was a healthy bilateral relationship. Perhaps 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.

---

<sup>106</sup> Annual General Meeting, Draft Programme, 1978.

<sup>107</sup> Annual General Meeting, Draft Programme of Activities for 1979.

<sup>108</sup> Richard Luce to Frank Dobson, 30 October 1981.

<sup>109</sup> Extract from a speech by Richard Luce, 27 November 1978, CSC 25/5.

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 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 human rights, but also shows the cragginess of the 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”. 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”.<sup>110</sup> 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”.<sup>111</sup> Critics of NGOs argued that human rights mobilizations have sustained and furthered a global capitalist project by masquerading as “a community face”, offering false universalistic identities obscuring and legitimising imperialism, intervention and neo-colonialism.<sup>112</sup> To conservative critics within the UK, 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

---

<sup>110</sup> Moyn, *Last Utopia*, pp. 220-23.

<sup>111</sup> Matthew Hilton, *International Aid and Development NGOs in Britain and Human Rights since 1945*, in: *Humanity*, (Winter 2012), pp. 449-472.

<sup>112</sup> James Petras, *Imperialism and NGOs*, in: *Latin America, Monthly Review*, 49 (1997), pp 10-27; 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.

people”. The transnational origins of human rights saliency continues to resonate, feeding into the backlash against the UK’s human rights legislation introduced of the late 1990s.<sup>113</sup> Although NGOs 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 scrutinize the egregious offences of an authoritarian state.<sup>114</sup> 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 “politicization” and “de-politicization”; stability could be articulated in the same terms as solidarity.

Christopher Moores is a history of political and social activism within the UK focussing on the civil liberties and human rights in national and global contexts. He is a Birmingham Fellow in Modern British History at the University of Birmingham where he also serves as Director of Modern British Studies.

---

<sup>113</sup> For a right-wing critique of human rights culture within the UK see Dominic Raab, *The Assault on Liberty: What went wrong with rights*, London, 2009; for a tradition of rescue see Buchanan, ‘Human Rights Campaigns in Modern Britain’, pp. 113-128.

<sup>114</sup> Raab, *The Assault on Liberty*, p. 237.