

The 1973 Chilean coup and the origins of transnational human rights activism*

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Abstract

The 1973 Chilean coup gave rise to an unprecedented growth in a global human rights consciousness. In its aftermath, transnational activists from a diverse array of political and ideological backgrounds found common cause – indeed, a common language of human rights – in campaigns to ameliorate the repressive acts of the Chilean military junta. This article focuses on two models of activism in particular: Amnesty International, whose 1973 investigative mission set the terms of the global debate about human rights in Chile; and transnational solidarity activists, especially Chilean exiles from leftist parties, whose vision of social activism narrowed as their interest in human rights surged. These campaigns – while not without tensions over the role of politics in the moral appeal to human rights – both articulated a transnational discourse of human rights and created new activist techniques to foment moral outrage by revealing the prevalence of torture through the power of personal testimony.

Keywords 1973 Chilean coup, global civil society, human rights activism, solidarity, transnational

How, oh, how can Chili [*sic*] be helped? My heart breaks over that tragedy.¹

A few months after his expulsion by the Chilean Junta in April of 1976, José Zalaquett explained to *Christianity and Crisis* that the ‘problem of human rights is not isolated; the situation in diverse countries is interrelated’.² Once the chief lawyer for the prominent if only domestic human rights organization in Chile, Zalaquett grasped before most others the changing nature of transnational activism in the years after the Chilean coup of 1973 that overthrew the

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1 Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI, Community Action on Latin America Records, box 1, folder 3, Margaret Andersen to Community Action on Latin America, undated.

2 Vicaría de la Solidaridad Archive, Centro de Documentación, Santiago, Chile (henceforth VS), document no. 2641, William L. Wipfler, ‘Solidaridad en Chile: una entrevista a José Zalaquett’, *Christianity and Crisis*, 21 June 1976, p. 7.

ected government of the socialist Salvador Allende. A year after the interview, while living in exile in Washington, DC, he sketched the outline for what would be a forthcoming book that cogently captured the human rights moment of the 1970s. In it he argued that the global interest in human rights was ‘relatively new’, resulting from a ‘progressive ascendance of interest in the topic’ since the late 1960s, accelerating dramatically after the 1973 coup.³ Long before historians of human rights began constructing triumphal tales, Zalaquett recognized the novelty of the moment and the promise and potential of human rights in the immediate years after the Chilean coup. Through his domestic activism in Chile, he grew ‘aware of the language of human rights and the importance of human rights over and above partisan politics’.⁴ Shortly thereafter, he would argue that ‘we must start to discover how we can create a new social order in which human rights can be fully attained and respected’.⁵

Why did José Zalaquett view the problem of human rights as interconnected throughout the world? How was he able to envision a ‘new social order’ based on the idea of human rights? In this article I explore the answers to these questions by foregrounding the impact that the 1973 military coup in Chile had on the explosion of transnational human rights politics in the 1970s. There is no doubt: the coup gave rise to a tremendous growth in a global human rights consciousness. If once protected by the boundaries of national sovereignty – or Westphalian sovereignty in Stephen Krasner’s paradigm⁶ – some countries would soon find themselves under fierce attack by legions of newly equipped human rights soldiers.⁷ Armed with information about torture, summary executions, detention without due process, and widespread disappearances, many began to identify as human rights activists and strenuously worked to ameliorate such state practices. Chile, more so than any other country, remapped the terrain of human rights activism, especially on the transnational plane. In the aftermath of the Chilean coup, not only were hundreds of new human rights and solidarity organizations founded, once inert intergovernmental human rights bodies at the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations (UN) stopped shuffling around papers and for the first time directed their energies toward exposing human rights abuses. In a variety of ways that shaped the last third of the twentieth century, the very cause of human rights became a *raison d’être* for many social activists. To Tom Quigley of the US Catholic Conference, human rights were ‘the air we breathed at the time’; and the Chilean coup was ‘the event that catalyzed everything else’.⁸

3 Fundación Salvador Allende, Sergio Insunza Archive, Santiago, Chile (henceforth FSA, ASI), 20, 2, José Zalaquett, ‘Human rights: suggestions about priorities for investigation and reflection’; the memo reads like an early draft of Zalaquett’s *The Human Rights Movement*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981.

4 Interview with José Zalaquett, 5 December 2011, Santiago de Chile.

5 Wipfler, ‘Solidaridad’, p. 7.

6 Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: organized hypocrisy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 3–4.

7 Kathryn Sikkink, ‘Human rights, principled issue-networks, and sovereignty in Latin America’, *International Organization*, 47, 3, 1993, p. 411, was one of the first to point to the ‘irreversible transformation of sovereignty in the modern world’ brought about by human rights activism. More recently, Greg Grandin, ‘The liberal tradition in the Americas: rights, sovereignty, and the origins of liberal multilateralism’, *American Historical Review*, 117, 1, 2012, p. 70, has argued that ‘Spanish Americans and Brazilians came to hold individual rights relative to the establishment of the public common good and territorial sovereignty as absolute’.

8 Tom Quigley, correspondence with author, 26 May 2010.

This study draws on archival research and oral interviews in Chile, Mexico, the United States, and Europe to map out the global dimensions of a decisive moment in the history of transnational human rights activism.⁹ It does so by highlighting the shared contributions and rival visions of two camps that grew massively in the coup's wake: human rights and solidarity activists. For the former group, the article shines a spotlight on the actions of Amnesty International. Although founded in 1961 in London, it was only in the 1970s that Amnesty, fuelled by surging membership, developed a much more global presence as *the* prototypical human rights organization.¹⁰ For the solidarity activists – defined as an ad hoc group of exiles and leftists who worked ‘in solidarity’ against abusive military dictatorships – the article zooms in on one epicentre of the transnational solidarity movement, in Mexico City, to explain how activists began to think in human rights terms. Together, these two groups developed a new transnational discourse of human rights, and also created new activist techniques to foment moral outrage by revealing the prevalence of torture through the power of personal testimony.

The article does not delve into the many ways in which the coup reconfigured intergovernmental human rights monitoring at the UN and the OAS, nor does it discuss the important contributions of transnational religious activists in the Americas (Latin America and the United States) in the forging of inventive forms of human rights activism. It also leaves aside activism against the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–85), which predated the Chilean coup and also significantly influenced the turn to human rights activism in the 1970s.¹¹

Where the lines of solidarity started and human rights ended cannot be easily delineated. Solidarity activists, on the whole, identified much more closely with overt political paradigms than groups such as Amnesty International. More often than not, solidarity activists were anti-imperialists: they saw the world through a Marxist lens, blaming the Chilean coup on the insidious advances of multinational corporations in collusion with the United States. Human rights organizations such as Amnesty, however, shunned any overt mention of politics. They donned a depoliticized cape as if it immediately bestowed upon them an invincibility of objectivity. By self-consciously trumpeting a depoliticized message, Amnesty saw itself as trading in a moral message that transcended the political quagmires of the past. Solidarity activists dabbled with depoliticized arguments as well, but they never lost

9 For extant works on the coup, see Jan Eckel, ‘“Under a magnifying glass”: the international human rights campaign against Chile in the seventies’, in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, ed., *Human rights in the twentieth century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 321–41; Aryeh Neier, *The international human rights movement: a history*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012; Van Gosse, ‘Unpacking the Vietnam syndrome: the 1973 coup in Chile and the rise of anti-interventionist politics’, in Van Gosse and Richard Moser, eds., *The world the sixties made: politics and culture in recent America*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2003, pp. 100–13; Margaret Power, ‘The U.S. movement in solidarity with Chile in the 1970s’, *Latin American Perspectives*, 36, 6, 2009, pp. 46–66.

10 The best historical work on Amnesty – and there is not much – is by Tom Buchanan: ‘Amnesty International in crisis, 1966–7’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 15, 3, 2004, pp. 267–89, and ‘The truth will set you free: the making of Amnesty International’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 4, 2002, pp. 575–97; see also Stephen Hopgood, *Keepers of the flame: understanding Amnesty International*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006; Samuel Moyn, *The last utopia: human rights in history*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010; Neier, *International human rights*; Ann Marie Clark, *Diplomacy of conscience: Amnesty International and changing human rights norms*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

11 These topics are, however, taken up in my forthcoming dissertation, ‘Rights after revolution: transnational human rights activism in the Americas in the long 1970s’, PhD thesis, University of Chicago.

a higher devotion to a political cause and therefore were much more likely to slip the depoliticized cape on as a strategic manoeuvre when it best suited them. For Amnesty activists, the idea of human rights was a foundational new creed; for solidarity activists it was primarily a means to talk about the suffering and victimization of families and compatriots. The irony, of course, was that both camps made political decisions, but Amnesty strove for impartiality whereas solidarity activists were not as concerned with appearing objective. Where Amnesty saw human rights as an ideology that rose above politics, solidarity activists saw it as a means to a political end.

Unpacking such nuances in 1970s human rights politics contributes to a budding conversation about how to write the history of human rights. Whereas early historians dropped a plumb line through the past and argued that human rights could be found throughout history, recent work has been much more attuned to the relative importance of historical constructions of human rights. Samuel Moyn has been at the forefront of this effort, warning that the human rights ‘vogue’ in today’s world has led to overly celebratory and imagined genealogies of human rights. The genius of his *The last utopia* is that it properly locates the 1970s as the breakthrough era; it was then – and only then – almost thirty years after the release of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that human rights began to be believable as a programme of social action. Only at this point did human rights emerge as a minor utopia, just as the pillars of the twentieth century’s maximal utopias – most obviously communism and anti-colonialist nationalism – appeared to be collapsing.¹² While convincing, Moyn largely articulates his thesis in a Euro-American context, with little sustained attention to the global South. Although I do not leave the European dimension aside, I seek to reorient the 1970s axis to focus on the activist workshop of the Americas, where much of the language of global human rights talk and practice was forged.

If the global Cold War intensified in regions throughout the global South in the 1970s,¹³ this article heeds Matthew Connelly’s call to ‘tak[e] off the Cold War lens’ and to think through transnational processes that do not map so easily onto a Cold War framework.¹⁴ At the same time, I suggest that, in order to understand the origins of transnational human rights activism, scholars should think less about a model of export of Western rights concepts to the South and more about a series of feedback loops of people, ideas, and experiences within the Americas. If our understanding of human rights activism remains framed solely in a Euro-American light, or if we only look through a Cold War lens, we miss the opportunity to see the fundamentally transnational construction of human rights activism in the 1970s.

Nevertheless, human rights politics did not germinate at the level of the transnational in the 1970s; rather it grew from ideological seeds planted in more regional and local contexts.

12 Moyn, *Last utopia*, p. 8; ‘vogue’ is from Moyn, ‘On the genealogy of morals’, *The Nation*, 23 March 2007; see also Patrick William Kelly, ‘“Zauberworte”: die Entstehung eines transnationalen Menschenrechtsaktivismus im Cono Sur während der langen 1970er Jahre’, in Jan Eckel and Samuel Moyn, eds., *Moral für die Welt? Menschenrechtspolitik in den 1970er Jahren*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2012, pp. 205–29 (English version forthcoming from University of Pennsylvania Press).

13 Odd Arne Westad, *The global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Heonik Kwon, *The other Cold War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

14 Matthew Connelly, ‘Taking off the Cold War lens: visions of North–South conflict during the Algerian War for Independence’, *American Historical Review*, 105, 3, 2000, pp. 739–69.

For US solidarity activists, human rights emerged in the waning years of the anti-Vietnam movement, the perseverance of the New Left, and the ‘long’ civil rights movement.¹⁵ For Chileans and other South Americans, human rights rose from a strong juridical and legalistic tradition, as well as a concern for the plight of the poor most centrally found in the tenets of liberation theology. These traditions melded in the emergency of the early 1970s, when the Catholic Church in Brazil and Chile developed the first domestic human rights groups to bring refuge and relief to victims.¹⁶ For Europeans, human rights, while having been codified in the European Convention of Human Rights of 1950, gained popularity in the 1970s as a ‘way forward’ beyond stalled political debates.¹⁷ Rather than offering an *a priori* definition of human rights, the focus on the local thus helps to unpack its ever-shifting meaning in different places at different times.

In providing a window onto how different local ideological seeds cross-pollinated in the maturation of transnational human rights politics in the years after the Chilean coup of 1973, I show how and why localized rights traditions allowed activists with similar concerns to find common cause – indeed, a common language of human rights. When activists marshalled the language of human rights, they did so for a variety of reasons. For some, the appropriation of a human rights rhetoric was more tactical than ideational: a contingent of Marxists would use human rights without ever altering their ideological worldview. For others, like José Zalaquett, human rights moved beyond mere tactics: it became a fundamentally new paradigm through which they saw the world. Antonio Leal, a Chilean politician under Allende who fled to Italy, explained that it was only through his exile that he discovered that ‘the socialist bloc had serious defects’ and that ‘there couldn’t be democracy without human rights’.¹⁸

The article opens with an overview of the profoundly global wave of protests to the Chilean coup that laid the groundwork for the proliferation of solidarity and human rights activism. The next section analyses Amnesty International’s first investigative trip to Chile in November 1973. The mission augured a future of transnational organizations challenging Chile’s sovereignty by exposing macabre tales of state repression. At the same time, activists in a transnational solidarity movement engaged in human rights work, and the next two sections take a twofold approach to examining this movement. They consider the efforts of an ad hoc tribunal, the International Commission, as well as the prominence of the solidarity and exile community in Mexico City, in an effort to draw out how these political activists started to reconsider their social activism in the light of what new-fangled ideas of human

15 Kenneth Cmiel, ‘The emergence of human rights politics in the United States’, *Journal of American History*, 86, 3, 1999, pp. 1231–50; Van Gosse, ‘A movement of movements: the definition and periodization of the New Left’, in Jean-Christophe Agnew and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *A companion to post-1945 America*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, pp. 277–302; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, ‘The long civil rights movement and the political uses of the past’, *Journal of American History*, 91, 4, 2005, pp. 1233–62.

16 Grandin, ‘Liberal tradition’; Steve J. Stern, *Battling for hearts and minds: memory struggles in Pinochet’s Chile, 1973–1988*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006; Mark Engler, ‘Toward the “rights of the poor”: human rights in liberation theology’, *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 28, 3, pp. 339–65.

17 Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki effect: international norms, human rights, and the demise of Communism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 50–1; the notion of the ‘way forward’ is from Tony Judt, *Postwar: a history of Europe since 1945*, New York: Penguin, 2005, p. 567.

18 Quoted in Katherine Hite, *When the romance ended: leaders of the Chilean left, 1968–1998*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, pp. 139–40.

rights could offer. In short, this article shows how activists from a variety of different ideological and political camps engaged in border-hopping strategies that would come to define the world of transnational human rights politics.

The global reaction to the coup

The response to the Chilean coup was, almost unanimously throughout the world, enormously critical. The one notable exception could be found in the pages of the *New York Times*, which initially claimed that a ‘heavy share [of blame] must be assigned to the unfortunate Dr. Allende’.¹⁹ As stories of repression and mass summary executions trickled back to the USA, the same *Times* editorial page warned of the inevitability of ‘lurid rumors’²⁰ (the *Times* would quickly change its tenor and endorse the work of activists who criticized the repression of the Chilean Junta). The Mexican scholar Miguel Wionczek snidely told his readers in *El Excelsior* that, if they had been in the USA in the days after the coup, they might have come to the conclusion that ‘nothing major’ had taken place in Chile.²¹ The degree of support begs the question: why did the Chilean coup incite such a global reaction?

The relatively tepid response in the US contrasted with the profoundly sympathetic, if sometimes rhetorically bloated, response throughout much of Latin America and Europe. ‘There are moments in world history’, the Finnish Prime Minister, Kalevi Sorsa, proclaimed, ‘when the fate of a nation draws the spontaneous attention of the entire world’.²² The Chilean coup spurred protests throughout the globe: hundreds of thousands protested in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Caracas, Bern, Paris, and Italy. Wherever they could, protesters attacked buildings owned by the multinational corporation International Telephone & Telegraph (IT&T), whose anti-Allende conspiracy had been revealed in the US. IT&T repeatedly interfered in Chilean politics and symbolized the nefarious nexus of global capital and imperialist power.²³

The coup also engendered an outpouring of solidarity and support from northern European countries, most notably Sweden, Finland, Belgium, and Denmark. The socialist promise of Salvador Allende, who soon after his suicide became a martyr for the international left, particularly appealed in European countries with a strong tradition of social democracy. As one group of Chilean exiles attested, ‘There are few European countries where you cannot find stamped the name of Salvador Allende’.²⁴ Europeans figured largely in the solidarity movement – agreeing to take thousands of Chilean political exiles as refugees – a testament to the good will built up over the years between Allende’s Chile and

19 *New York Times*, 12 September 1973.

20 *New York Times*, 20 September 1973.

21 Miguel S. Wionczek, ‘En Chile no ha pasado gran cosa ...’, *El Excelsior*, 21 September 1973.

22 FSA, ASI, 9, 2, opening statement of Kalevi Sorsa, undated.

23 ‘Repression, resistance, and censorship’, *Chile Newsletter*, 1, 1, 1 November 1973, p. 4, from North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) Archive, microfilm roll no. 24, frame no. 0508, file no. 125; Power, ‘U.S. Movement’.

24 Fernando Montupil Inaipil and Jorge Barudy, eds., *Exilio, derechos humanos y democracia: el exilio chileno en Europa*, Santiago: Casa de América Latina, 1993, p. 20.

the leaders of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. The Swedish ambassador to Chile during the coup, Harald Edelstam (the ‘forgotten hero’, in the words of one contemporary Chilean), fought relentlessly for the release of political prisoners and their safe refuge during the most brutal months of repression.²⁵

Curiously, Chile garnered global attention in the 1970s to an extent disproportionate to the relative degree of atrocities. Many more died in Pol Pot’s killing fields in Cambodia or during the Guatemalan civil war than as a result of the dictates of General Pinochet.²⁶ Even so, the Chilean coup captured the imaginations of a world on the precipice of ideological and political change. As the Chilean exile Rogelio de la Fuente recalled it, ‘the world longed for a transformation’ after the socialist revolutions had ‘rigidly ossified’ and turned ‘repressive’.²⁷ Salvador Allende’s election as President of Chile in 1970 began a novel experiment: a democratic transition to socialism. His very existence called into question the rigid bipolarity of the global Cold War.²⁸ In overthrowing Allende, Chilean military leaders not only foreclosed the realization of Allende’s laboratory of democratic socialism but also upended the political dreams and sympathies of many leftists throughout the world. Allende’s ‘third way’ was viewed by many leftists in Europe and the non-aligned nations of the global South as perhaps the last best hope of salvaging a future for socialism.²⁹ He likewise appealed to an international culture of revolt in the late 1960s that expressed disenchantment with the torpid pace of change and empty promises of reform from Cold War leaders.³⁰ And, given the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring of the CIA and the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to prevent the spread of Allende’s socialist vision, the coup only amplified the perception among the global left that Latin American military dictators were nothing but mere puppets to a dominant US puppet master.³¹

To channel these frustrated sentiments, a series of solidarity and human rights groups sprouted after the coup. Clustered in western Europe, Canada, and the US, as well as in countries of the Americas with supportive leftist governments, notably Mexico and Cuba, they adopted names such as Chilekommitté (Sweden) and the Chile Committee for Human Rights (UK). Concurrently, the coup fostered international cooperation among non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, and the International Red Cross. These NGOs, in turn, encouraged

25 Pamela Gutiérrez, ‘El héroe olvidado’, *La Nación*, 12 September 2009; Fernando Camacho Padilla, ‘La diáspora chilena y su confrontación con la Embajada de Chile en Suecia’, in José del Pozo, ed., *Exiliados, emigrados y retornados: chilenos en América y Europa, 1973–2004*, Santiago de Chile: RIL Editores, 2006, p. 38.

26 Jan Eckel, ‘Under a magnifying glass’, p. 326, makes exactly this point.

27 Archivo de la Palabra of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Memoria e identidad, Política y cultura del exilio latinoamericano en México series (henceforth AP), PEL/1/CH/15, interview with Rogelio de la Fuente, conducted by Renée Salas in Mexico City, 1 October 1997.

28 See Tanya Harmer, *Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American war*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

29 Westad, *Global Cold War*.

30 Jeremi Suri, *Power and protest: global revolution and the rise of détente*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003, pp. 88–130.

31 Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet file*, New York: The New Press, 2004; John Dinges, *The condor years*, New York: The New Press, 2004.

intergovernmental groups including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS and the Committee on Human Rights at the UN to denounce violations of human rights in Chile.³² Of all groups, however, Amnesty International stands out for its early investigative trip in November 1973, which was one of the first trips in history to take the form of what we know today as human rights monitoring.

Amnesty International's first mission to Chile

Amnesty International wasted little time in responding to the violent events unfolding in Chile. In the four months following the coup the organization was involved in a flurry of activity, stimulated by what Roger Plant, Amnesty's researcher on Chile at the time, called a 'surfeit of information' coming in from exiles and journalists about rights abuses in Chile.³³ A mere three days after the coup, the chairman, Sean MacBride, in a joint statement with Niall McDermott of the International Commission of Jurists, sent a cable to the heads of the UN, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the OAS that stated that they were 'deeply concerned' over 'mass arrests' and 'summary executions' in Chile.³⁴ Two days after the telegram, Amnesty issued a press release calling on Chile to halt all executions, arrests, and deportations.³⁵ About a month after the coup, it dispatched a series of pleas (called Urgent Actions) on behalf of prisoners in Chile whose lives were in jeopardy.³⁶ Such frantic efforts reflected the expansion of Amnesty's operation in the early 1970s in moving beyond mere letter writing on behalf of prisoners of conscience. The Chilean coup, along with the Brazilian campaign that preceded it, provided a laboratory for Amnesty to envision new frontiers of human rights activism.

In the weeks after the Chilean coup, information was scarce, and Amnesty needed more of it, having relied only on limited evidence from refugees and incomplete news accounts. The International Secretariat in London, headed by Secretary General Martin Ennals, worked to compile a three-person investigative research team: Frank Newman, a professor of law at the University of California, Berkeley; Bruce Sumner, a judge in Orange County; and Roger Plant, the Latin American researcher from the IS. They travelled to Santiago in the first week of November 1973, less than two months after the coup, and conducted interviews with governmental and non-governmental sources over eight days. Although they spoke to the Supreme Court, to the President of the Bar Association (*Colegio de Abogados*), to officials at the UN, the Red Cross, and the National Committee for Aid to Refugees, and

32 For OAS involvement, see Klaas Dykmann, *The human rights policy of the Organization of American States in Latin America*, Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2008; Cecilia Medina Quiroga, *The battle of human rights: gross systematic violations and the Inter-American system*, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988.

33 Interview with Roger Plant, 29 June 2012, London.

34 Amnesty International of the USA Records, Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research, Columbia University, New York (henceforth AI-USA), series II.5, box 3, AMR-22, Executive Director Files, Americas–Chile, 'Telegrammes sent 14 September 1973'. For decisions about Chile, see the minutes of the meetings of the International Executive Committee in Amnesty International's International Secretariat Archives, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam (henceforth AI-IISH), 414–15.

35 For the press release, see AI-USA, series II.5, box 3, AMR-22; see more generally the resolution passed at the 6th International Council Meeting, held just days after the coup, 13–16 September 1973, in AI-USA, series I.3, box 1.

36 For a summary of Amnesty's activities, see AI-USA, series II.5, box 3, AMR-22, International Secretariat (henceforth IS) to all National Sections, 'Urgent Action Campaign: Chile', 12 October 1973.

to Chilean and foreign prisoners, their most valuable source of information was the Pro-Peace Committee – an ecumenical Church organization set up in a moment of emergency after the coup – whose legal advisor was José Zalaquett. Months after the mission ended, as Newman and Plant were drafting the text, they continued a working dialogue with the Committee over the specifics of different provisions of Chilean law. Zalaquett helped correct Amnesty's report and recalled being very impressed with Amnesty's meticulousness in verifying the quality of its information.³⁷

On 1 November 1973, as the team was heading to the heart of Santiago from the airport, they quickly realized the magnitude of the events taking place in Chile. There was a palpable sense of fear and dread looming over the city. Newman recalled seeing 'all kinds of military equipment and guards' that got progressively 'tighter and tighter as we got closer to the city center'. At one checkpoint, an officer shoved his automatic rifle into their car to examine their papers. After they cleared, Sumner turned to Newman and said 'That guy didn't even have on his safety lock.'³⁸ Plant also remembered the mission as very 'tough', with nightly 'gunfire out on the streets' from automatic weapons fire.³⁹

In his retelling, Newman emphasized the novelty of the moment – the sense that they were improvising human rights investigative work on the spot as they proceeded. Of course, there were no manuals in 1973 on how to conduct such investigations. As such, Newman stressed the team's very narrow, apolitical mandate: 'the revolutionary cause, either before or after the revolution, was none of our business'. While they spoke to almost anyone, even government officials 'talked about the [National] stadium and how ghastly it must be'.⁴⁰ The team ended up gaining access to the prisons because of Plant's connections with the Red Cross. On a visit to the National Stadium, Plant recalled entering a zone that he was told to avoid, where a prisoner furtively handed him a list of names of people whose lives were in danger; the prisoners throughout the stadium, Plant noted, showed 'signs of torture'. Relying on his Red Cross contact, Plant 'clandestinely' held numerous interviews with prisoners to gain vital first-hand information.⁴¹ After the trip, Newman and Plant returned to Paris to draft the final report (Sumner had to resume his judging duties in Orange County). While in Paris, the two of them put the finishing touches on the report and presented it to Amnesty's International Executive Committee.⁴² The head of Amnesty, Martin Ennals, actually rejected the first draft because he felt it lacked emphasis, forcing Newman to go back to write a more 'hard-hitting' report filled with 'facts' and 'testimony'.⁴³

In a world that had known few human rights reports, this one dropped like a bombshell. 'How, briefly, does one describe fear and its chilling effect?' In evocative prose, the Amnesty

37 Interview with José Zalaquett.

38 California State Archives, State Government Oral History Program, Frank C. Newman, oral history interview, conducted in 1989 and 1991 by Carole Hicke, Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley.

39 Interview with Roger Plant.

40 Newman, oral history interview, p. 287.

41 Interview with Roger Plant; Newman, oral history interview, p. 291.

42 Newman, oral history interview, p. 299.

43 Interview with Roger Plant.

Report painted Chile as a land where torture and summary executions took place with abandon, prisoners lacked due process rights, and refugees overwhelmed the embassies. However, of all charges, the report focused especially on torture. Through interviews with detainees and others, Amnesty determined that torture was not just occasionally used but had become pervasive. The Junta deployed torture as a scare tactic, in which persons were ‘chosen almost capriciously ... for the purpose of scaring others into submission’.⁴⁴

The Amnesty report’s heavy attention to torture would be echoed in a series of reports from other NGOs, the UN, and the OAS. Given Amnesty’s recent launch in 1972 of the Campaign for the Abolition of Torture (CAT), the global focus on torture was somewhat surprising; Amnesty itself only embraced the issue of torture as part of an extension of its mandate in 1967.⁴⁵ But torture would soon come to dominate the human rights agendas of national governments, the UN, the OAS, and the European Commission on Human Rights. Torture came to occupy a special place in the global consciousness as the human rights abuse par excellence. The UN would pass a resolution against torture in 1975 and an expanded and legally binding Convention Against Torture in 1984. Yet it was Amnesty that spearheaded the global push for the abolition of torture before most others, and Chile became one of the most emblematic examples of an abusive state in which torture was rampant.⁴⁶ In subsequent CAT memos, torture was dubbed the ‘official policy of the Chilean government’. Its use had become ‘more uniform’ and a ‘constant practice during interrogations’.⁴⁷

Beyond the focus on torture, Amnesty’s investigative trip spurred events that would enable the growth of transnational human rights advocacy. Immediately before he flew to Paris to draft the report, Newman stopped in Washington, DC, to testify before a joint House panel on ‘Human rights in Chile’ where he explained the significance of the moment: the coup altered how people understood both international law and the doctrine of state sovereignty. ‘This kind of violation of human rights is no longer a matter within domestic jurisdiction’, Newman told House members.⁴⁸

In an annex to Amnesty’s Chile report, Newman continued by way of attacking the Chilean Bar Association for hiding behind its ‘domestic jurisdiction’. He chastised their ‘seeming lack of concern regarding the need for a public listing of detainees’ names’.⁴⁹ More importantly, he took Chilean officials to task for their flaunting of international law. Noting that Chile had ratified the ‘three most important treaties that affect human rights’ – the

44 AI-USA, series II.5, box 3, AMR-22, ‘Report of the mission to Santiago, Chile, 1–8th November 1973’ (henceforth Amnesty Report on Chile).

45 On Amnesty’s evolving mandate, see *Amnesty International: a chronology, 1961–1976*, London: Amnesty International, 1976; see also Amnesty International, *Report on torture*, London: Gerald Duckworth, 1973.

46 On initial efforts to historicize the rise in concern over torture, see Tobias Kelly, *This side of silence: torture, human rights, and the recognition of cruelty*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012; Tobias Kelly, ‘What we talk about when we talk about torture’, *Humanity* 2, 2, 2011, pp. 327–43.

47 AI-USA, series II.5, box 3, AMR-22, Campaign for the Abolition of Torture Department to all National Sections, ‘Re: Torture in Chile’.

48 Hearings before the Subcommittees on Inter-American Affairs and on International Organizations and Movements of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-third Congress, Second Session, ‘Human rights in Chile’, 7 December 1973, p. 27.

49 Amnesty Report on Chile, Annex I: ‘Letter written by Professor Frank C. Newman to the *Colegio de Abogados*’, 16 November 1973.

UDHR, and the Covenants on Civil & Political and Social, Economic & Cultural Rights – Newman declared it ‘unconscionable’ that Chile would violate those very rights so soon after ratifying the Covenants.

Newman was especially offended at the flagrant violation of international law that flew in the face of his conception of sovereignty, all the more so because the popularization and ratification of the trinity of UN human rights documents became his new obsession in the twilight of his life. He had only been directly working on human rights issues for some five years when he encountered the Chilean situation, and here was a country that threatened to make a mockery of the entire UN human rights edifice. If Chile, a country that seemed to stand at the vanguard of the effort to pass international human rights treaties, could so easily sign and then swiftly reject those documents, for what, in the end, did they stand? And even more frustrating to Newman, Chile continued to appeal to its history as a champion of liberal rights and constitutionalism. The Amnesty Report recognized this, extolling the ‘juridical traditions of Chile’ as ‘laudable’; ‘They are not, though, honoured by many actions of the junta’.⁵⁰ In actuality, Newman’s letter attested to an unsettled time when international human rights law was undergoing a series of profound changes – and he was ahead of his time. No one in 1973 quite knew how human rights law and advocacy would take shape.

The uncertainty of the moment invites the most vexing of questions: why was Amnesty’s trip permitted by the Chilean Junta in the first place? In a region of the world where the doctrine of state sovereignty was sacrosanct, why would the Junta allow an investigative team to enter its territory and judge their regime, especially an organization that had no connections to state governments? One explanation is that the Junta imagined it could convince the Western world of its version of events: nihilistic communists threatened to destroy the country, or so they argued, and the only solution was to use military violence to restore order. Surely the Junta did not expect the level and degree, ‘almost volcano-like’ in Newman’s words, of international opprobrium. If that was the case, Amnesty investigators may have been welcomed as an ‘easy way to take some of the international pressure off’.⁵¹ Another plausible explanation might ask how effective the Junta thought Amnesty could be. In the early 1970s, NGOs were not often seen as key actors on the global stage. And it certainly was not foreordained that they would continue to grow at a breakneck speed through to the end of the twentieth century, exponentially increasing their influence.

In the months after the report’s release, Amnesty built on the worldwide momentum gained from sustained attention to the Chilean case. Indeed, Chile would come to catalyse the organization’s work in Latin America and across the globe for years to come. ‘What the combination of Brazil and Chile did’, explains Plant, ‘was to move [Amnesty] from this rather slow-moving adoption technique to a whole range of different techniques in order to bring human rights issues into the limelight’.⁵² It was through its experience responding to violence in Brazil and Chile that Amnesty began to work in multiple arenas to ameliorate human rights abuses. It created Chile Coordination Groups in many national sections, issued Urgent Actions on behalf of Chilean prisoners, and built strong publicity campaigns with the

50 See Amnesty Report on Chile.

51 Newman, oral history interview, p. 288.

52 Interview with Roger Plant; interview with Tracy Ulltveit-Moe, 29 June 2012, London.

goal of securing amnesty for political targets, as well as ending the practices of torture, disappearances, and forced exile. National sections assumed a much more visible role in the 1970s, as they were encouraged to raise their own funds and put pressure on their national leaders to publicly chastise Pinochet's Chile.⁵³ Amnesty recognized that their global strength was directly linked to their local embeddedness. In order to reach as many people as possible, Amnesty adoption groups were encouraged by the leadership board to 'concentrate on getting press and publicity coverage *locally*'. Leadership of the country coordination groups and the staffs of national groups, it was thought, would work on 'national-level press, TV, professional organizations, etc'.⁵⁴ At the same time, Amnesty staffers at the International Secretariat in London would focus on the more global human rights conversation: directing Amnesty's research into human rights abuses throughout the globe, passing UN resolutions, and working with other intergovernmental organizations and NGOs.

Amnesty's work on Chile in the 1970s foretold the emergence of broader trends in human rights activism. The report on Chile was the first formal international attempt to alert the world to human rights abuses taking place in Chile. While journalists had made some strides in conveying the basic facts on the ground, and refugees and exiles were gradually slipping out with testimonial evidence of their own, the report was a watershed in terms of its credibility, objectivity, and the breadth of its sweeping conclusions. Amnesty preceded the OAS (1974), the UN (1975), and a slew of other NGO and governmental delegations that would visit to conduct their own investigations. And although the report would later be outdone in terms of the complexity of the research and the persistence of other groups – the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the UN stand out in their repeated yearly reports and denunciations of human rights abuses – it is important to highlight Amnesty's role as both envisioning and galvanizing future transnational advocacy. Its work complemented that of the transnational solidarity movement, which, while united with Amnesty in the cause for human rights, functioned quite differently.

Transnational solidarity: exiles and the International Commission

At roughly the same moment that formalized NGOs such as Amnesty International began to work fervently to raise worldwide awareness about events in Chile, a network of less institutionalized activists started to coordinate their own campaigns. Chilean exiles were the prime movers and shakers. The Chilean exile diaspora was massive and extensive, stretching from Moscow to London, across the Atlantic Ocean to Canada, the United States, Mexico, and Cuba, and even to as remote a land as Australia. While other exiles from the Southern Cone frequently struggled to find safe harbour, Chileans were welcomed in an extraordinary number of countries. As the vast majority of Chilean exiles were politically involved and leftist – despite their fracture along a spectrum from socialist and communist to Christian democrat parties – they linked up with similarly minded activists in foreign countries to form

53 AI-USA, series II.5, box 3, AMR-22, AI Research Department, 'List of recommendations coming from meeting of National Sections – 2/3 February 1974, re: Chile', February 1974.

54 AI-USA, series II.5, box 3, AMR-22, AI Research Department to all National Sections, 'Second anniversary of the coup in Chile', 5 August 1975.

a transnational solidarity movement. Through these ideological and physical treks, exiles underwent a series of transformative personal experiences. As Gabriel Gaspar, an exile who fled to Mexico City, recalled, the exile experience of solidarity allowed him for the first time to witness ‘other forms of life, other languages ... to get used to differences’.⁵⁵ This section and the next unpack two key iterations of the transnational solidarity movement: the International Commission of Enquiry into the Crimes of the Military Junta in Chile (the International Commission) and the exile experience in Mexico City.

Of crucial importance to these sections is an effort to tease out the complex and shifting relationship between anti-imperialism and human rights. Solidarity activists displayed varying attitudes toward human rights work. While some embraced the human rights ethos wholeheartedly, freely assimilating it into their work, others used it more strategically. A subset of activists evolved from an initial suspicion or unfamiliarity with rights discourse to a more tentative embrace as solidarity activists continued their work throughout the mid 1970s. The unifying potential of human rights made for some interesting bedfellows. Miguel Enríquez, leader of the most radical group of Chilean leftists, the Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR, Revolutionary Left Movement), wrote to the head of the Chilean Catholic Church, Archbishop Raúl Silva Henríquez, that, if divided on many issues, ‘certainly we are at least united in the defence of Human Rights’.⁵⁶ These sections explore the multitude of exiles’ experiences in the creation of novel forms of transnational human rights activism. Although there were not always explicit ties, transnational solidarity activists amplified the human rights message of NGOs like Amnesty International, and provided essential first-hand testimonies of violence in Chile. And at times, they appropriated some of the same human rights tactics, most obviously in the deliberate use of a depoliticized appeal to compel people to act against the Chilean Junta.

While a small solidarity movement existed before the 1973 coup,⁵⁷ it saw its ranks grow exponentially in the coup’s aftermath, fuelled by waves of Chilean exiles that spread throughout the world. Between 1978 and 1988, some 200,000 Chilean exiles and dissidents formed a transnational diasporic community in over 140 countries. Exiles principally settled in Europe – in Sweden, France, Italy, East Germany, and Moscow – and in Latin America – in Mexico City, Venezuela, and Cuba. Since criticism of the Pinochet government was largely stifled in the domestic sphere, exiles used the international sphere to protest the regime.⁵⁸ Although torture,

55 AP, PEL/4/CH/4, interview with Gabriel Gaspar, conducted by Gabriela Díaz in Santiago de Chile, 13 August 1999.

56 Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Mexico, Galeria 2, SCDFS/Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (IPS) (henceforth AGN), 1808 C, exp. 7, ‘Boletín del Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria de Chile en el exterior’, *Correo de la Resistencia*, 2, August 1974.

57 Solidarity activists before the Chilean coup were largely concerned with torture in Brazil. See James Green, *‘We cannot remain silent’: opposition to the Brazilian military dictatorship in the United States*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

58 The figure of 200,000 Chilean exiles is the most widely cited, coming from the Chilean Commission on Human Rights and the International Organization for Migration (IOM); for specific treatment of Chile, see Montupil Inaipil and Barudy, *Exilio*; del Pozo, *Exiliados*; Marita Eastmond, *The dilemmas of exile: Chilean refugees in the USA*, Gothenburg: Department of Social Anthropology, Gothenburg University, 1997; Thomas Wright and Rody Oñate, *Flight from Chile: voices of exile*, Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1998, pp. ix, 8. The best overview of Latin American exiles is Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger, *The politics of exile in Latin America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; see also Luis Roniger and James N. Green, ‘Introduction: exiles and the politics of exclusion in Latin America,’ *Latin American Perspectives*, 155, 34, 4, 2007, pp. 3–6.

illegal arrests, and mass killings attracted the most attention, exile was in fact the Junta's weapon of choice to vanquish the left. This was partly due to the sheer impracticality of detaining all leftists, so in legal cases exile was doled out as the punishment. The Chilean Junta tried to portray this form of exile as voluntary, or one of 'golden exile' – a bourgeois luxury only afforded to the leftists. Their exile was necessary, argued Junta officials, as they branded all exiles as communists. Many exiles grew increasingly politically conscious through their experiences as 'enemies' of Pinochet's Chile. In an effort to promote change within Chile – either piecemeal through the amelioration of rights abuses or wholesale with the return of democracy – they constructed solidarity networks in the abovementioned areas, as well as in places that received fewer exiles, such as Canada, Costa Rica, and the United States.

Transnational solidarity activism united a diverse group of ideological and political advocates. While the solidarity movement varied depending on the political dynamics of the locale, solidarity activists were generally anti-imperialists, especially in the immediate years after the coup. They held a staunch Marxist vision that viewed the United States and multinational corporations as engaged in unseemly practices throughout the world in the pursuit of capitalist hegemony in the global Cold War. They held rallies, meetings, and conferences, gave speeches, and made documentaries that sought to inspire people in a resilient resistance campaign against the Chilean Junta.⁵⁹

One of the more concerted efforts developed with the cooperation of Chilean exiles and European politicians when, in late 1973, they formed the International Commission. Holding its first meeting in late March 1974 in Helsinki, the Commission brought together sixty witnesses, academics, and activists from twenty-seven countries.⁶⁰ Nordic countries led the non-Chilean contingent of the International Commission – a Finnish politician, Jacob Söderman, was the first chairman, and a Swedish lawyer, Hans Göran Franck, was the first secretary general – which in part reflected many shared ideological affinities between Nordic leaders and President Allende.⁶¹ After the first meeting, the Commission would convene almost every year throughout the 1970s in an assortment of cities throughout the globe: Copenhagen (1974), Mexico City (1975), Helsinki (1976), and Algiers (1978).⁶² In depoliticized language, participants aggrandized the degree of anti-Chile protest for political effect. 'The unity which has sprung up around the Chilean cause', reflected the Finnish Minister of Education, Ulf Sundqvist, in soaring terms, 'is one of the broadest ever realized in the history of our age'. Sundqvist suggested that such unity was due to a recognition that 'fundamental human rights' were being abridged.

59 Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Biblioteca Digital, Santiago de Chile, 'One minute of darkness does not blind us', poster from German film *Eine Minute Dunkel macht uns nicht blind* (1975), produced by the West German documentary film directors Gerard Scheumann and Walter Heynowski.

60 FSA, ASI, 9, 1, Comisión Investigadora de los Crímenes de la Junta Militar en Chile, Primera Sesión, Helsinki, 1974; The complete list of countries that attended the first session is: Belgium, Finland, France, Denmark, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Vietnam, Panama, Ecuador, the United States, Brazil, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Chile, Argentina, Great Britain, Bolivia, Uruguay, Canada, Sweden, Austria, the German Democratic Republic, Japan, Cuba, Venezuela, the Federal Republic of Germany, India, Norway, Poland, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Algeria, and Australia.

61 Camacho, 'Diaspora'.

62 The Commission continued to meet throughout the early 1980s, but it never held another full session. Smaller audiences were held in Denmark (1979), Rome (1980), Athens (1982), and Helsinki (1983). See FSA, ASI, 20, 1.

The elected Nordic leadership bespoke a deep current of leftist activism in Europe that began to see its work in human rights terms with relative ease. Both men were social democrats, trained as lawyers, and both had a history of working with socialist and communist organizations.⁶³ Söderman was a politician in the Finnish parliament. Frank had an even more involved past with non-state advocacy, having worked with Amnesty International since its inception. Both men's efforts (and those of the International Commission more generally) attested to the great degree of fluidity among different activist groups in the transnational solidarity movement.

Like Amnesty International, members of the International Commission invoked an ostensibly depoliticized message: certain extraordinary events, they argued, went beyond the realm of the political and necessitated a collective moral response. The inaugural document read: 'The only sanction which the Commission can yield is the moral verdict of humanity'.⁶⁴ The emblem of the International Commission evoked these sentiments. It featured a pained face protruding from South America, which can be read as the face of a tortured Chilean, a more generalized tortured South America, or perhaps as the face of tortured humanity writ large.

Commission members crafted a narrative of massive violations of human rights. One of the primary mechanisms that they used to further this goal was 'testimonial truth'. Steve Stern has argued that testimonial truth provided 'personal experience and personal witnessing, told as living memory of the authentic, [that] could bring out a collective truth denied by the official story'.⁶⁵ The 'official story' in Pinochet's Chile whitewashed human rights abuses as at once necessary to rid the country of the communist 'threat' and as a hyperbolic propaganda conspiracy by the forces of international communism. The International Commission used their annual meetings to foreground, sometimes in sensationalist terms, the testimony of Chileans who had been tortured, imprisoned, raped, or subjected to other forms of state repression.

Alicia Flores Flores' testimony is one such example. Standing before the first session of the International Commission in early 1974, she described how after being tortured she never felt 'normal' again. As an exile who had fled Chile shortly after the military coup, Flores explained in agonizing detail the 'horrible pains' in her ovaries and kidneys that prevented her from walking. Even more, she confessed that she and her husband 'haven't been able to have sex' because of the pain that afflicted her. At the end of her testimony, she expressed her hope that the International Commission would work with the United Nations to set up a permanent investigative body to reveal similar tales of abuses that might 'pressure the Junta' to stop committing such acts.⁶⁶ Flores' words were prescient: along with the stories of other victims from Chile, her testimony would become part of a groundswell of documented evidence that the International Commission would use to paint a broad canvas of state violence in Chile.⁶⁷ In turn, this evidence was forwarded to the UN's Commission on

63 Jacob Söderman, correspondence with author, 31 January 2010.

64 FSA, ASI, 9, 4, Statutes of the International Commission of Enquiry into the Crimes of the Military Junta in Chile, undated.

65 Stern, *Battling*, pp. 90–7.

66 FSA, ASI, 9, 1, testimony of Alicia Flores Flores, undated.

67 FSA, ASI, 9, 1, untitled and undated memo.

Human Rights, which in 1975 launched an unprecedented ad hoc commission that probed the abuse of ‘fundamental human rights’ in Chile – delivering a decisive diplomatic blow to the Chilean Junta.⁶⁸

The Chilean coup marked a profound shift in the reliance on testimony that would serve as an example for human rights activism in the future. Testimony established a culture of suffering among Chilean exiles that relayed the horrors of Pinochet’s Chile to the world community. Going forward, human rights activists would use the power of testimony as a trump card that arguably could not be overturned, in effect constructing a powerful counter-official story to the one told by the Chilean Junta. While by no means unimportant to Amnesty International, testimony constituted the sole source of information for the transnational solidarity movement. Since many of the members of the International Commission and other solidarity groups had strong affiliations to political parties or were exiles who had themselves fled from Chile, they were, fairly or not, tainted with the label of partisanship – and even defined as enemies of the state by the Junta. But on a more practical level, the fact that they wore politics on their sleeves so much more blatantly than Amnesty International prevented them from ever conducting so-called impartial investigative missions.

In the absence of monitoring trips, testimonials played a critical role at every session of the International Commission. As Söderman recalled some thirty-five years later, the approach was ‘pragmatic’, focusing on ‘the grave violations that occurred in Chile under the military regime’.⁶⁹ At its first session, Commission members invited thirteen exiles to give testimony. The Spanish journalist Alberto Míguez described how ‘rare are the nights without executions’.⁷⁰ Marta Olivares Gómez told of the ‘telephone’ torture technique whereby torturers blasted loud music in her husband’s ears until he was left deaf.⁷¹

Commission members relied on the emotional power of these testimonies to deploy propaganda bombs against Pinochet’s Chile, which they collected in a series of testimonial booklets.⁷² One such booklet, entitled ‘To save the lives of people kidnapped by DINA’, placed the faces of detained Chileans on the cover. Set against a black background, the profiles of the detained were outlined in white, and the booklet personalized the victims by including their picture, name, and party affiliation. In a section that listed ten easy steps for how the reader could help, the Commission encouraged readers to ‘act, individually or collectively, to bring this appeal to the ears of all segments of world opinion’. To do so, readers were urged to write letters to Pinochet, the military Junta, the Supreme Court of Chile, the Chilean embassy ‘in any country’, the UN, and the IACHR. Eye-catching red font at the bottom of the call to action read: ‘Human lives are at stake. Time assumes another dimension for all languishing in the torture chambers of the Chilean secret police.’⁷³

68 These events are discussed in more detail in my PhD dissertation. See also FSA, ASI, 22.

69 Jacob Söderman, correspondence with author, 31 January 2010.

70 FSA, ASI, 9, 1, testimony of Alberto Míguez, undated.

71 FSA, ASI, 9, 1, testimony of Marta Olivares Gómez, undated.

72 FSA, ASI, 9, 6, ‘Meeting of the Secretariat, Helsinki Finland’, 4 August 1974.

73 FSA, ASI, 13, 2, ‘To save the lives of people kidnapped by DINA’, undated.

The booklet shows how the transnational solidarity movement experimented with new forms of social organizing that mimicked the human rights appeals of groups such as Amnesty. Solidarity activists sometimes moved away from overt political appeals in favour of depoliticized messages that transformed the political crisis in Chile into a type of morality play: if those who read the appeal cared enough, they would act. Much like Amnesty International's prisoners of conscience campaigns, where local Amnesty chapters would write letters petitioning for the release of prisoners, the International Commission established a direct link with its readers, compelling them to respond through emotive appeals framed in the discourse of human rights. The use of similar techniques shows how the International Commission learned from NGOs such as Amnesty, adopting many of their naming and shaming techniques to denounce Pinochet's Chile.

The third meeting of the International Commission was held in Mexico City in early 1975. Luis Echeverría, México's enterprising *tercermundialista* president, presided over the inaugural session. Very much like his Nordic counterparts, Echeverría had formed a special relationship with Allende, one rooted in their shared role as spokespeople for the global South.⁷⁴ In his opening speech, Echeverría spoke in grandiose and depoliticized terms about the 'world's conscience' and 'the longstanding aspirations of the human spirit'.⁷⁵ Such platitudes disguised more crass political motives: namely, Echeverría's savvy internationalist politicking to cover up for more insidious domestic repression in Mexico.⁷⁶

While conversant in depoliticized messages, solidarity activists also went after the Junta more aggressively. Unlike Amnesty, which seldom directly veered into politics, solidarity activists gave impassioned speeches. At the third meeting of the International Commission, more than seventy 'witnesses' denounced the 'fascism' of the Chilean Junta financed by 'foreign capital'.⁷⁷ Harald Edelstam condemned the Junta as 'illegal, tyrannical, and criminal with its weapons of terror, persecutions, torture, [and] lies'.⁷⁸ Amnesty International's Mexico Section sent Alicia Zama to participate in discussions. Zama reminded everyone gathered in Mexico City that, if the 'disdain for human rights in Chile is today a tragedy, it is one that repeats itself in other nations throughout Latin America'.⁷⁹ While some aimed to do little more than provide a snapshot of repression in Chile, others told moving stories about their own experiences at the hands of Chilean torturers.⁸⁰ The Chilean politician Antonio Leal, who had fled to Italy, thanked the 'international solidarity' that saved his life as well as the 'lives of thousands of patriotic Chileans'.⁸¹

74 See AP, PEL/1/CH/1, testimony of Jorge Witker.

75 VS, 36: Chile-América no. 5, 'La Junta Militar antes el juicio internacional: el fracaso de Ginebra', 1975.

76 Luis Suárez, *Echeverría rompe el silencio*, Mexico City: Grijalbo, 1979.

77 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 7, IPS report, 'Sesión de Trabajo de la Comisión Investigadora de los Crímenes de la Junta Militar en Chile', 19 February 1975; VS, 'La Junta Militar'.

78 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 7, speech by Harald Edelstam before the International Commission, 'Sesión de Trabajo', 19 February 1975.

79 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 7, statement of Alicia Zama, IPS report, 'Continuaron las sesiones del trabajo de la tercera reunión de la Comisión Internacional Investigadora de los Crímenes en Chile', 19 February 1975.

80 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 7, testimonies of Amy Conger and General Sergio Poblete, IPS report, 'Continuaron las sesiones', 19 February 1975.

81 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 8, statement of Antonio Leal, IPS report, 'Sesión de Trabajo de la Comisión Investigadora de los Crímenes de la Junta Militar en Chile', 20 February 1975.

One participant described the Mexico City session as the ‘most important’ of all held by the International Commission.⁸² In large part, this spoke to the centrality of the city as a pivotal hub in the emergence of a broader transnational solidarity network. Historians have documented Mexico’s long engagement with refugee issues, welcoming exile diasporas throughout the twentieth century.⁸³ During the 1970s, Mexico accepted political refugees from the Southern Cone, a practice that it continued with Central Americans in response to rampant violence in the 1980s. In holding their third meeting in Mexico City in early 1975 – the same year that the UN inaugurated its Conference on the Year of the Woman in Mexico City – members of the International Commission were sending pointed signals. The choice of Mexico City, for both the UN and the International Commission, hinted at the potential for the global South to play a more influential role in international politics in the latter half of the twentieth century. Even more important, the International Commission chose Mexico City as the first non-European city – indeed the Latin American city most uniquely identified as the century’s cosmopolitan capital of European and Latin American exiles – and thus sought to isolate the Chilean Junta as a pariah state even within its own hemisphere.⁸⁴

Transnational solidarity: exiles and Mexico City

A closer look at the politics of exile in Mexico City sheds light not only on the wider experience of Chilean exiles but also on how transnational human rights activism was enmeshed in local politics. Affirming the work of scholars such as Yankelevich, interviews with political exiles in Mexico City resound with positive affirmations of how Mexico welcomed them with open arms. ‘From the government to the opposition, from the university to the illiterate, in the countryside, in all parts, they welcomed us as brothers’, recalled Rogelio de la Fuente in dramatic terms.⁸⁵ Given the strength of solidarity networks, diverse participation of every major political party, and the presence of the Allende family in Mexico, the Chilean exile Gabriel Gaspar viewed Mexico City as ‘one of the capitals ... of Latin American exile’.⁸⁶ It was considered by some to be the ‘principle academic point’ of the global South and was rivalled only by Rome as the main destination for Chilean exiles.⁸⁷ In a similar fashion, a group of Chilean exiles issued a tribute that commended Mexico and

82 Jacob Söderman, correspondence with author, 31 January 2009.

83 Pablo Yankelevich, *México: país refugio*, Mexico City: Plaza y Verdes, 2002; Pablo Yankelevich, *Ráfagas de un exilio: Argentinos en México, 1974–1983*, Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2010; Eugenia Meyer and Eva Salgado, *Refugio de la memoria: la experiencia de los exilios latinoamericanos en México*, Mexico City: UNAM, 2002; Patrick Iber, ‘The imperialism of liberty: intellectuals and the politics of culture in Cold War Latin America’, PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 2010.

84 Jocelyn Olcott explains similar trends in her article on the 1975 UN Conference in Mexico City, ‘Cold War conflicts and cheap cabaret: sexual politics at the 1975 United Nations International Women’s Year Conference’, *Gender & History*, 22, 3, 2010, pp. 733–54.

85 AP, PEL/1/CH/15, interview with Rogelio de la Fuente. Similar statements abounded in the interviews collected in the AP.

86 AP, PEL/4/CH/4, interview with Gabriel Gaspar; see also AP, PEL/1/CH/34, interview with Hugo de la Fuente conducted by Renée Salas in Mexico City, 2 March 1998.

87 AP, PEL/1/B/4, interview with Severo Salles, conducted by Concepción Hernández in Mexico City, 24 September and 4 October 1999.

its government for having 'opened the doors for us to take shelter from the fury unleashed in the Andes'.⁸⁸ An Amnesty report likewise noted Mexico's accommodating treatment, highlighting the 'outstandingly generous' response by the Mexican government.⁸⁹

Exiles also fondly remembered the formation of the *Casa de Chile* (Chile House), a political and cultural centre established in Mexico City. Created on the first anniversary of the coup, and aided by sizeable funds from the Mexican government, the founding ceremony brought together some 500 writers, artists, politicians, diplomats, and intellectuals, many of whom were Chilean exiles. Although the president himself could not attend, his wife, María Esther Zuno de Echeverría, presided over the inauguration as a symbol of the government's support.⁹⁰ The *Casa de Chile* was the brainchild of Pedro Vuskovic, Allende's Economy Minister and potential successor. Vuskovic envisioned it as an integrative body to foment transnational solidarity, with the primary goal of ending the dictatorship by increasing international pressure on the Junta. He called it 'the best response to the fascist barbarianism that attempts to erase the cultural expressions of the Chilean people'.⁹¹ Beyond the political goal, the *Casa de Chile* worked to promote 'the historical memory of a period that was being erased systematically in Chile'.⁹² Jorge Witker, another Chilean exile, saw the *Casa de Chile* as the nucleus for 'meetings, ceremonies, music, cocktails, readings, book presentations'.⁹³

The first anniversary of the coup brought not only the opening of the *Casa de Chile* but also a wave of global protests against the Chilean Junta that resembled those that occurred in the coup's initial aftermath. 'A year ago Chile turned back the clocks', wrote the editor of the daily Caracan newspaper *El Nacional*. And protesters remembered.⁹⁴ They flung dynamite at the offices of IT&T in Barcelona and Marseille. One newspaper noted rallies in France, the US, Great Britain, Belgium, West Germany, Greece, Cuba, Ecuador, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. If not rallying against the Junta, sympathetic governments were showing signs of nostalgia. In 'hundreds or thousands' of offices, people observed a ten-minute moment of silence to commemorate Allende's death. Not to be outdone, the West German government bestowed upon him the title 'Star of the Order of Friendship of Peoples'.⁹⁵

Chilean exiles banded together in solidarity with other Mexican leftists. By and large they adopted an anti-imperialist platform, expressed at events such as the 'International Solidarity Rally with Chile'. Roughly a year after the coup, activists held a rally with one wordy poster

88 'Tributo de los Asilados Chilenos', *El Día*, 25 September 1974.

89 AI-USA, series II.5, box 3, AMR-22, IS memo, 'Subject: refugees in Chile', November 1973.

90 'La Casa de Chile difundirá la historia reciente de aqual país', *El Día*, 12 September 1974; 'La Sra. Echeverría inauguró la Casa de Chile en México', *El Excelsior*, 12 September 1974.

91 'La Sra. Echeverría'.

92 AP, PEL/1/CH/15, interview with Rogelio de la Fuente.

93 AP, PEL/1/CH/12, interview with Jorge Witker. The *Casa de Chile* was primarily seen in a political light. In early 1975, Mexican newspapers carried stories of a dynamite bomb that failed to detonate at the *Casa*. Many linked the potential attack to officials from the Chilean Junta: see 'Atribuyen a la Junta Militar el atentado contra la Casa de Chile', *El Día*, 24 January 1975; interview with Beatriz Torres, 29 September 2011.

94 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 6, 'Hace un año que en Chile retroceden los relojes', *El Nacional*.

95 'Repudio en Europa y América a la Junta Chilena', *El Excelsior*, 12 September 1974.

that exemplified this anti-imperialist message: 'Mexican Communists understand that the Military Junta imposed by the bayonets and dollars of Yankee imperialism will only be swept away by the Chilean peoples' resistance struggle and offensive with the help of ... international solidarity'.⁹⁶ More often than not, these initial acts of anti-imperialism were devoid of references to human rights. However, in time, anti-imperialists gradually incorporated rights discourse into their list of grievances. A year later, the same organization would call for the 'reestablishment of Human Rights' and the need to 'demand information about the *desaparecidos* [disappeared]'.⁹⁷

The gradual appropriation of human rights discourse can at least in part be attributed to the growing circulation of rights discourse by groups such as Amnesty International. In September 1974, for example, the student newspaper of Mexico's leading university, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, while clearly appealing more to an anti-imperialist political ideology, referenced Amnesty's early report from 1973. They described Amnesty as the 'well-known world organization' and credited it for its influential report, naming Newman, Plant, and Sumner's contributions.⁹⁸ While many activists grew more comfortable with human rights discourse, the turn did not necessarily alter their ideological worldview. Some, such as the Chilean exile Gladys Marín, who in the 1970s was Secretary General of the Youth Communists, would remain fervent Marxists who followed a close pro-Soviet line, viewing Amnesty International's apolitical stance and criticism of Soviet Union authoritarianism with a suspicious eye.⁹⁹ But Marín still participated in solidarity activities and spoke at the Third Session of the International Commission in Mexico City.

In November 1974, the Mexican government shocked the Chilean Junta when it declared that it was formally ending relations. It was the first non-socialist government to do so. Many Mexicans applauded their government's decision, especially the agrarian unions, which were particularly upset with the Junta's rapid reversal of Allende's favourable land distribution policies.¹⁰⁰ The League of Revolutionary Economists of the Mexican Republic issued a statement the day after in which it announced its support for Mexico's break with Chile. In their declaration, they attacked Chile for violating the UN's 'Declaration of the Rights of Man'. Here the authors confused 'rights of man' (*derechos del hombre*) with 'human rights' (*derechos humanos*), revealing the relative ignorance of many in the 1970s about the UDHR in the moment of the growing global appeal of human rights.¹⁰¹ The Mexican newspaper *La Prensa* editorialized that the decision was met with the

96 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 6, 'Gran mitin de masas arena México – con la resistencia chilena, por el socialismo!'

97 AGN, 1808 D, Exp. 9, 'Plan de Acción' of the Mitin Internacional de Solidaridad con Chile, undated.

98 AGN, 1808 C, Exp. 6, 'Llamada de Chile a las Juventudes del Mundo' – *Gaceta Estudiantil*, 5 September 1974.

99 Oscar del Rivero, 'Gobierno en el Exilio, no; Lucha Hasta Lograr la Victoria Democrática, sí', *Universal Gráfico*, 19 February 1975. For more on the history of communism in Latin America during this period, see Rolando Alvarez Vallejos, *Desde las sombras: una historia de la clandestinidad comunista (1973–1980)*, Santiago: LOM, 2003.

100 'México rompió con la Junta Fascista Chilena', *El Día*, 27 November 1974; 'México rompió relaciones con Chile', *Heraldo de México*, 27 November 1974; 'Rompió México relaciones con Chile', *La Prensa*, 27 November 1974; 'México rompió relaciones con el gobierno de Pinochet', *El Excelsior*, 27 November 1974.

101 '¡¡¡Solidaridad con el pueblo Chileno!!!' *El Excelsior*, 28 November 1974. This same confusion can be seen in documents from Brazilian leftists in the same period.

‘complete support of the people’. It should be interpreted, the editorial continued, as a ‘moral condemnation’ of the Chilean Junta. Yet, the paper was hesitant to offend the integrity of Chilean state sovereignty. ‘We are not interfering in any way in the international affairs of other nations’, assured the writers.¹⁰² But others would not say the same. In the coming years, the Chilean Junta would have to fend off attacks of its human rights record not only from NGOs such as Amnesty but also from newly revitalized intergovernmental monitors at the UN’s Commission on Human Rights and the IACHR.

Conclusion

José Zalaquett, the exiled Chilean whose story opened this article, represented the advent of a new protagonist in world politics in the 1970s: the transnational human rights activist. Armed with on-the-ground knowledge of human rights abuses, Zalaquett travelled throughout the Western world to share his stories of the violence unravelling in Chile. His exile was a punishment handed to him by the Chilean Junta for calling too much attention to human rights issues, but it backfired. In an unforeseen turn of events, Zalaquett capitalized on the proliferation of human rights networks, employing his own personal charm, expertise, and persuasion, to raise awareness about human rights. He would soon join the leadership ranks of what he called the ‘flagship’ of human rights organizations, Amnesty International, where his legal expertise and first-hand experiences in Chile saw to his rapid ascendance. He would eventually come to chair Amnesty’s International Executive Committee and later serve for two years as a deputy secretary general. Of course, Zalaquett was only one model of human rights activist, and this article has stressed how transnational human rights activism after the Chilean coup took many permutations. If not an archetype, Zalaquett most certainly did hold one of the most capacious visions of human rights as a way to transcend the political divisions of the global Cold War.

If we are also to look beyond the Cold War, however, hovering over the new transnational politics of human rights was a fundamental challenge to the stalwart doctrine of Westphalian sovereignty.¹⁰³ If human rights activists in no way eviscerated the concept of sovereignty, they did make a few chinks in its armour. This very reality goes a long way to explaining the schizophrenic reactions of the Chilean Junta to the seemingly never-ending proliferation of attacks by transnational human rights activists. Beyond the startling convergence on the language of human rights, as well as the tremendous explosion of activism in a variety of places throughout the world, one of the most significant conclusions from analysing the impact of the Chilean coup on human rights activism is this very fact: for one of the first times in history, a state was in the position of having to answer to the world community for the sovereign conduct of its leaders. If initially a product of the 1970s, transnational human rights activism would expand drastically throughout the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, ushering in a ‘justice cascade’ in the form of supranational human rights norms that manifested in international and domestic law, courts, and truth and reconciliation commissions.¹⁰⁴

102 ‘La ruptura con Chile: una victoria moral’, *La Prensa*, 29 November 1974.

103 Charles Maier, ‘Consigning the twentieth century to history’, *American Historical Review*, 105, 3, 2000, pp. 807–83.

104 Kathryn Sikkink, *The justice cascade*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010; Beth Simmons, *Mobilizing for human rights: international law in domestic politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University

Nevertheless, the advent of transnational human rights activism must be seen as a phenomenon that at once opened and closed a series of possibilities on the activist horizon. In the innovative realm, human rights and solidarity activists developed a set of novel ways of speaking about state abuses with a specific human rights vocabulary, as well as pioneering new activist techniques that featured the tortured body and the power of testimony to galvanize ordinary citizens throughout the globe to act against rights abuses in distant lands. Yet such activism also foreclosed more grandiose visions of social change that seemed to crumble alongside the collapse of Salvador Allende's socialist experiment in democracy. 'When the romance ended'¹⁰⁵ for many on the left, the world of human rights activism provided a plausible and passionate means of continuing their efforts to make a difference – one individual victim at a time. But that new vision came at a cost: the turn to human rights was nothing if not a narrowed perspective of social change that sought a minimalist relief in the form of pleas not to be tortured – a far cry from the 1960s utopian aspirations to fundamentally remake the world.

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Press, 2009; Greg Grandin, 'The instruction of great catastrophe: truth commissions, national history, and state formation in Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala', *American Historical Review*, 110, 1, 2005.

105 Hite, *When the romance ended*.