

The UK and the coup in Chile, 1973

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September 11 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the first 9/11. This was the coup in Chile against the left-wing Popular Unity coalition government of President Salvador Allende, who had been democratically elected to power in 1970. Allende's administration was replaced by the military dictatorship headed by General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet's regime was responsible for the murder of at least 3000 Chileans who had backed Allende, while thousands more were imprisoned and tortured and tens of thousands driven into exile. It was not until the 1990s that democracy returned to Chile. In the intervening years many of the social and economic reforms introduced by Allende's administration, including the break-up of large landed estates, nationalisation of key industries and programmes designed to improve poverty and literacy and to make dramatic reductions in the high levels of disease, were reversed. The country was turned into a laboratory for the monetarist economic policies of Milton Friedman and the 'Chicago Boys', resulting in mass unemployment, the dismantling of public services and rising inequality.¹ 9/11/73 marked the start of two calamitous decades for the Chilean working class and rural poor and of an experiment in avowedly free market, anti-socialist political economy which in subsequent decades was to spread across much of the globe.

Informal empire in Chile

That much is familiar, along with the role played by the Nixon administration and the CIA in destabilising Allende's government and covertly backing opposition to it in Chilean business and military circles.² There are, however, two aspects of the Chilean affair which are less well known. First of all, it needs to be located in the context of Chile's long-term relationship to the global economy and the hegemonic powers within it.³ The second is that there was a British dimension to the overthrow of Allende.

¹ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), ch. 3.

² See William C. Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War Two* (London: Zed Books), 2014, ch. 34.

³ This relationship is discussed in P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 306-15.

As far as the first of these is concerned, the best way to approach it is through the analysis developed by two historians, Ronald Robinson and Jack Gallagher, in a famous article called 'The Imperialism of Free Trade'. This appeared in 1953 in the distinguished academic journal the *Economic History Review*.⁴ Robinson and Gallagher argue that, from the end of the Napoleonic wars until 1914, Britain was the world's largest creditor and its leading industrial and financial power. It created a global market through exporting goods, capital and people all over the world. In return, the British economy was opened up to imports of foodstuffs, raw materials and minerals from less developed countries - although at some cost to its own agricultural sector. That this was a continual, ongoing, process is shown by the growing number of overseas states that became integrated into a single international political and economic system. The core beliefs of this group were a commitment to free trade and liberal values, and it was centred on the City of London.

Many of these states were in central Asia and the Middle East, or in territories once part of the Spanish and Portuguese world empires. Robinson and Gallagher saw Britain's preferred technique for the integration of these societies into the growing world market as 'informal imperialism'. Thus Britain, as the metropolitan power, would work with a collaborating elite in the subaltern society whose interests were usually tied to the import-export economy. This elite was at the core of the informal colony's ruling class. It was located usually in primary production, extractive industries (oil and other minerals, or in farming based on extensive landed estates. They were allied to the mercantile and professional groups whose work in local banking, property relations and education guaranteed the reproduction of the system. Known in Marxist literature as a 'comprador class', it would tend to welcome the inward investment and labour which facilitated a lop-sided national development privileging its own extensive economic interests.⁵ Money, the greater part of it from London, therefore flowed into extractive and agricultural enterprises and also into the transport infrastructure (railways, public transport and ports especially). The British would not in such circumstances need to go to the trouble, in terms of blood and treasure, of using military force to control the 'colony' because the locals did it for them.⁶ When potential collaborating elites

⁴ See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, Vol. VI, No. 1 (1953), pp. 1-15.

⁵ See Steven Schmidt, 'Latin American Dependency Theory', *Global South Studies* (2018), <<https://shorturl.at/EKXY2>> or <<https://globalsouthstudies.as.virginia.edu/key-thinkers/latin-american-dependency-theory>>.

⁶ Joseph Conrad's remarkable novel, *Nostramo* (1904), provides a contemporary account of this process. The book is now available as a Penguin Classic.

refused to work with British mercantile interests – as, for example happened in Egypt in 1882, West Africa in the 1890s, and South Africa at the turn of the century – military power would be used to bring them into line.⁷ It was a question of 'trade with informal control if possible; trade with rule when necessary'.⁸ Britain's preference for informal control was a function not of morality but of context.

This 'informal imperialism' characterised Britain's relationship with many states in the years up to 1914, particularly in Latin America. At the forefront of this process were Argentina, with its exports of livestock (mainly cattle and sheep) meat (mutton and beef) and grain; Brazil, above all with coffee; and Chile, specialising in nitrates and then copper production. On the eve of World War I these three countries 'accounted for 85 per cent of Latin America's foreign trade and 69 per cent of all publicly issued British capital placed in the continent'.⁹ The produce from these countries travelled through the local countryside on British-financed railways, into British-built ports and across the Atlantic in British ships; the transactions all being insured by firms based in the City of London. Up to 1914 these states were dependent both on the British market and on British finance and credit. However, Britain's informal empire in Latin America faded during the twentieth century. This was largely a result of the two world wars, which, for a time, turned the UK into an international debtor forced to liquidate overseas assets, and of US economic expansion, backed, as Britain's had been after 1815, by military power. Indeed, during the twentieth century the USA replaced Britain as the hegemonic power in Latin America, incorporating the states there into its own informal empire. Once again, the relationship was rooted in the exchange of capital, credit and goods – now increasingly from US banks and corporations – for primary and agricultural produce and foodstuffs.

The power realities behind this were evident in a series of covert and sometimes open US interventions in the politics of Latin American states, designed to ensure that there was no change in their relationship to the US and the global market.¹⁰ This actuality was disguised, as it had been during the

⁷ See for example Scott Newton, 'Blair and Gladstone', *Lobster* 42 (2001/2), <<https://shorturl.at/euvB1>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/article/issue/42/historical-notes-blair-and-gladstone/>>.

⁸ Gallagher and Robinson (see note 4) p. 13.

⁹ Cain and Hopkins (see note 3) pp. 285-6.

¹⁰ A pretty comprehensive listing of these can be found in John Coatsworth, 'United States Interventions. What For?', *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, Volume IV, no. 2 (2005), <<https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/united-states-interventions/>>; and, for the post-1945 period, see Blum (see note 2).

years of British supremacy, by liberal political and economic ideology and the invocation of the benefits to be derived from free markets and free trade.

There were changes in the Chilean economy after 1900 but significant diversification of economic activity was limited. The trade in nitrates declined after the early twentieth century, largely thanks to the development of the Haber-Bosch process for the production of ammonia (1913). Given Chile's mineral wealth, investment in this sector became increasingly significant. Iron ore, potash, salt, and silver were among the most significant exports for the world market. The chief one, however, was copper. This was abundant in Chile and had been mined centuries before the arrival of the Spanish in the sixteenth century. Output from Chile's copper mines grew throughout the twentieth century, and by 1970 the country was the world's second largest producer, responsible for 11 per cent of the global total (the USA was the leading one, with 23 per cent¹¹). Copper was responsible for 70 per cent of Chile's export earnings.¹² This did not alter Chile's relationship to the global economy. It remained an informal colony, now of the USA rather than the UK, dependent on primary production and on investment from, and markets in, the leading capitalist states. Most of its telecommunications network was owned by the US multinational International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) through its 70 per cent holding in the Chile Telephone Company. (ITT also owned and controlled the newspaper, *El Mercurio*, a right-wing journal very hostile to Allende).¹³ The copper industry was largely in the hands of foreign capital, with 80 per cent of it owned by American corporations such as Anaconda, Kennecott and Cerro. These firms, along with the local complex of banking, legal, property and landowning interests (and the social groups in them) received a disproportionate share of the profits from the export of copper (and other

¹¹ Derived from Kenji Takeuchi, John E. Strongman and Shunichi Maeda, 'The World's Copper Industry. Its Changing Structure and Future Prospects', *World Bank Staff Commodity Working Paper* (Washington, 1986), Table 2.5 p. 17.

¹² Mark Curtis, "'Our Major Interest Is Copper": Britain Backed Pinochet's Bloody Coup In Chile', *Declassified UK*, 4 September 2023, <<https://shorturl.at/gilBF>> or <<https://www.declassifieduk.org/our-major-interest-is-copper-britain-backed-pinochets-bloody-coup-in-chile/>>.

¹³ M. Stanton Evans, 'The Ridiculous Crusade Against ITT', *Human Events*, 5 May, 1973. This article was a robust right-wing denunciation of American 'liberals' who were supporting Allende at the time, but, ironically, the material it used reinforced the case for change in Chile. The piece is one of a number kept in CIA files and released as a result of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, established in 1975 and chaired by Senator Frank Church. It can be found on page 6 of the scanned documents available at <<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP91-00901R000600100004-0.pdf>>.

minerals).¹⁴ Neither Chilean workers nor peasants derived many benefits from the country's unequal exchange with the developed world.

US hegemony notwithstanding, Britain retained significant commercial interests in a number of Latin American countries, Chile being one. The British-owned Bank of London and South America (BOLSA) had been an important part of the Chilean financial community for decades. During the 1950s and 1960s its role there expanded, as it 'became one of the main drivers of British investment' in Latin America. BOLSA assisted local firms with development investment and played a significant role in overseas commerce. It shifted from its historic function of servicing business mainly between Latin America states and Britain to one of financing international trade with third countries. This development owing much to the work of its chairman Sir George Bolton 'in creating the Eurodollar market in London'.¹⁵ Unilever expanded its activities in Chile during the 1950s, largely through the formation of joint ventures.¹⁶ The Anglo-Dutch multinational Shell, along with Standard Oil New Jersey (known as Exxon after 1973), controlled all of Chile's energy market.¹⁷ Britain remained a significant customer for Chilean copper, which by 1973 accounted for one-third of all its copper imports.

Allende's programme

The economic strategy of Allende's Popular Unity government was designed to transform Chile's economy and its relationship to the world's leading developed states. Allende made it clear that he was going to implement Popular Unity's 1967 manifesto commitment to replace 'the present economic structure, doing away with the power of foreign and national monopoly capital and of the latifundia (large estate) in order to initiate the construction of socialism'. To this end, Popular Unity undertook a public ownership programme designed to

¹⁴ Pablo Monje-Reyes, 'The Coup against the Third World: Chile, 1973', *Tricontinental*, 5 September 2023, <<https://thetricontinental.org/dossier-68-the-coup-against-the-third-world-chile-1973/>>.

¹⁵ See Rory M. Miller, 'Economic Nationalism and British Investments in Post-War Latin America, 1945-70', in Thomas C. Mills and Rory M. Miller, *Britain and the Growth of US Hegemony in Twentieth Century Latin America* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p. 164. Sir George Bolton, who was known for his expertise in external finance, came to BOLSA from the Bank of England, where he had been Executive Director since 1948.

¹⁶ See Miller (see note 15).

¹⁷ Marcelo Bucheli, 'Multinational Corporations, Business Groups, and Economic Nationalism: Standard Oil (New Jersey), Royal Dutch-Shell, and Energy Politics in Chile 1913-2005', *Enterprise and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2010), pp. 350-399. <<https://shorturl.at/grI02>> or <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305972018_Multinational_Corporations_Business_Groups_and_Economic_Nationalism_Standard_Oil_New_Jersey_Royal_Dutch-Shell_and_Energy_Politics_in_Chile_1913-2005>.

bring control of the economy's commanding heights to the people of Chile. They increased spending on social welfare and support for 'the poorest 60% of Chileans', and promoted the participation of workers in the management of industries. By 1973 a good deal of this had been delivered. 90 per cent of the banking system had been nationalised, the copper industry taken into public ownership, and 'almost all' latifundia expropriated.¹⁸ At the same time the government promoted a series of important social reforms, including an increase in the minimum wage, a drive against illiteracy, and higher spending on education, health and housing. By 1972-73 real improvements to the living standards of the Chilean poor were becoming apparent. The British Ambassador in Santiago, Raymond Secondé, cabled to London that Chile

has at least caught her social problems by the tail: many people in the poorer and most depressed sections of the community have, as a result of President Allende's administration, attained a new status and at least tasted, during its early days, a better standard of living, though it has been eroded by inflation . . . this is a major achievement and has set Chile apart from most other Latin American states.¹⁹

The electoral verdict was favourable: having come to power in November 1970 with 37 per cent of the popular vote, Congressional elections in March 1973 saw Popular Unity increase its share to 44 per cent.²⁰

At the same time as his Popular Unity government was driving through these domestic changes, Allende was one of the leading voices in the camp of developing nations calling for a 'New International Economic Order' (NIEO), using the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as his platform. Allende's Popular Unity government saw the transformation of Chile's economic relationship with the USA and other leading developed states as essential to the creation of a fairer society at home. The construction of this new domestic political economy, intended to be the basis of a Chilean road to socialism, required a congenial external environment. Its outline became clear during the early 1970s, when a programme for international economic reform

¹⁸ See Kevin John McEvoy, 'Before the rubble: Britain's secret propaganda offensive in Chile (1960-1973)', *Contemporary British History*, Volume 35 (2021), p. 603. Historians of modern Chile and the covert operations of the British state have good reason to acknowledge McEvoy's work in spreading enlightenment, both about the Allende government and about the UK's part in its destabilisation.

¹⁹ Secondé quoted in Curtis (see note 12).

²⁰ E. Bradford Burns, 'The True Verdict on Allende', *The Nation*, 3 April 2009 <<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/true-verdict-allende/>>.

emerged, backed by 'the Group of Seventy Seven' less developed countries, most of which were primary producers whose relationship to the global economy paralleled Chile's. This programme featured nationalisation of resources, foreign assets and subsidiaries of multinational firms; preferential trade agreements to guarantee markets to exports from developing countries in the industrial economies; technology transfer from developed to developing countries; international debt relief; the creation of buffer stocks for primary products to stabilise their prices on the world market; and reductions in arms spending, to facilitate a switch of resources into development projects in Third World countries.²¹ Allende's vigorous support for these measures meant that, briefly, 'Chile was at the centre of the project to break down the neocolonial world system and establish the NIEO'.²²

The British Link

In Washington, there was mounting concern that the Chilean experiment would set a precedent which would be followed throughout the developing world. It was an anxiety which played a very significant role in the undermining of the Allende government. Washington feared that if Allende were successful, a chain reaction would follow in which radical Left and Marxist parties would gain popular support in nation states throughout Latin America and the Third World. These would come to form governments no longer friendly to American strategic interests, nor to Western capital. Instead they would be committed to the expropriation of commercial assets, a transformation of the economic relationship with the USA and the UK and other developed states and to defections from the Western to the Neutralist or, at worst, to the Soviet camp in the Cold War.²³ Defence contractors in the USA and Western Europe would see falling sales, as spending priorities switched away from defence to investment in domestic, social and educational improvement. There would be a real danger that governments in developing countries would nationalise the assets of multinational corporations, or, at the very least, start taxing them heavily to finance these programmes. Allende's removal was intended not just to abort this process in Chile but to minimise the possibility that it would spread elsewhere.

The British government shared these very same fears and co-operated with the USA in the programme of destabilisation which culminated in the 1973 coup. Indeed, the evidence shows that these concerns were behind not just American but also British attempts to stop Allende as far back as the 1964

²¹ See Scott Newton, *The Global Economy, 1944-2000* (London: Arnold, 2004), pp. 113-115.

²² Monje-Reyes (see note 14)

²³ McEvoy (see note 18) p. 602.

elections in Chile. At that time, Allende was at the head of the *Frente de Accion Popular*, a broad Left coalition campaigning against the Christian Democrats, led by Eduardo Frei.²⁴ Deeply worried, the Foreign Office sanctioned a campaign against Allende by its Information Research Department (IRD), in essence a black propaganda unit with strong ties to the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). In the run-up to the election IRD passed material, designed to discredit Allende, to trusted journalists and used its contacts in the Chilean press to promote the publication of hostile articles. The result of the election, a comfortable victory for Frei, was taken by IRD both as a vindication of its tactics and a justification of continuing intervention in Chilean politics.²⁵

IRD and the CIA worked hard to prevent a Popular Unity victory in the 1970 Chilean general election. This time the result went the wrong way from the Anglo-American point of view, and covert action on the part of both the CIA and the British State continued against Allende after he won. Allende's triumph was badly received in London; there was a good deal of concern about the implications of the nationalisation programme for UK companies and copper imports. Allende's victory had been followed by a sharp increase in the price of copper, notably in 1970-71 (though it later subsided). The loss in foreign exchange was £500,000, leading Foreign Office officials to insist both that 'our major interest in Chile is copper' and, provoked by the volatile markets and fears concerning the public ownership of foreign assets, that 'We . . . have a major interest in Chile regaining stability, regardless of politics'.²⁶ These anxieties grew as Allende's popularity increased in Chile and then throughout Latin America and much of the developing world. They led the British to share information with the US on leftist activity and social movements in the country and support internal opposition to Popular Unity, spreading black propaganda against it through the work of the IRD.

One particular example, now quite well-known (not least because of articles in *Lobster* going back to the 1980s), was the work of the news agency, Forum World Features (FWF).²⁷ FWF was no ordinary news agency. It had been established by the Anglo-American intelligence asset Brian Crozier in 1958, with CIA funding and, at the very least, the knowledge and support of SIS and

²⁴ John McEvoy, 'Exclusive: Secret Cables Reveal Britain Interfered with Elections in Chile', *Declassified UK*, 22 September 2020, <<https://shorturl.at/lqtZ9>> or <<https://www.declassifieduk.org/exclusive-secret-cables-reveal-britain-interfered-with-elections-in-chile/>>.

²⁵ McEvoy (see note 18) p. 605.

²⁶ Curtis (see note 12).

²⁷ There have been numerous references to FWF in *Lobster* over the years, beginning with *Lobster* 11 (1986).

IRD. After the election of Allende, British Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home told IRD specialist A. S. Dyer (based at the British Embassy in Santiago) to cooperate with FWF there, indicating concern at the top of the British government about the turn events had taken in Chile. FWF was active in spreading negative stories about the Allende government, accusing it of political dogma, pro-Soviet leanings, incompetence, economic mismanagement, and abuse of power.²⁸ The campaign continued after the coup against Allende, reflecting a determination both to legitimise the Pinochet regime and to discredit the very considerable opposition to it which had developed in the UK and beyond. The vehicle for this project was the publication of FWF journalist Robert Moss's *Chile's Marxist Experiment*²⁹ in December 1973, 'a CIA-commissioned book which categorically rejected the US role in the coup, and laid the blame at the feet of Allende's economic policy'.³⁰ Crozier later wrote that most of the book was in fact completed in 1972, with an introduction added straight after Allende's removal.³¹

After the Coup

After the coup, Crozier himself helped the Pinochet dictatorship, drafting fifteen clauses for a new Chilean constitution – fourteen of which made it into the finished document. This can hardly have been accidental. Crozier, an experienced secret Cold Warrior, well connected to the American and the British secret States, was acting to safeguard both countries' interests in Chile. The new Constitution gave right-wing political parties a built-in electoral advantage and guaranteed the independence of the military. Indeed, it left the armed forces superior to the civil power, given that it prevented Chilean presidents from appointing, promoting or dismissing senior military officers. It also established a National Security Council, whose brief extended to examination and evaluation of any development it thought likely to challenge 'the bases of the institutional order or . . . national security'. The Council was also granted the right to appoint 9 of the 38 Senators in the upper house of the Chilean National Congress.³² The new Constitution has with good reason

²⁸ McEvoy (see note 18) p. 608.

²⁹ Robert Moss, *Chile's Marxist Experiment* (Newton Abbot, Devon: David and Charles, 1973).

³⁰ See McEvoy, (see note 18).

³¹ Brian Crozier, *Free Agent. The Unseen War 1941-1991* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 115.

³² See Jennifer M. Piscopo and Peter M. Siavelis, 'Chile's Constitutional Moment', *Current History* Vol. 120, issue 823 (February 2021) pp. 43–49, <<https://shorturl.at/biyG6>> or <<https://online.ucpress.edu/currenthistory/article/120/823/43/115914/Chile-s-Constitutional-Moment>>.

been described as 'a formalised "constitutional dictatorship"',³³ with its provisions for (eventual) local and national elections designed to deliver 'authoritarian democracy'.³⁴ It was designed to restore the politico-economic status quo before 1970, and ensure that there could never be another government like Allende's (hence the ongoing struggle within Chile to amend the constitution).³⁵

In fact, Chile did not return to the status quo as it was in 1970. As is well known, it became a pioneer of the neo-liberal revolution,³⁶ with teams of right-wing economists, all committed to the free market and anti-state teachings of economist Milton Friedman, descending on the country. There were dramatic cuts in government spending (except for the military), which was slashed by 27 per cent in 1975 alone. Programmes of social support and investment in health and education were substantially reduced, with much of this provision being turned over to the private sector. By 1980, public expenditure was running at just one half of the level it had reached under Allende. State support for industry was scaled back dramatically and trade barriers, designed to protect and nurture local enterprise, were scrapped. State owned banks and industries were privatised, often at knock-down prices, since the objective was to 'liberalise' the economy as fast as possible rather than to generate income for the government. Interestingly, the copper industry was an exception, and remained publicly owned.³⁷ The effect was three-fold. First of all, foreign multinationals nationalised under Allende returned to Chile. ITT, Dow Chemical and Firestone were three leading examples.³⁸ Secondly, there was a rise in unemployment as manufacturing enterprises collapsed while overseas capital, much of it in the form of bank loans, flowed into the Chilean financial system.³⁹ 177,000 industrial jobs were lost in manufacturing between 1973 and 1983.

³³ Brian Loveman, 'Government and regime succession in Chile', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 10, (1988), p. 265.

³⁴ Loveman (see note 34) p. 266.

³⁵ Alexander Villegas and Natalia A. Ramos Miranda, 'Chile's constitution will struggle to escape Pinochet's shadow', *Reuters*, 8 May 2023, <<https://shorturl.at/nqOQT>> or <<https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/chiles-constitution-will-struggle-escape-pinochets-shadow-2023-05-08/>>.

³⁶ See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 7-9.

³⁷ Klein (see note 1) p. 82.

³⁸ James Petras and Steve Vieux, 'The Chilean "Economic Miracle": An Empirical Critique', *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 17 (1990), pp. 57-72.

³⁹ Petras and Vieux (see note 38).

The sector contracted by a startling 25 per cent in 1975, its share of GDP falling by the mid-1980s to levels not seen since World War Two.⁴⁰ Falling real wages and the reductions in social spending all led to lower living standards for the poor. 45 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line by 1988. In contrast, the richest 10 per cent saw their incomes increase by 83 per cent in the same period, an improvement no doubt assisted by a programme of tax cuts.⁴¹ Finally, the ruthless use of state power against the left and trade unions in Chile crushed the country's working class and drove socialism underground. In so doing, it swung the balance of class power decisively in favour of the employers, landowners and property-owning classes who had run Chile for most of its history prior to the 1960s. There would be no comeback for the forces which had supported Allende until decades later. It is very doubtful whether any democratic government could have survived the implementation of this politico-economic strategy.⁴²

The British reaction to the repression and shock therapy following the coup was one of relief, tempered by a mild sense of unease. Ambassador Secondé accepted that 'circumstances . . . will push them [the Pinochet regime] into directions which British public opinion will deplore' and that it was 'very hard to foresee a return for many years to anything like democratic government'. He acknowledged, however, that the British business community would greet the coup with relief, adding his own view that 'For British interests . . . there is no doubt that Chile under the junta is a better prospect than Allende's chaotic road to socialism'.⁴³ It would lead to a stabilisation in the price of copper, a political and economic climate favourable to overseas enterprises and security for British banks and corporations from further experiments in public ownership. The government in London concurred and was keen to show its support for Pinochet. It approved a £50 million arms package, originally intended for Allende, which included the delivery of eight Hawker Hunter fighter jets and other equipment. London looked forward to further lucrative arms deals with the junta as well as an improvement in trade unrelated to the defence sector.⁴⁴ This was in part because it supported Pinochet's economic programme. In addition, however, his emphatic and violent rejection of socialism reassured it that Chile would remain on the

⁴⁰ Klein (see note 1) p. 82.

⁴¹ Klein (see note 1) p. 86.

⁴² Klein (see note 1) p. 86.

⁴³ Curtis (see note 12).

⁴⁴ Chile was a well established customer of British arms exports. The Chilean armed forces had used Hawker Hunter jets to attack the Presidential Palace on 11 September 1973.

West's side in the Cold War.⁴⁵

The British role in the overthrow of Allende has been missed by journalists and historians for many years, largely because of the more significant intervention of the USA in Chile during the 1970s. Acknowledgement of the critical part the USA played in the fall of Allende should not, however, lead to neglect of the British role and the reasoning behind it. In working with Washington against the Popular Unity government, Britain was showing its continuing commitment to informal imperialism and the techniques required to maintain it. By providing modest backing for those seeking to remove Allende, Britain was working with the social and economic forces which had traditionally been favourably disposed to free market capitalism, international trade and foreign economic interests. The success of this operation can currently be seen in the ongoing economic importance of Chile to the UK. Now the world's leading copper producing country,⁴⁶ it continues to be a main supplier of the British market, providing Britain with 43 per cent of all its copper imports in 2022. British and foreign capital, including multinationals such as Shell, Unilever, Rolls Royce, Astra Zeneca⁴⁷ and BAE Systems,⁴⁸ retain high visibility in the Chilean economy. Finally, Chile remains a strategically important British ally, capable of projecting British power and influence into the South Atlantic and the Antarctic, just as it did during the 1982 Falklands War.⁴⁹

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⁴⁵ McEvoy (see note 18) p. 611.

⁴⁶ 'Chile – Country Commercial Guide – Mining', <<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/chile-mining>>.

⁴⁷ Miller (see note 15) p. 179.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Franklin, 'Pinochet and son deny selling cocaine to Europe and US', *The Guardian*, 12 August 2006. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/jul/12/chile.drugstrade>>

⁴⁹ Merco Press, 8 July 2014, "'Without Chile's help we would have lost the Falklands", says former RAF intelligence', <<https://shorturl.at/imIK2>> or <<https://en.mercopress.com/2014/07/08/without-chile-s-help-we-would-have-lost-the-falklands-says-former-raf-intelligence>>.