

## ‘With a Little Help from My Friends’: The Dutch Solidarity Movement and the Chilean Struggle for Democracy

*Mariana Perry*  
Leiden University

### Abstract:

This article explores the political interaction that took place during the 1970s and 1980s between Chilean refugees and the local solidarity movement in the Netherlands. The analysis of the Dutch political context during the 1970s facilitates an understanding of the positive reception of Dutch society to Chilean refugees and the long-lasting impact that the Chilean case had on Dutch politics. The article also asserts that though Dutch solidarity was essential for maintaining international attention in denouncing the Pinochet regime, the international dimension for redemocratization began when the Chilean community in exile organized itself according to democratic principles. In this sense, the article places the foundation of the Institute for a New Chile as the main contribution of the Netherlands to the democratic transition in Chile, since in the space provided by the Institute, Chilean refugees could debate and spread the ideas of ‘Renovation’, in an atmosphere of political tolerance. This ultimately contributed to the unification of a democratic opposition in exile and the decision to defeat the Pinochet regime through democratic means. *Keywords:* Chile-Netherlands, exile, Institute for a New Chile, solidarity, Chileanization.

Resumen: ‘Con un poco de ayuda de mis amigos’: El movimiento holandés de solidaridad y la lucha chilena por la democracia

Este artículo explora la interacción política que tuvo lugar durante los años 1970 y 1980 entre los refugiados chilenos y el movimiento de solidaridad en los Países Bajos. El análisis del contexto político holandés durante la década de 1970 permite entender la buena acogida que la sociedad holandesa tuvo con los refugiados chilenos y el impacto duradero que el caso chileno causó en la política holandesa. Además el artículo afirma que, si bien la solidaridad holandesa fue esencial para mantener el compromiso internacional en denunciar al régimen de Pinochet, la dimensión internacional de la redemocratización comienza cuando la comunidad chilena en el exilio se organiza en torno a principios democráticos. En este sentido, el artículo sitúa la fundación del Instituto para una Nueva Chile como la mayor contribución de los Países Bajos a la transición democrática en Chile, ya que en el espacio provisto por el Instituto, los refugiados chilenos debatieron y difundieron las ideas de la Renovación, en un ambiente de tolerancia política. Esto finalmente contribuyó a la unificación de una oposición democrática en el exilio y en la decisión de derrotar al régimen de Pinochet a través de medios democráticos. *Palabras clave:* Chile-Países Bajos, exilio, Instituto para un Nuevo Chile, solidaridad, chilenización de la solidaridad.

The 1973 *coup d'état* in Chile generated worldwide condemnation. Both governments and civil society organizations around the world protested against the gross violation of human rights committed by the Pinochet regime. The dramatic political events in Chile caused many thousands of former supporters of the Allende government to flee, arriving as political refugees in many Latin American and European countries. The presence of Chilean refugees in many Western European nations had, over time, a political effect, which influenced both the newcomers and the citizens of the countries that received them. While many Chilean political leaders were influenced by the social and political achievements they saw in the nations where they were received, the political Left and social democratic forces in Western Europe also became closely connected to the Chilean cause.

This article focuses on the important political interaction that took place in the 1970s and 1980s between Chilean refugees and the local solidarity movement in the Netherlands. It starts with a brief analysis of the role played by the international dimension in re-democratization processes in Latin America and of the refugees' interaction with local political forces in the nations where they were received. I argue that this led to a kind of *Chileanization* of the local political agenda, where Chilean refugees managed to form an organized democratic opposition to the military junta and lead international campaigns against the Pinochet regime.

In order to understand how well the Chilean cause was received by Dutch left-wing political forces at the time, the so-called 'New Left approach' that emerged during those years must be looked into. Likewise, a determining factor in understanding the huge impact of the fall of the Allende government in Chile and subsequent reactions to the junta seems to be the pre-existing links between Dutch social democratic forces and the *Unidad Popular* government. Dutch solidarity was not only expressed through official channels when the social democratic government of Joop Den Uyl received Chilean political refugees, but also through the emergence of a vibrant solidarity movement in the Netherlands in the form of the 'Chili-Komitee'. For many years, the Chili-Komitee supported various political and social entities in Chile opposed to the military regime.

The Chilean intellectuals and political leaders who spent their exile in the Netherlands also instigated many political and cultural initiatives, such as the Institute for a New Chile and the Salvador Allende Cultural Centre in Rotterdam. The political activities that the Institute for a New Chile was involved in to unify forces opposed to Pinochet in both Chile and abroad (including the Christian Democrats) were particularly fundamental to the later recovery of democratic rule in the country.

## **The international dimension of redemocratization**

Compared to other similar processes in Latin America, the international dimension of redemocratization in particular played a very important role in Chile (Angell, 1996). Based on a study of the nature of the various contemporary processes of democratization, Whitehead (1996, pp. 4-16) sought to analyse the international dimension by grouping together international factors under three main headings. The first analyses the neutral transmission mechanisms that lead to countries copying the democratic political institutions of their neighbours (contagion). The second refers to an act of imposition or intervention from outside (control), and the third emerges from the complex interactions between international processes and domestic groups, which generates new democratic rules (consent). Whitehead assumes that there is a significant overlap between the three and that consent is of special interest when analysing the Chilean case. This mechanism assumes that 'a genuine and securely implanted democratic regime requires the positive support and involvement of a wide range of social and political groups and support that must be sustained over a considerable period and in the face of diverse uncertainties' (Whitehead, 1996, p. 15). In the case of Chile during the early 1980s, important domestic groups managed to organize protests and put pressure on the Pinochet regime.

However, little has been written about the vital importance of the international dimension in the process of the transition to democracy. International demands and pressure to protect human rights, coming from different countries and international bodies, meant that the Chilean military regime became extremely isolated in political terms. A major highlight of this international effort was the role played by the main leaders of Chilean left-wing political parties exiled by the military regime. According to Altman, Toro and Pineiro (2008, p. 15-16), the influence of exile was expressed in three ways. Firstly, the mere presence of political refugees managed to maintain and focus the world's attention on the military regime in Chile, through the establishment of extensive international contacts both with governments and non-governmental organizations, the creation of think tanks and the creation of measures to exert pressure by international agencies. Secondly, the impact of exile on Chilean socialist leaders – who initiated a process of ideological renewal influenced by the ideas of Euro communism and social democracy in 1980s Europe – allowed for convergence with other political actors. Thirdly, coordination among the exiles themselves and internal resistance, often financed by international aid agencies, allowed for opposition to the regime to flourish.

At the same time, the European context in general – and solidarity movements in particular – supported the ways in which the exiles influenced the Chilean process. They provided security, financial support and an international platform for them to focus on Chilean political activities, as well as offering an important political and ideological stimulus that shaped the Chileans' political activism in exile (Portales, 1991). International demands and pressure to pro-

tect human rights, coming from different countries and international bodies, ensured that the military regime was obliged to worry about its legitimacy (Altman, Toro & Pineiro, 2008). In doing so, the international system saw their own political agendas affected by the Chilean case, since new paradigms regarding the understanding of international law and domestic matters were established (Kelly, 2013). Consequently, it can be said that the international dimension was a two-way street, influencing Chile's redemocratization as well as the general political landscape in a Cold War context, particularly concerning Western European left-wing political agendas. Therefore, this article aims to tackle the international dimension of Chile's redemocratization, considering a double level of analysis in the specific case of the Netherlands' solidarity towards Chile.

Chilean political activity in the Netherlands during the 1970s and 1980s has had little light shed on it up to now.<sup>1</sup> Although both dynamic and prolific, the Dutch Solidarity Movement and its contribution to Chilean political activities in exile has gone rather unnoticed in scholarly literature. The importance of this case lies in the fact that the Dutch Government was actively involved in solidarity movements and directly supported initiatives to end the dictatorship in Chile. This commitment was not only limited to the left-led coalition that held office between 1973 and 1977, but was ongoing, even during governments with different political ideologies. The Chilean case was vital to the Netherlands's reshaping of their foreign policy, especially regarding their human rights policy, with the country becoming one of the most vocal on this matter. In the light of this article, the creation of the Institute for a New Chile in Rotterdam is presented as the Netherlands' greatest contribution to Chile's redemocratization. The Institute hosted and promoted one of the Chilean Left's most important political processes, known as the 'Renovation Process', that, as Roberts (1998) points out, was highly influenced by the European political and ideological context of the time. Likewise, the creation of the Institute in the Netherlands marked a turning-point in the *Chileanization* of the solidarity movement in two main ways. Firstly, discussion and dissemination of the Renovation Process within the Institute's walls led to an important convergence within the democratic opposition and secondly, the intellectual work done in the Institute prepared the opposition so they could represent a real and viable alternative to the military regime. These two pillars contributed enormously to the organization of a democratic alternative to the Pinochet regime among Chilean exiles, becoming, as a result this phenomenon, one of the main aspects of Chile's international dimension of re-democratization.

### **The rise of a Dutch New Left**

Like the rest of Western Europe, the Netherlands experienced significant political and cultural changes after the Second World War. Some of these changes help explain both the reasons for their positive reaction to the Chilean commu-

nity in exile and the huge impact of the Chilean case on the Netherlands' political scenario during late 1970s and early 1980s. The Netherlands' post-war years were characterized by a complete economic reorganization, framed in an atmosphere of a high level of political consensus. Nevertheless, after 1956, the political landscape of reconstruction, based on an agreement between five political parties, began to fall apart. In response, during the 1960s, an explosion of small parties started to appear on the political scenario. According to a study headed up by Inglehart (1977), the importance of material values such as general income and social security decreased, while the importance attributed to intangible values such as environmental protection, personal development and humanitarian involvement increased significantly. As a result, during the 1960s, the political elite had to strengthen their identity to attract voters, and foreign policy issues, such as concern for human rights and Third World poverty, were used to mark the difference between proposed policies (Malcontent, 2003). This in-depth focus on foreign affairs created a positive framework for Dutch involvement with the Chilean case to be developed after the 1973 coup.

It is in this context that a New Left tendency emerged within the Netherlands' political spectrum, including the emergence of political parties such as the Pacifist Socialist Party, the Provo movement, *Nieuw Links* (New Left) and the Political Party of Radicals (PPR). Of greater and more long-lasting importance was the Nieuw Links movement within the Labour Party (*De Partij van de Arbeid*; henceforth PvdA). Combining moderate ideology with traditional political activism and a positive presence in the media, the Nieuw Links group held key positions within the PvdA. By 1971, the group controlled half of the party's executive committee, and one of their leaders, André van der Louw, was elected party chairman. Along with other movements of its kind in Europe, Nieuw Links shared common elements such as international solidarity, a tendency towards pacifism, an emphasis on democracy and a refusal to take sides in the Cold War between Western capitalism and Eastern socialism (Lucardie, 1980). On the other hand, Nieuw Links differed from the New Left in other European countries, as it opted to stay within the establishment and within the PvdA, meaning the party took a more progressive turn.

In 1971, the PvdA, in conjunction with the D66 Party (Democrats 66) and the PPR, formed the so-called Progressive Alliance, led by Joop den Uyl. This coalition's programme was called *Keerpunt 1972* (1972 Turning Point) and its proposals included electoral and social reforms, profit sharing, comprehensive education, defence cuts, environmental issues and an increase in foreign aid. In the 1972 elections, the Progressive Alliance and the liberal VVD made considerable gains whilst the Christian Democrats – who had been in power since the 1960s – suffered considerable losses. It took several months for a consensus cabinet to be formed. As a result, a coalition cabinet led by the PvdA's leader, Joop Den Uyl was formed, including the Progressive Alliance, the KVP (Catholic People's Party) and the ARP (Anti-Revolutionary Party) (Hellema, 2009). This coalition cabinet meant that Den Uyl had to adapt the principles of the

Keerpunt 1972. However, in foreign policy terms, Den Uyl announced stricter embargos on South Africa due to apartheid and an increase of aid for the Third World (Hellema, 2009). Both measures proved to be very important for Chileans in exile.

### **Early ties: the Dutch government and the Chilean socialist experiment**

With the PvdA representing democratic socialism in the Netherlands, Allende's road to socialism resonated deeply among the political elite of this party, which sought to represent socialist values and, simultaneously, the pragmatism that filled the post-Second World War scenario in Europe. During the 1960s, the PvdA sought to move from being a class-based party to being one for the people. For this purpose, the party needed to expand its electorate and its proposals had to be moderated, so as to participate at the forefront of the Dutch coalition system. Therefore, the democratic triumph of Allende's Popular Unity also represented a triumph for the PvdA.

Jan Pronk, a fairly radical supporter of Nieuw Links and Minister for Development Cooperation in Den Uyl's cabinet, initiated his links with Chile in 1971, when, in the context of researching transnational companies, he visited many Latin American countries, including Chile, where he was 'fascinated by what was going on' (Pronk, 2013). On his return to the Netherlands, he wrote many articles about the Chilean experience, stating that:

It was indeed trying to establish a progressive social economic policy with democratic means ... and it was not as revolutionary in economic terms as many critics in particularly the U.S. were claiming. Allende presented an alternative to Cuba: you can become a democratic regime interested in people (Pronk, 2013).

In 1972, Pronk, already an MP, returned to Chile with a parliamentary delegation and journalists for the UNCTAD 3 World Conference that was being held in Santiago. The PvdA's party leader, Joop den Uyl, was also part of the Dutch delegation and was involved in all of UNCTAD's discussions and debates on Chile's experiment with democratic socialism. According to Jan Pronk, the presence of Den Uyl on this visit to Chile was fundamental to later events because, after this journey, Den Uyl came to 'believe' in Allende's road to socialism. That same year, Pronk, along with several others, founded the Chili-Komitee in the Netherlands to publicize Allende's socialist experiment against 'capitalist American geopolitical resistance opposed to the changes in Chile' (Pronk, 2013). After his appointment as a minister in Den Uyl's cabinet, Pronk 'promised the Chili-Komitee that they now had an ally in the cabinet and that he would continue to defend Chile's cause' (Beerends, 1998, quoted in Hindriks, 2012, p. 36). Following the military coup in September 1973, Joop Den Uyl and all the members of his cabinet reacted quickly and emphatically to reject the loss of democracy in Chile, taking political and economic

measures against the military regime. This very personal approach to Allende's Chile by the elite of Dutch politics in the 1970s set the tone for the Netherlands' involvement in the Chilean struggle for democracy. Den Uyl was able to focus on the Chilean case without generating controversy or upsetting the cabinet. In fact, the policies adopted against South Africa were used as the basis for dealing with Chile. As Saskia Stuiveling puts it, 'We were knowledgeable about dictatorship because of Spain and knowledgeable about campaigning because of South Africa and if you mix the two together then you have a melting pot of ideas about how to handle the Chilean case' (Stuiveling, 2013).

Max Van der Stoep, the Foreign Affairs Minister, turned his energies towards repeatedly denouncing the human rights violations perpetrated by the Chilean military junta in the United Nations' General Assembly. In particular, he actively supported the idea of a fact-finding mission because it represented definitive action as opposed to simple verbal condemnation (Grünfeld, 2002). After Pinochet's refusal to let the *ad hoc* commission enter Chile, the Dutch minister supported the drafting of strict resolutions condemning the Chilean regime. The main aim of the Netherlands' representatives was to take on a leading role in bringing Western and non-aligned countries together to support common and strict resolutions against the military junta.<sup>2</sup> The explicit and unmovable position adopted by the Netherlands gained them criticism from their partners in European political cooperation during the 1970s and the 1980s. Moreover, the Western Hemisphere Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not approve of such an outspoken position, particularly regarding the Netherlands' prominent role in the drafting of the Chilean resolution in the United Nations. However the minister maintained his position, supported by members of Parliament (Grünfeld, 2002).

At a bilateral level, the government quickly decided to end any kind of development cooperation with Chile, not wanting to fund a government that violated human rights. In the words of Jan Pronk, 'It is uncertain whether aid under the new circumstances would be in accordance with the objectives of the Netherlands development policy' (ARA).<sup>3</sup> Along these lines, Jan Pronk decided to direct financial aid to victims of human rights violations in Chile through NGOs. Benjamin Teplizky, head of *Chile Democrático* in Rome, stated that 'The country that gave the largest amount of money in solidarity with Chile was Holland' (Wright & Onate, 1998, p. 164).

In economic terms, the cabinet became actively involved in applying pressure to stop the Dutch private sector from investing in Chile. For instance, the government put an end to assisting export/imports credit in order to put economic blockades for Chile in place. This caused nationwide debate and pitted the cabinet against private conglomerates (Pronk, 2013).<sup>4</sup> Along the same lines, the Dutch government refused to negotiate a debt agreement with Chile in the Paris Club and blocked the sale of Fokker aircraft to the Chilean Air Force.<sup>5</sup> 'Never again were such financial decisions made on such explicit political

grounds. The Netherlands was open in its opposition to the Pinochet regime; it acted in solidarity with the victims at the time' (Grünfeld, 2002, p. 63).

In political terms, the Netherlands decided to maintain diplomatic relations with Chile in order to protect Dutch citizens in Chile and Chilean citizens who were at political risk. In 1974, the Dutch government – due to the demands of the Chili-Komitee movement, the PvdA and the Christian Democrats – began to offer asylum to political prisoners in Chile. On three occasions, the government granted political asylum to 150 people. According to Peter Malcontent, the total number of Chilean refugees in the Netherlands in 1989 was around 2,500 (Grünfeld, 2002).

Dutch foreign policy towards Chile during the military period occupies a unique place in the Netherlands' history, firstly because the Allende Project was considered a milestone in a progressive, worldwide trend which Den Uyl's cabinet was part of. Secondly, the Dutch political elite was not only personally involved with Allende's government but was also more ideologically in tune with Allende's political programme and Chile's political system than others such as those of South Africa or Vietnam. Thirdly, considering the coalition's equilibrium, Chile did not provoke unbalance as other cases did.<sup>6</sup> The aforementioned added to an 'increasingly humanitarian-inspired sense of international involvement in Dutch society' (Hellema, 2009, p. 293). As stated by André van der Louw, 'The lesson of Chile is that we have to create the right international conditions, for the long-term, which will give a fair chance to future experiments like the Chilean one. It is an enormous task, but it must be done' (Van der Louw, 1975, p. 13).

Although the governments that followed Den Uyl's cabinet were more conservative, they continued to be opposed to the Pinochet regime, with the Chilean case being a permanent concern of Dutch foreign policy on human rights. According to Grünfeld (2002), the Dutch public and Parliament became more aware of human rights policies in general because of Chile, resulting in the Parliament requesting that the Human Rights Memorandum of 1979 be drawn up, which today still guides Dutch foreign policy on human rights. In this document, the government made clear that human rights are a legitimate subject for international involvement and stated that Dutch intervention will concentrate on specific cases in which severe violations are taking place. 'Wherever possible, the government wishes to help counter specific human rights abuses abroad, particularly in cases of gross and persistent violations'(Conclusion No. 14, p. 133; quoted in Baeyer, Castermans-Holleman & Grünfeld, 2002, p. 16). This consistent support can be explained because, during this period, human rights emerged as the last feasible utopia that could be supported (Moyn, 2010).

Hence, in a dynamic political period where domestic unrest emerged in a Cold War scenario, the attention given to the defence of human rights in the Chilean military regime was amply supported in the Netherlands. Considering this convergence of factors, it is safe to say that the Chilean case permanently

affected Dutch foreign policy on human rights. However, the attention paid to the Chilean case started to diminish in the 1980s. With many western European countries and the United States becoming more conservative and the incorporation of neoliberal policies in many of these countries, the focus and scope of developmental aid programmes changed (Westad, 2005). Between 1977 and 1989, there were various centre-right cabinets in power in the Netherlands, putting specific aspects of Den Uyl's government 'to one side' (Hellema, 2009, p. 275). However, the programmes started by Jan Pronk were continued by his successor Jan de Koning, a Christian Democrat (Hellema, 2015), undergoing only some changes (as regards support for Vietnam and Cuba). In the same way, the Chilean case continued to be considered as one related to human rights, specifically because, during the 1980s, Pinochet was still in power. Therefore, support for the Chileans' struggle for democracy continued during the 1980s through initiatives such as the Institute for a New Chile in Rotterdam.

### **Dutch civil society and the Chilean case**

During the Popular Unity government in Chile in the early 1970s, Chile did not feature heavily in Europe's political news. Its importance only resonated among some sectors of society, namely the Left, who saw Chile as an important reference point for the matters they were discussing at the time. On one hand, the extreme Left in Europe regarded Allende's democratic triumph from a distance and with scepticism. The idea of a revolution being conducted within bourgeois democratic institutions was regarded as a contradiction in terms. On the other hand, the traditional Left saw Chile as a reference point for the parties who wanted to unite socialists and communists in a wider progressive front that could confront 'the rise of fascism that went hand in hand with that of multinational companies and global capital' (Christiaens, 2014, p. 209). In addition to this, the Chilean case took advantage of a widespread anti-imperialist sentiment among Dutch society, enhanced by former solidarity campaigns such as the ones involving Biafra, South Africa and Vietnam. In the same vein, the revealing by the Church Committee in 1975 of the US's involvement in Chile's military coup was particularly important, coinciding with increasing anti-US sentiment 'as a result of the massive opposition to the NATO decision to deploy new middle range cruise missiles in Western Europe, forty-eight of them in the Netherlands' (Hellema, 2010, p. 72). However, as Hendriks puts it, the specific importance of the Chilean case in comparison to others lies in the fact that 'The case about Chile will finally elucidate how anti-fascism succeeded in partially uniting the Movement on the principles and causes it had lost since Biafra and Vietnam' (Hindriks, 2012, p. 13). Therefore, given this favourable environment, solidarity with the Chilean case was hastily organized, mostly due to the fact that pre-existing organizational structures from other issues occupying their attention were used.

In the Netherlands in particular, the Chilean case grabbed the country's attention when André van der Louw, at that time Chairman of the PvdA, was appointed leader of a Socialist International Party delegation that visited Chile immediately after the coup. In a telegram sent by the delegation on 6 October to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, the delegation summarized their visit by stating that:

The new regime in Chile is one which has banished all freedom and which is persecuting leaders and activists of the Popular Unity coalition simply on account of their political convictions. The press and broadcasting media exhibit all the features that characterized the fascist and Nazi press in Europe. Court martials dispense summary justice to those whose sole offence has been the defence of constitutional legality.

The last point of the telegram was dedicated to a specific experience that the delegation had while laying flowers at Salvador Allende's grave. On that occasion, the delegation was 'encircled, threatened at gunpoint and questioned in detail for two hours by the armed forces'.<sup>7</sup> This episode was described in full detail by André van der Louw in many Dutch newspapers on his return.<sup>8</sup> Media coverage of the delegation's journey to Chile and of Van der Louw's first-hand description of their experience of the new regime's violence had a significant impact on Dutch society.

According to Jan Pronk, the government's full support for Chile's political exiles was well received by society at the time. 'Chile was never a bone of contention in Parliament. It was so clear: it was a democratic regime, and it was a fascist regime and it had killed people' (Pronk, 2013). As a report compiled by the Chilean Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs on June 1978 argues, the Netherlands has been characterized as a country in which anti-Chilean action is particularly virulent and dynamic, making it one of the main opponents of the current government.<sup>9</sup>

The aforementioned active support of the Dutch Government for Dutch solidarity movements for Chile did not only remain within the framework of public policies. On many occasions, Prime Minister Den Uyl and his ministers, as well as members of Parliament, participated in public demonstrations against the military junta. Their presence in this type of protest was well covered by Dutch newspapers, contributing to the media's influence over solidarity towards Chile.

This media impact did not only contribute to a show of solidarity towards Chile. As stated above, the Dutch Chili-Komitee was already actively supporting President Allende's government, so, only four days after the military coup, 20,000 people gathered in Amsterdam in protest (Grünfeld, 2002). The demonstration was organized by the Chili-Komitee, which also had local branches in 51 towns and Chile groups in churches and trade unions, incorporating a great variety of political tendencies (De Kievit, 2013). The aim of this organization was to win 'support in Dutch society for the Chilean people in their struggle

for the return of democracy and the restoration of human rights in that country'.<sup>10</sup> As a result of this aim, the Chili-Komitee stated that:

In the first half of 1977, Chile was repeatedly in the news in the Netherlands. Through hunger-strikes, demonstrations in front of the Chilean Embassy in The Hague, petitions to the Dutch government and boycotts by consumers and the labour movement, the people of the Netherlands gave vent to their disapproval of the serious violations of human rights in Chile.<sup>11</sup>

Every 11 September, the Dutch Chili-Komitee organized public demonstrations, both locally and nationally, to maintain media attention on the Chilean case. According to Jan de Kievid, a leading member of the Chili-Komitee, the posters that invited Dutch society to participate in these demonstrations are an important source for studying the kinds of message the various groups of the Komitee wanted to transmit to Dutch society about Chile. An interesting characteristic to bear in mind is that, especially during the 1970s, whenever the posters included text, they often called the Chilean dictatorship '... fascist, sometimes reinforced with images of swastikas or the watchtowers of concentration camps, which associated Chile with the Dutch experience of the National-Socialist occupation in WWII' (2013, p. 110). The association with the Nazis is repetitive among Europeans who wanted to get the Pinochet regime closer to a European audience. By doing so, they built the bridges necessary to help understand the Chilean case.

The interpretation of the coup by the Dutch, especially those from the Left, varied according to their own political leanings. In fact, as Hindriks states, 'The coup d'état in Chile quickly turned into a domestic political confrontation between Dutch organizations that supported different Chilean parties' (2012, p. 39). However, these divisions were affecting the different organizations and the solidarity campaigns. Therefore a temporary alignment between moderate groups and more radical ones took place, being facilitated by government subsidies for non-governmental organizations. One revolutionary group stated '... only a broad temporary alliance will be able to defeat fascism in Chile and only once democracy has been restored can we start dreaming about taking further steps towards a socialist society in Chile and in the Netherlands' Quoted in (Hindriks, 2012, p. 41).

Embedded in this broader alliance of trade unions, political parties, and action groups, several key campaigns were designed to weaken and isolate Chile's economy. One such campaign was carried out in 1976, when the Chili-Komitee protested against plans for a huge investment in Chile by a Dutch private company (the Stevin Group). In July 1975, the Stevin Group obtained authorizations from the military regime to invest 62.5 million dollars in the extraction of gold, silver, platinum and other minerals from the Chilean coastline. This amount would have made the Stevin Group the biggest foreign investor in Chile. Encouraged by the Chili-Komitee's campaign however, the Groningen

town council threatened to boycott the Stevin Group by cancelling local contracts they had already signed with the company. This example was followed by other town councils such as that of Rotterdam (Teunissen, 2013), with the result being that the company cancelled its international commitment with Chile in 1976.

In parallel, the Chili-Komitee, in association with other Dutch organizations and political representatives, boycotted Chilean ships on many occasions in order to isolate the military junta. This type of campaign had already been used against apartheid South Africa and, overall, campaigning against the Chilean military junta was carried out by following the lead of the South Africa campaign or the Angola-Komitee. In fact, in 1977, the Chili-Komitee supported a statement in which ‘the violation of human rights in Chile would be related to those in Southern Africa and Eastern Europe’ (Hindriks, 2012, p. 43). Of particular importance was the boycott against a Chilean fruit ship on 26 March 1976. On that occasion, Jan Pronk praised and actively supported the boycott. In addition, the Chili-Komitee also organized consumer boycotts, aimed at raising awareness of what was happening in Chile by encouraging people to not buy Chilean products. ‘Copying the strategy of the Angola Comité five years earlier, the Chile-Comité convinced Albert Heijn to stop selling Chilean apples’ (Hindriks, 2012, p. 42).

### **The ‘Institute for a New Chile’ and the *Chileanization* of solidarity**

From the exiles’ point of view, the future of their stay abroad was unclear. At the beginning, most of them assumed that their stay in Europe would be short and that circumstances in Chile would allow them to return soon enough. This was accompanied by psychological and physical trauma from the tragic events of the coup. According to Gonsalves (1992), the first stages of exile, particularly for political refugees, are characterized by shock and the use of different defence mechanisms aimed at coping with the extreme changes they were going through. In the Chilean case, as well as these different phases, a profound and intense process of political debate emerged among the exile community. Chileans started blaming each other for the failure of the Popular Unity’s programme and for not being able to prevent the tragic outcome. As in the Dutch case, division and fragmentation started to hinder solidarity campaigns and Chilean involvement was actually seen as a liability (Teunissen, 2013; De Kievid, 2013; Gelauff, 2013).

However, having overcome this first, difficult phase, Chilean activists in exile started to organize themselves and create diverse initiatives aimed at denouncing and pressuring the Pinochet regime through the international community, supported by many international organizations. Christiaens, Rodriguez and Goddeeris related this process to what Sikkink and Keck (1998) called the ‘boomerang pattern’, arguing that Chilean exiles ‘reached out through cross-border networks to foreign audiences in order to launch their activism by

spreading information, creating common symbols, and establishing common forums' (2014, p. 13). The key point in this process is the emphasis on Chileans' agency. Referring to West Germany but completely applicable to the Netherlands and the rest of Western Europe, Slobodian refutes 'the oft-repeated claim that the West German New Left "discovered the Third World" by showing that the Third World discovered it as politicized foreign students mobilized West German students for their causes' (2012, p. 13). Relating the latter to Dutch solidarity organizations, it seems appropriate to apply what Christiaens (2014) called the *Chileanization* of the solidarity movement. This process is defined as a 'growing emphasis on Chilean politics and culture instilled by exiles in conceptions and practices of solidarity' (2014, p. 223). This concept allows us to go from a European-based perspective of the solidarity phenomenon to a Chilean-based one. This makes it possible to grasp the complexity of the two-way impact of the international dimension on Chile's transition to democracy. This approach implies that, while European solidarity was essential in amplifying and maintaining global attention on the Chilean case in the early stages, it was the organization of a unified Chilean political opposition based on democratic ideals that structured the international dimension of Chile's return to democracy. This is supported by Shain (2005), who argues that international recognition of the political exiles' activities determined the character of the struggle abroad, as well as the political thinking of those who returned to take over the government once the former regime was defeated.

One remarkable example of this 'boomerang pattern' organization and of the *Chileanization* of solidarity lies in the creation of the Institute for a New Chile in Rotterdam. Orlando Letelier – who had been a key figure within the Allende government and afterwards became an important representative of Chilean resistance abroad – soon realized the need to unify opposition to the Pinochet regime and put an end to fragmentation among the political parties in exile. Therefore, Letelier as well as other political leaders devised a plan for the creation of a Chilean exile think tank. His first challenge was to acquire funding, so he embarked on a European tour in August 1976 to visit friendly social democrat governments in order to gather support for the project. As part of his tour, he visited Jan Pronk in the Netherlands. During that meeting, Letelier told Pronk that sooner or later they [political exiles] would go back to Chile and that they needed to be prepared to do so (Pronk, 2013). Letelier also met with André van der Louw, who had assumed a key role in denouncing Pinochet's regime since his trip to Chile in 1973.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in 1974, he had been elected mayor of Rotterdam and, in this new position, had continued to actively support the Chilean case. Saskia Stuiveling, who was his assistant at that time, remembers that '... he brought with him his Chilean case and his Chilean visibility to Rotterdam' (Stuiveling, 2013).

In the above-mentioned meeting with Van der Louw, Letelier told him about his think tank project and the results of his meetings. Saskia Stuiveling, who was present at that meeting, said that Letelier shared a list of people he

thought should make up the think tank with Van der Louw. However, on the 21 September 1976, less than a month after that meeting, Letelier and his American personal assistant Ronni Moffatt were killed in Washington by Pinochet's secret police by a bomb placed in Letelier's car. After receiving this tragic news, Van der Louw and Stuiveling felt responsible for carrying out Letelier's plan. 'We were sitting on the heritage of Orlando Letelier' (Stuiveling, 2013), so they decided to implement Letelier's project.

After finding a building in Rotterdam, they invited Jorge Arrate to head up the Institute and to start recruiting staff. Carlos Parra from the Radical Party (Partido Radical) and a member of the Socialist International was also named co-director. Jorge Tapia from the Radical Party (Partido Radical), Luis Jerez from the Socialist Party (Partido Socialista), Roberto Celedón from the Christian Left (Izquierda Cristiana), Otto Boye from the Christian Democrats (Partido Demócrata Cristiano) and Cecilia Medina, a non-party professional, made up the rest of staff. The Institute also had a Dutch board, to which it was accountable in administrative matters but did not interfere with the Institute's programme itself. The idea to staff the Institute with members of different political parties, including the Christian Democrats, was, in itself, an important sign of the unification of the opposition in exile, given the political fragmentation that existed in the early stages. In the second article of the Institute's statutes, the purposes of this association are stated:

[O]n one hand, the encouragement of scientific study and the spreading of the Chilean reality and, on the other hand, stimulus of the possibilities of development of a new Chile, as well as the stimulus and maintenance of contacts among the main Chilean democratic ideologies.<sup>13</sup>

As stated by Jan Pronk in response to a parliamentary interpellation regarding the government's financial support for the Institute, posed by Van Rossum, the idea of the Institute for a New Chile was to 'serve as a meeting place to discuss the major democratic ideologies of Chile, which is not legal in the current Chile'.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Van Rossum expressed his concern to Pronk regarding an international conference called 'Chile' that took place in Rotterdam in 1977. His concern revolved around the idea of having funded an insufficiently representative conference, which only left-wing parties could attend. Pronk pointed out that the aim of the government was to finance an initiative that represented all Chilean Democratic political forces, including Chilean and Dutch Christian Democrats. Therefore a Dutch Christian Democrat representative had attended as an observer. However, the Chilean Christian Democrats declined the invitation at the last moment. The importance attributed by Van Rossum to the provision of Dutch funding for wider democratic political representation reflects the important and ongoing concern of the Dutch government and parliament for the promotion of understanding between Chilean socialists and the Christian Democrats, who cooperated to build a united and democratic opposition to the dictatorship from exile. This is probably the place to locate

the Netherlands' main influence on the articulation of Chilean democracy in exile. Continuous encouragement to work together against the dictatorship, reinforced by the Dutch political system which somehow showed Chileans the benefits of working together, represented a significant move forward in the struggle for democracy. As Silva puts it, 'what was perhaps the greatest impact on them have been the Western European societies as a whole, their people, their social and political systems, and their ability to solve problems by consensus' (Silva, 1992, p. 13). Enhancing this idea and relating it to the Institute, Saskia Stuiveling stated that 'the concept of Letelier fitted the European experience.... So by living in Europe they saw the practice of the concept ... the world around them fitted in with the reality of that concept and they could compare their own reality of Chile with the reality of Western Europe, where there are coalitions all over and create a mix between the two' (Stuiveling, 2013).

Jorge Arrate's presence in the Institute is an important factor for Chilean politics in exile. Since his stay in Rome, he had embarked on a profound process of political reflection that accompanied him throughout his exile. In Allende's government, he had been in charge of the nationalization of the copper mines in 1972 and an important member of the Socialist Party. However, after the military coup and his experience in Rome and afterwards in East Berlin, he instigated – along others – a process called *Renovación* (Renovation) within the party. In summary, this process started out with crucial self-criticism of the role played by the Socialist Party in political polarization during the Allende administration. At the core of the process was the repositioning of democracy as a *sine qua non* condition of the political system. Democracy should be a continuous process which frames politics and limits the political game. This means moderation and more pragmatism towards politics.<sup>15</sup> Along these lines, cooperation and coalition-building started to be seen as the basis for any kind of political understanding. This meant the need to compromise and to form an alliance with the political centre in order to guarantee not only a technical majority, but also a social majority that could support their political decisions (Roberts, 1998).

Jorge Arrate introduced these ideas into the very structure of the Institute and it soon became an important point of reference for the Renovation political idea both among Chileans in exile and those inside the country. In an interview in 1978, Arrate said about the Institute, 'Yes, you can call [the Institute] the European headquarters of intellectual opposition to Pinochet'.<sup>16</sup> In 1979 the Institute became even more important after the schism that occurred within the Socialist Party in exile. As a result, the Institute emerged as a point of reference for the branch of the Socialist Party which defended the Renovation process, whereas the other branch, led by Clodomiro Almeyda, remained in East Germany, supported by the Soviet Union (Angell & Carstairs, 1987; Silva, 1992; Walker, 1990). This outcome meant that the socialist strand made up of Arrate and others built bridges with European social democracy, installed a

democratic presence in Western Europe and acted as an operational and intellectual platform for the new ideas that emerged from the Left.

The Institute, supported financially by the Dutch Government, became an important element in Chile's redemocratization. While many initiatives emerged to provide opportunities for political reflection both in Europe and Latin America, the Institute's impact was relatively long-lasting. It helped initiate the debate on the Left's process of Renovation and the formulas for achieving convergence between the atomized Left in exile in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The Institute also played an essential role through its various publications such as *Plural Magazine*, the *International Bulletin* and the *ESIN Journal*. In parallel, the Institute also played a key role in encouraging international seminars, which sought to create suitable opportunities for debate in exile. An example of this is the 1982 meeting in Chantilly, France, where more than 200 representatives connected to Chile met in exile. Their influence would turn out to be crucial to the process that led to the restoration of democracy.

On another front, the Institute played a major role in the circulation of Renovation ideas through the organization of various 'Summer Schools' in both Europe and Latin America. The aim of these was to bring together opposition to the military regime and share the new ideas about democracy that circulated at the time. One of the most renowned summer schools was held in 1985 in the border city of Mendoza, Argentina. This allowed a large contingent of opposition representatives to come from Chile and exchange ideas with many Chileans in exile who were not allowed to return to the country.

The main idea behind all these activities was to emphasize Renovation ideas and create links among those opposed to the Pinochet regime, in order to build a genuine democratic alternative. However, perhaps the most important contribution of this Institute was to diffuse the idea of democracy among Chilean politicians as a framework that both holds together and limits the political system. Based on these ideas, different Chilean political parties gathered in a wider coalition and were given a strong voice to put international pressure on Pinochet. Asked about his personal evaluation of the Institute's activities, Jan Pronk commented that the idea of financing the Institute was to support non-violent resistance to the Pinochet regime by 'facilitating intellectual, political and cultural resistance ... to give them a platform for discussion, for culture, to come together, to develop ideas about the future ... the message was that there will be a new Chile and this new Chile had to be prepared by them themselves'. As a government, Pronk said, 'you can only help a little bit ... give them security, a platform, financial support ... but they did it, they fought for it, they talked about it, they made their own decisions ... the Chileans did it' (Pronk, 2013).

## Final remarks

The Netherlands' early involvement as a government and civil society in solidarity activities connected to Chile represented a unique moment for Dutch political history. The historical turn-to-the-Left that occurred during Den Uyl's cabinet in the Netherlands created the perfect conditions for a very positive reception to Chile's exiled community during late 1970s and early 1980s. However, it is even more important to stress that solidarity towards Chile did not only remain within the framework of a left-wing led coalition, but persisted over time, turning support for the Chilean democratic opposition into an ongoing concern. In fact, the Chilean case inaugurated a new era in Dutch foreign policy, especially regarding human rights, inspiring them to intervene in cases of severe human rights violations. Although the Netherlands helped the Chilean cause in multiple ways, its biggest contribution to Chile's re-democratization was the funding and support given to the Institute for a New Chile, presented as a turning-point in the *Chileanization* of solidarity. The political exiles involved in this Institute actively focused on defeating the Pinochet regime by any democratic means possible and preparing themselves for the process after the end of the dictatorship. The latter was accompanied by the organization of a unified and democratic opposition to the dictatorship that was widely promoted by the Dutch government, which encompassed the groundbreaking alliance between the Socialists and Christian Democrats. Within the Institute, this was no small thing, bearing in mind that a great number of Chilean exiles in the Netherlands and in other parts of the world adopted the armed struggle strategy as the only way to defeat the Pinochet regime.

During the initial post-coup stages, European solidarity campaigns were essential in positioning the Chilean case as a new example of injustice around the globe. Their organization and dedicated activity caused the military rule to worry about its international legitimacy. Besides, thanks to international support, many exiles had the chance to work actively to defeat the dictatorship back home. In particular, the support provided by the Dutch government, the PvdA and many political leaders in the Netherlands allowed many Chilean exiles to discuss and debate the new ideas in circulation in early 1980s directly related to Chile's re-democratization. However, the *Chileanization* process was also fundamental for Chileans themselves to think about their own future and the opportunity to go back and work for their country. To think about a 'new Chile' also marked the moment when these exiles realized that they needed to rethink their governmental strategies and to reflect on their ideas about politics in Chile. The Renovation process was precisely characterized by a rethinking of political paradigms, which included a renewed appreciation of democracy as an ongoing process and as a permanent framework, the abandonment of armed struggle strategies and a more pragmatic approach towards the relationship between socialism and capitalism. Even though this process was carried out in different contexts (even within Chile), it was in the Netherlands and specifical-

ly within the Institute for the New Chile's walls that these Renovation ideas were pondered, debated and spread across the globe, contributing to Chile's transition to democracy.

In summary, although the European context provided extraordinary and essential support to the Chilean community in exile in their struggle against the dictatorship, the international dimension of Chile's re-democratization began when the Chileans themselves realized the need to organize themselves according to democratic principles, creating a unified and democratic opposition that would not only defeat the dictatorship but also present a legitimate alternative for government.

\* \* \*

**Mariana Perry** <m.a.perry@hum.leidenuniv.nl> is a PhD Fellow at the Department of Latin American Studies, Leiden University. Her major research areas are Chilean contemporary history, transnational history, international solidarity, the Cold War.

Mariana Perry  
Room number 0.19a  
Department of Latin American Studies  
Leiden University  
Doelensteeg 16  
2311 VL Leiden  
The Netherlands

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## Notes

1. Although the importance of political activity in exile has not resulted in large amounts of academic output, several important works have filled this academic vacuum. For an overview see Wright & Oñate (1998) and Sznajder & Roniger (2009). For interesting case studies of Chile's political community in exile, see Camacho (2013) and Christiaens, Rodríguez García & Goddeeris (2014). For specific political initiatives similar to the Institute for a New Chile, see Rojas (2013) and Bulnes (2003).
2. In a yearly assessment of Dutch-Chilean relations, the Chilean Ambassador to the Netherlands stated that 'the Netherlands continues to maintain a hostile attitude to our country in international organizations on the issue of human rights. Last February [1982], at

- the Human Rights Commission in Geneva, the Netherlands, together with Greece and Denmark, once again sponsored the draft resolution against Chile' (from the archives ARREE – Archivo de Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores [Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives at Santiago de Chile]; FP – Fondo País [Archives by Country]; PB – Países Bajos [The Netherlands]).
3. Quoted in (Malcontent, 2003, p. 235).
  4. See, for example, the parliamentary interpellation done by Henk van Rossum, representative of the Reformed Political Party to Minister Pronk in September 1977. Van Rossum questioned Pronk's decision to finance Chilean political activity, which appeared to be only partially politically representative (Archives ARREE, FP, PB). Also, regarding this line of questioning, J. G Heitink wrote an article in *De Telegraaf*, on 29th September 1977, criticizing Minister Pronk's involvement with the Chilean case.
  5. Archives (ACK – Archief Chili Komitee, IISS – International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam).
  6. The Chilean case, as already mentioned, fitted in with Jan Pronk's approach to the developing world. During his time as minister, he focused on providing aid to countries that had introduced socio-economic reforms, including communist states such as Cuba, the reunited Vietnam and Mozambique. As Hellema states, 'Pronk's approach aroused much controversy in The Hague, but had, in retrospect, only very limited results. Although some of Pronk's decisions, such as aid to Cuba and Vietnam, were soon revoked by his successors, the level of Dutch aid in relation to the Dutch GDP remained high' (2010, p. 77). This was not the case with Dutch cooperation for Chilean refugees, which was ongoing, even in more conservative coalitions.
  7. Archives (SIA – Socialist International Archives, IISS – International Institute of Social History).
  8. Archives (SIA – Socialist International Archives, IISS – International Institute of Social History).
  9. Archives (ARREE – Archivo de Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores; FP – Fondo País; PB – Países Bajos).
  10. Gelauff, Peter ( ACK – Archief Chili Komitee, IISS – International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam).
  11. Archives (ACK – Archief Chili Komitee, SIA – Socialist International Archives).
  12. In his memoirs, Van der Louw dedicated a chapter to his involvement with the Chilean case called 'Chili na de coup'. See: Van der Louw (2001, p. 68-76).
  13. Archives (ARREE – Archivo de Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, FP – Fondo País, PB – Países Bajos).
  14. Archives (ARREE – Archivo de Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores; FP – Fondo País, PB – Países Bajos).
  15. For a full overview of the Renovation process, see Garretón (1987) and Walker (1990).
  16. Archives (ARREE – Archivo de Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores; FP – Fondo País, PB – Países Bajos).

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