

Chileans condemn Thatcher Foundation's defence of Pinochet

Chris Marsden
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"Those who know that violations of human rights occurred in Chile, those who know what happened and saw it, will take it for what it is--another piece of propagandistic rubbish from the Pinochetistas."

Nicole Drouilly is the organiser of the Chile Committee against Impunity, which is organising the anti-Pinochet protest in Britain. The quotation cited above was her assessment of a pamphlet recently issued by the Thatcher Foundation and authored by Robert Harris. This document is entitled *A Tale of Two Chileans: Pinochet and Allende*.

Drouilly was scathing of Harris's defence of Pinochet, stating, "Behind this pamphlet are the extreme right, neo-fascists, the military and those involved in crimes against humanity. They realise that their extreme ideas do not have much of a hearing in Europe, but they can still influence a small sector, particularly in the Conservative Party in England, and that is what they are doing."

This is, indeed, Harris's audience. His pamphlet was only distributed to a small sector of so-called "opinion makers" in politics and the media. Even here, what little public comment it received concentrated on its pathetic attempts to defend the fascist general and mass murderer.

Large parts of this tendentious pamphlet are not worthy of comment. "Extraordinarily, only the 'victims' of Pinochet ever receive a hearing," whines Harris. The main source from which Harris purports to establish "the truth about Pinochet" is the *White Book*, published in 1973 by the junta itself. Harris contends that this source is "reliable--and a great deal more so than the self-serving diatribes concocted by those who tried to make Chile communist, and failed."

According to Harris, virtually everyone was complicit in a Marxist threat to Chile, which was only averted by

the military. The culprits extended from the Socialist Party and the Communist Party right through to Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic Party, the Chilean Radical Party and the Church. All subscribed to the "fashion for soft-left politics in Chile" in the sixties, and enabled "socialism as an omnipresent ideology and hard-line Marxists in various groups and guises" to get "a grip on Chilean political life."

He declares that Pinochet's 1973 coup was an attempt to pre-empt what he calls a "self-coup" planned by Socialist Party President Salvador Allende, even though he admits, without a trace of irony, that this scenario "seems on the face of it bizarre".

He baldly asserts, "There is no evidence that the CIA was more than a passive, if sympathetic, spectator of the events of 11 September 1973."

Harris's sophistries are significant for two reasons. First, they show why Pinochet remains a favoured son of the British establishment and, second, they illustrate the venal character of this social and political elite.

Harris raises the contemporary importance of Chile to Britain, stating, "Above all, perhaps, it is not in Britain's interests to antagonise, perhaps permanently, our closest and oldest ally in South America." But he concentrates mainly on the strategic significance of Pinochet's coup in 1973, from the standpoint of British and world capitalism.

Pinochet's ascent to power and his brutal suppression of all opposition are justified by the need to prevent a social revolution. Harris writes, for example, "The change of regime did have a hugely beneficial impact that extended far beyond Chile. The West, after all, fought and won the Cold War by proxy.... Within Latin America the Cold War was won, above all, and most completely, through the action of General Pinochet."

In this cause, all things are permissible; all crimes can

be excused. "Order was necessary if the right to private property was to be upheld, after the Allende government's contempt for it," Harris declares. He speaks here of the "order" of the jackboot and the concentration camp. Such ravings say a great deal about the "democratic" pretensions of the Cold War.

"The primary and continuing obligation on the new government was the restoration of order," Harris continues. "And when governments clamp down some abuses occur. But the fact is that order is preferable to disorder and law to lawlessness. Pinochet's action restored law and order to Chile."

Harris goes on to pronounce on "Pinochet's legacy". His most grotesque claim is that Pinochet can be thanked for the restoration of "democracy" in Chile, for this "could not have been accomplished without first establishing order and prosperity". The suppression of "political activity entirely for a number of years" was necessary, says Harris "in order to make conditions safe for true democracy to re-emerge."

In this concluding section, one passage sticks out. Describing Pinochet's economic agenda, Harris writes, "Suffice it to say that it was Thatcherite before Thatcher, though with a tougher stance towards the trade unions and a more consistent commitment to monetarism and markets."

On January 9 the *World Socialist Web Site*, in an article entitled "What the Pinochet affair shows about Britain," made the following appraisal of the campaign in defense of Pinochet on the part of Thatcher and other leading figures in the British establishment:

"Thatcher, and those who benefited from her policies, have come to the general's defence because they saw his victory in Chile as a key strategic question. The years from 1968 through to the mid-1970s saw a series of explosive class struggles throughout the world. Beginning with the French general strike, a strike wave swept through the European countries of Germany, Italy and Britain itself. This militant upsurge produced the collapse of military/fascist dictatorships in Portugal and Greece, while the United States was the scene of workers' struggles, civil unrest and mass protest against the Vietnam War.

"Faced with a very real possibility of social revolution, not just in Latin America but also in Europe, Pinochet's British supporters argue that his actions were necessary to defend the country from the

'Marxist threat'."

We went on to note that "Thatcher herself came to prominence in the Tory Party as the staunchest critic of (former Conservative Prime Minister) Heath's failure to deal decisively with Britain's labour movement. As a fellow disciple of the monetarist economic guru, Milton Friedman, she hailed Pinochet's success in imposing economic counter-reforms on the basis of the brutal suppression of democratic rights, and declared her intention to establish a 'Chile model' in Britain."

We posed the question, "Can anyone doubt, based on Thatcher's own words, that, had the British ruling class at any time felt threatened to the same degree as their Chilean counterparts, they would have been prepared to act in a similar manner?" From Mister Harris, we now have an explicit answer.



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