

Sources for Latin American Research At the International Institute of Social History

Posters of the Dutch Solidarity Movement with Chile (1972-1990)

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Forty years ago on 11 September 1973, the democratically elected Chilean president Salvador Allende was overthrown in a violent military coup, provoking indignation throughout the world. Thus ended the Chilean road to socialism. Indignation was also great in the Netherlands, where solidarity activities to support Allende had already started before the coup. Four days later, 20,000 people took to the streets of Amsterdam to make their protest against the coup. At the centre of the solidarity movement was the national *Chili Komitee Nederland* (CKN), founded in 1972 to support Allende. One of the founders was Jan Pronk, then a Social Democratic member of parliament and at the time of the coup Minister of Development Cooperation. The movement was a broad one with local Chile committees in 51 municipalities and Chile groups in churches and trade unions. The movement was also politically broad with participation by the Social Democrats and after some time the Christian Democrats.

Of the approximately 250,000 people who left Chile as political refugees, more than two thousand arrived in the Netherlands. This relatively small group was highly visible with its political manifestations, mural paintings, music and *empanadas*. Their presence and activities influenced and strengthened the existing Dutch solidarity movement.

Posters are an interesting source for the study of the solidarity movement. The International Institute of Social History (IISH) preserves a collection of some 300 Netherlands-Chile posters, the majority from the seventies.¹ Many of these posters invite participation in the annual national

(Amsterdam) and local manifestations on 11 September, the date of the coup (figures 1, 3, 5). Some posters are very simple, hastily made to announce local actions or manifestations (figures 1, 2). Others are made by professional artists and cartoonists. After refugees arrived, many posters were influenced by Chilean artistic styles, such as the tradition of political mural paintings (figure 3).



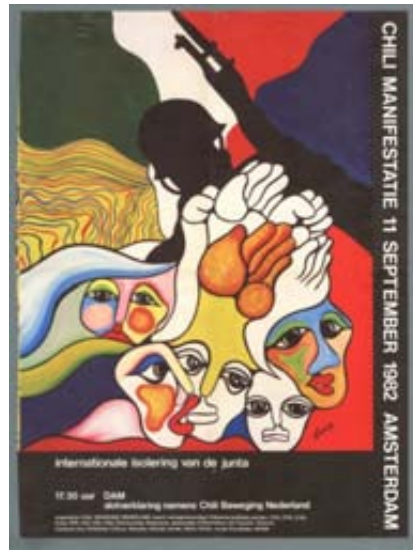
1. Chili Front Leiden, 1975

These posters provide excellent material to study the kinds of messages the various groups wanted to give to the Dutch people about Chile. In the first ten years after the coup they often used bars, barbed wire and military boots to express the harsh reality of the dictatorship. But we also see Allende, the Chilean flag, the dove of peace and people breaking their chains. When we see people marching together, this portrays historical pictures of workers and peasants during the Allende years, because public manifestations were prohibited after the coup. Posters of cultural activities with guitars, flags and flowers are often more friendly.

Many posters just mention Chile, without further explanation. That the man wearing glasses is Salvador Allende is seldom explained (figure 4), because it was assumed that the Dutch people had some basic knowledge about Chile. In the seventies and eighties, the dictatorship served as the example par excellence of a brutal government led by the military. When the posters use explanatory texts, they often call the dictatorship ‘fascist’, sometimes reinforced with images of swastikas or the watchtowers of concentration camps, which associated Chile with the Dutch experiences of the national-socialist occupation in WWII (figures 1, 4). In 1983 the Chileans in Chile began protesting against the dictatorship in public. From that time onwards, actual photos of these protesting people fighting the police or being hit with water cannons appeared on the Dutch posters (figure 5).



2. Chili Komitee Groningen, 1977



3. National manifestation, 11 September 1982, Amsterdam (Patricio Madera)

The posters cover many special topics. Some petition money for community kitchens, social projects for women and children or the clandestine media. Others protest against human rights violations or demand the truth about the disappeared and the liberation of political prisoners. They urge support of the resistance movement, sometimes with bayonet rifles as a symbol of armed struggle. Many posters called for a boycott of Chilean products (figures 2, 4) and the isolation of the military junta (figure 3).



4. Manifestation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, 1978

The information given by these posters should be placed in the context of the history of the solidarity movement. A lot of information can be found in the archive of the Chili Komitee Nederland (CKN), the Dutch national committee (1972-1995), at the ISSH. There are five meters of written materials about manifestations, campaigns, local committees and contact with the government and political parties. This information has been used for a small book² on the solidarity movement and some master's theses. The CKN also donated a large collection

of Chilean periodicals to the ISSH archives, mostly from the opposition to the dictatorship in the eighties.

For researchers interested in the early labour movement, the IISH has a large collection of Chilean anarchist and labour periodicals (1890-1920) collected by the Austrian anarchist and historian Max Nettlau. These periodicals are not available in any public archive or library in Chile.

The Chilean coup and its exiles not only strengthened the Dutch solidarity movement and the public interest in Latin America, but also strongly influenced Latin American studies in the Netherlands. Dutch and exiled Chilean scholars started studying the characteristics of new military dictatorships, human rights violations, social movements, civil society, (transitions to) democracy and citizenship, not only in Chile but also in other parts of Latin America. That these themes became so important was surely related to the Chilean experiences. Dissertations on Chile were published by Chileans living in the Netherlands, for example Alex Fernández Jilberto on the political opposition against the dictatorship and Patricio Silva on the agrarian policy of the dictatorship.³



5. National manifestation, 11 September 1986, Amsterdam (Rob van der Doe)

In September 2013, some posters from the IISH collection were included in the book *40 jaar, 40 verhalen. Chileense vluchtelingen en solidariteit*. (40 Years, 40 Stories. Chilean Refugees and Solidarity) and shown in a travelling exposition.⁴ The book contains the (life) stories, based on interviews, of Chilean refugees (many settled permanently in the Netherlands, and a few returned to Chile after the dictatorship ended) and Dutch members of

the solidarity movement. The men and women who were interviewed have greatly varied backgrounds, some of whom had to completely rearrange their lives after often traumatic experiences. Most are rank and file political and social activists, but some are national politicians like Jorge Arrate, Minister of Mining under Allende, and former Dutch Minister Jan Pronk.

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More about the cooperation between CEDLA and IISH can be found at: <http://socialhistory.org/en/region-desks/latin-america-and-caribbean-desk>.

An overview of the Latin American Collections of the International Institute of Social History can be found at: <http://socialhistory.org/en/collections/latin-america-collection-guide>.

Notes

1. search.socialhistory.org, catalogue: affiche chili.
2. Hans Beerends (1998) *Weg met Pinochet. Een kwart eeuw solidariteit met Chili* (Down with Pinochet. A quarter century of solidarity with Chile). Amsterdam: Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek.
3. Alex E. Fernández Jilberto (1985) *Dictadura militar y oposición política en Chile (1973-1981)*. CEDLA Latin America Studies no. 31; and, Patricio Silva (1987) *Estado, neoliberalismo y política agraria en Chile, 1973-1981*. CEDLA Latin America Studies no. 38.
4. Kievid, Jan de; Pablo Eppelin Ugarte, and Karin Snoep (eds) (2013) *40 jaar, 40 verhalen. Chileense vluchtelingen en solidariteit*. Amsterdam: OLAA; and *Exposition 40 jaar Chileense vluchtelingen en solidariteit*, information: www.chili40jaar.nl.