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BRITAIN WARMS UP RELATIONS WITH CHILE AS PINOCHET RIGHTS VIOLATIONS MOUNT

---Joint cooperation on a number of fronts

---Thatcher government deplures "tin-pot dictators" on east side of Andes, but courts them on west side

---10 Downing Street favors self-determination for Falklanders, but what about the Chilean people?

---Moral underpinnings of Falklands war dissolved by London's cynical relations with Santiago

Only a year after British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher justified the British stance in the Falklands war by railing against the "tin pot dictators" of the Argentine military junta, and invoking the cause of self-determination for the Falkland Islanders, her government is cynically placing strategic considerations over moral principles in developing a close military and political relationship with the Chilean dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet-- a regime, if anything, more contemptuous of human rights than the Argentine government.

High-level military and diplomatic delegations that have shuttled between London and Santiago in recent months, ongoing negotiations for the establishment of a British air base in southern Chile, the transfer of nuclear power technology, and reports of British training of Chilean troops, are cementing what amounts to an undeclared alliance to defend their territories--Chile's three Beagle Channel islands and Great Britain's Falklands--from Argentine attack. London and Santiago are also said to be harmonizing their positions for upcoming Antarctica negotiations, which will negatively affect Argentine territorial claims in the area.

According to a high-level Reagan administration official, the British are not keeping the U.S. informed of the warming trend between the two countries: "They're getting close, very close and they are not telling us a thing about it." Another official noted that there is increased activity on a number of fronts between the British and Chilean governments, and did not rule out the possibility of a strategic, if secret, military alliance between Chile and Britain designed to counter the Argentine military's rapid buildup of its air and naval forces since its embarrassing defeat at the hands of the

British in the Falkland conflict.

Should the present course of diplomatic relations between Britain and Chile continue, Britain's budding friendship with Gen. Pinochet is more likely to present the Thatcher government with a major embarrassment and diplomatic liability down the road than a useful working partner in the Southern Cone. As the Chilean economy staggers and anti-government strikes and protests spread, police in Chile are resorting more often to their old standards of widespread torture and arbitrary mass arrests. Many experts believe that the Pinochet government will not survive the next 6 months, potentially leaving the Thatcher government with a relationship that will be repudiated by a successor democratic administration in Santiago. Unless the present courtship loses its flame, the British prime minister, placing security concerns above ideals, is likely to find herself allied with a repressive dictator against democracy. It also threatens to estrange the democratic leadership of the English-speaking Caribbean from Britain.

With a close working relationship with Chile in hand, how will the Thatcher government fall back on democratic rhetoric, if the Falklands situation again heats up? The fact that COHA is taking a position of condemning Britain's embrace of the Pinochet regime must be set against its support of the Thatcher government's stand on the Falklands-Malvinas. In a May 14 issue of the New York Times noting the silence of many U.S. organizations "searching for a policy acceptable to both Latin American and North American opinion," the Times observed: "Almost alone in its clear and consistent criticism of Argentina has been the Council on Hemispheric Affairs..."

To deal with supply problems, the British require an air base in the southern Atlantic for ready access to the Falkland Islands. Currently, the only connecting base for the Falklands, where 4,000 British troops are stationed is Ascension Island, some 2,000 miles to the north. Chilean Foreign Minister Miguel Schweitzer disclosed on May 4 that the British were negotiating for bases in Chile, and reportedly have their sights on the nearest important Chilean settlement to the Falklands, Punta Arenas, where an airstrip has recently been lengthened to handle jet traffic.

Punta Arenas is also close to the three Beagle islands, whose nationality is still disputed. Controlled by Chile and claimed by Argentina, the islands have been the focus of a long-term tension between the two Southern Cone neighbors, bringing them as recently as 1978 to the verge of war. At stake is access to potentially significant marine petroleum deposits and an additional arc that would expand Antarctic territorial claims. The Chileans are reportedly seeking British logistical support in the region, arms and nuclear power technology. Until two months ago, Chilean leaders were rumored to be contemplating the purchase of the British aircraft carrier *Hermes*, one of the two flagships of last year's Falklands force. The price, they finally decided, was too high, and the *Hermes* is slated to go to the Australian navy.

Recent contacts between the two countries have been high-level. In late March, Chilean Foreign Minister Schweitzer--a former Santiago envoy to London--visited London and Washington, and later described his talks as "very positive." A month later, Cransley Onslow, the British Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, met with President Pinochet, Schweitzer and Air Force General Fernando Matthei in Santiago. Onslow emerged from the meetings saying that "relations between Chile and Great Britain were strengthened." A communique later released by both countries mentioned "closer ties with the objective of furthering bilateral ties in all fields."

Chilean Neutrality Has British Flavor

Onslow went too far, his hosts seemingly felt, when he praised the Chileans for their support of Britain before, during and after the Falklands conflict. The Chileans promptly issued a statement stressing their neutrality. It is widely recognized, however, that Chile's neutrality during last year's war--the only such case among Spanish-speaking countries--had a distinctly British tilt.

The Argentines have reason to suspect a warming of British-Chilean relations. In 1977, the British Crown mediated the Beagle islands dispute and ruled in Chile's favor. The decision deeply offended the Argentines, who refused to adhere to the mediator's recommendations. In the dual mobilizations of Argentine and Chilean forces that followed in 1978 over the dispute, Hawker Hunter bombers previously supplied by the British were sent south by the Chilean air force. The same bombers were deployed by the Chilean military to bomb the presidential palace in Santiago during the September 1973 coup that ousted the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende Gossens. Last fall, the British government sold four Canberra bombers to the Chilean air force. More arms deals are in the

works. They are based on long-term credit arrangements due to the strapped nature of the Chilean economy.

An Atmosphere of War

Tensions are mounting in the deep south between Argentina and Chile. Argentine Nobel Prize Laureate Adolfo Perez Esquivel declared on April 25 that "There is a clear atmosphere of war in southern Argentina." Much of Argentina's post-Falklands arms acquisitions are being deployed in the sensitive area. In April, Argentina conducted naval exercises off Rio Gallegos, just north of Tierra del Fuego and only 100 miles from Punta Arenas. In the maneuvers the Argentines displayed their aircraft carrier, the 25 de Mayo, equipped for the first time with French Super Etendard jet fighters.

Meanwhile, the Argentine media stress the threat posed by a Chilean-British alliance. On April 28, Argentine radio broadcast undocumented reports that British military officers and Nepalese Gurkhas were instructing Chilean troops in Punta Arenas. They added that the British were building a base on Darwin Island and that two British planes, a Phantom and a Sea Harrier, had crashed while responding to Argentine movement in the area.

The Shattered Peals of Democracy

In its appeal to patriotic British citizens and to world public opinion, the Thatcher government justified its praiseworthy Falklands stand on the right of self-determination for the residents of that territory. But the Pinochet government has denied the right of self-determination for the citizens of Chile by postponing elections for years to the distant future, if at all, and democracy hardly thrives in Chile. It was the Thatcher government that normalized relations with the Chilean dictatorship shortly after coming to power, after they had been virtually suspended by the previous government due to the detention and torture of a British citizen by the Chilean secret police. During the period of her rule, arms sales to Santiago significantly have increased. The normally close relationship between the British navy and air force has been intensified as Britain prepares itself to be the major supplier of weapons to the Pinochet dictatorship. The U.S. cut off all arms shipments to Chile in 1977, based on human rights constraints. Even the Reagan administration, which has indicated its favorable intentions to the Santiago regime, has not dared to certify that human rights have improved sufficiently in that country, to justify a resumption of military sales.

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