6. ‘Chile is not alone’: Actions for resource-sensible organisations

For a grouping formed on the run, the Sydney May Day Committee was ambitious: for the first May Day after the Chilean coup, they invited Madame Allende to Australia.

At best the committee was a loose amalgam of interested parties, most of whom were members or representatives of the SPA. While their invitation was not accepted, they were visited by Aída Insunza and Luis Muñoz. Insunza had been a professor of labour law at the University of Chile, and the wife of the former minister for justice. She was a woman of ‘small build but considerable presence’, reported the Tribune. Muñoz was a CUT member and a journalist.

Insunza and Muñoz were representatives of the Chilean Anti-Fascist Solidarity Committee, which operated out of Berlin. Their visit cost $4000 and that money was collected by a wide range of political and trade union organisations including, for example, $73.43 from a reception put on by nine unions at the Carlton Bowls Club in Melbourne. The visitors led the May Day procession in Brisbane as well as in Sydney. At an associated talk in Sydney, where Insunza spoke in English and Muñoz spoke through an interpreter, there were many questions about arming the people in Chile and the failings of the UP Government, as would be expected from an SPA-dominated audience. Eric Aarons concluded that despite the need for analysis, ‘the main thing for the audience there, I sensed, was solidarity and warmth with all fighting for Chile’s liberation’.

While this may have been the case on the surface, beneath the facade, sectarian disquiet burbled. But just how much did social movement infighting effect

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1 This visitor should not be confused with Jorge Muñoz, missing person in the later 1970s, or Mario Muñoz, over whom there was a considerable campaign and squabbling in 1976. ‘Trotskyists Profit from Munoz Campaign’, Socialist, 15 September 1976.
4 ‘Chilean Guests’ Appeal! “Keep up the Fight, Venceremos!”’, SPA, June 1974; Aarons, ‘Chile Resistance Fighters’ Visit’.
6 Ibid.
8 Aarons, ‘Chile Resistance Fighters’ Visit’.
trade union support for the movement as a whole? This chapter accompanies the discussion of Britain by focusing on indirect actions organised externally to trade unions but completely reliant on them for support. The activities include demonstrations, international conferences, tours of Chileans to Australia and cultural events. The CSCP’s reliance on trade unions for support in these activities was not parasitic. The relationship between the CSCP (and other committees around the country) and trade unions was symbiotic. Trade unions’ use of the campaign was a ‘resource-light’ method of expressing internationalist sentiment.

The tension between political factions had erupted by the first anniversary of the coup.9 Activists from the Communist League and the Spartacist League involved in the organisation of the Melbourne rally came to fisticuffs over the failure of the Communist League to photocopy a rally pamphlet. In Sydney a protest was to be organised by the CSCP along with the Chile Action Committee (Socialist Workers League, Communist League, Socialist Youth Alliance and Spartacists).10 The Socialist called people to the rally: ‘The bonfires of books in Hitler’s Germany 40 years ago have been re-lit in the suffering republic of Chile. She needs your help.’11 How much help the 11 September anniversary demonstration would offer the Chilean nation was unclear, especially since much energy in the lead-up to the event was used in internecine struggles. The separate committees did not have different aims: both wanted the junta to end and for repression to cease in Chile. Where they differed was in their interpretations of revolutionary strategy: the CSCP generally supported Allende’s actions, and the Chile Action Committee believed Allende had failed the Chilean people. This situation was complicated by a power struggle within the CSCP group, as SPA activists tried to gain control of the high-profile first anniversary march, before retreating for some time.

The CSCP would not let any Chile Action Committee members speak on its platform. As a consequence, the Spartacists alleged the CSCP was dominated by the SPA and that the CSCP only recognised unions, not minority political parties.12 In Direct Action (printed by the Socialist Youth Alliance), David Holmes wrote that the CSCP was in fact anti-unification and anti-broad front as it ignored a cross-partisan meeting that was being organised and just called the demonstration ‘on its own and demanded that everyone join the [CSCP] and work for it. This set the pattern for the behaviour of the [CSCP] and its Stalinist supporters from then on in.’13

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10 The Chile Action Committee sometimes called themselves the September 11 Chile Action Committee. ‘Solidarity with Chile on September 11th’, Socialist, September 1974, 1.
11 Ibid.
12 Against Political Exclusionism.
These sort of comments indicate that there were various SPA members active within the CSCP at the time, as the CPA was pro-broad front and eurocommunist and was implementing new left strategies of engaging with social movements.

By way of compromise, the Chile Action Committee and the CSCP came to an informal agreement that the CSCP would hold one rally, and following that, the Chile Action Committee would lead on to theirs.14

The rally was to start outside the Lan Chile offices at 5 Elizabeth Street at 4.30 pm on 11 September 1974.15 Senator Arthur Gietzelt, Jim Baird of the AMWU, Bob Bolger of the WWFA and Chilean refugees would address the gathered crowd outside Lan Chile. Nineteen trade unions had their names listed on the accompanying pamphlet. At 5.30 pm the demonstrators would march via the US Consulate to Martin Place, where the Chile Action Committee’s rally would establish what they called an ‘open platform’ (in an implied contrast to the CSCP’s platform).16 Only one trade unionist put their name to the Chile Action Committee platform: Bob Pringle of the NSW Builders’ Labourers Federation.17

The CSCP organised the Lan Chile platform under a pro-Allende pamphlet and the Chile Action Committee (CAC) advertised for that demonstration as well as another in Martin Place under the understanding that there would be joint publicity for the rallies. The Chile Action Committee distributed more than 12 000 leaflets and undertook an ‘energetic paste up drive’ around the city in the weeks before the demonstration.18 The CSCP did not feel the need to do similar work because their union connections would assure them of a good crowd to their section of the march and would undertake the printing on their behalf.19

Tension was building and then a report aligned with the Chile Action Committee noted that the SPA (mentioned specifically, not the CSCP) tried to sabotage the agreement and wreck the second rally by speaking over time.20

The Spartacists weighed into the fight. They published an eight-page denouncement of the ‘reformists’ and ‘Stalinists’ in the CSCP. It accused the CSCP of favouring the return of a UP government to power in Chile rather than returning to democracy.21 The Spartacists argued that the Chile Action Committee did not try to push a line like the CSCP did with their pro-Allende

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14 Ibid.
15 ‘Chile Inflation and Repression Hit all Sectors’, *Tribune* [Australia], 3 September 1974.
16 Ernest Mandel was to speak on that platform. David Homes, ‘CPA, SPA Sectarianism in Chile Defence’, *Direct Action*, 2 September 1974.
17 Though the CAC-organised platform did have a large amount of student support (as demonstrated in the *Tharkuna*). ‘Actions Protest Repression in Chile’.
18 Ibid.
20 ‘Actions Protest Repression in Chile’; *Against Political Exclusionism*.
21 *Against Political Exclusionism.*
pamphlets. Yet, the Spartacists burnt their bridges by then attacking the Chile Action Committee and its Socialist Workers League and Communist League constituents. They accused them of capitulating to the CSCP and called them ‘pseudo-Trotskyist’. Slashing and burning their way through the labour movement, they turned their attention to trade unions, accusing them of being weak and conceding to the dominant pro-Allende sentiment of the rally. The Spartacists would go to the Lan Chile rally, and support their own open platform, separate from the two already organised. Besides the Spartacists, who would attend such a platform was unclear. They suspected it would be shut down by the CSCP supporters anyway. The fact there were three rallies in the same place in support of the same cause brings to mind the old adage: the left divides, the right rules.

But really, the internecine battle that surrounded the first demonstration emphasises the competition that occurred for the political ownership of the Chile issue. Demonstrations such as those on the anniversaries were part of the regular strategies in the repertoire of trade union political tactics and were straightforward to support from the point of view of unions. At the time, one commentator said: ‘international protests have a definite impact on the behaviour of the Chilean Junta.’ But like many activities in the repertoire of solidarity actions undertaken, they were indirect—that is, non-industrial—and organised from outside trade unions yet reliant upon them for success. Political factionalism played a role through the whole solidarity movement, both in and out of unions, including Australian participation in international solidarity events.

Australians started travelling almost immediately after the coup and the first trip was to Helsinki for a conference under the title of ‘International Conference of Solidarity with the Chilean People’. Bernie Taft, Mavis Robertson and Laurie Aarons were in Moscow for talks with the Soviet Communist Party before the World Congress of Peace Forces. Taft and Robertson were contacted with the request to travel to Helsinki. Robertson remembered that ‘we just left the talks, which were not very useful anyway (with the Communist Party it was like talking to a brick wall) and we went by train’ to Helsinki. Samuel Goldbloom from Victoria and Senator George Georges (ALP Queensland) also attended the first Helsinki event. Goldbloom was an official of the Campaign for International Cooperation and Disarmament in Victoria and Georges was

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22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 ‘Actions Protest Repression in Chile’.
26 The Peace Forces event ran from 25 to 31 October. Mavis Robertson, ‘Moscow World Peace Congress’, Tribune [Australia], 13–19 November 1973. Taft had been involved in the anti-Vietnam War movement, and he returned to Melbourne to spread his new-found knowledge of Chile solidarity via meetings organised by the CPA. ‘Chile Analysed’, Tribune [Australia], 23–29 October 1973, 10.
27 Robertson Interview, 2009.
one of the vice-presidents of the World Peace Council. Georges actually chaired sections of the Solidarity Conference. All of the Australian activists were well known to Robertson, who remembered that ‘George and I go back a really long time, but he was also somebody with strong pro-Soviet tendencies, so he kind of sat in the middle between the non-aligned peace movement and the World Peace Council’.

These prominent peace activists joined representatives from 49 other countries for the meeting, which was held on 29–30 September 1973. It was organised by a Finnish committee set up for the task, headed by that country’s education minister. Unidad Popular politicians already in exile were given a platform and a sympathetic audience to which they proposed a broad-front organisation to organise action against the military junta. This was not passed, however, as it was ‘too binding’ for ‘Western socialists’. Isabel Allende, daughter of the deceased Chilean president, also spoke. She said: ‘We now know that the violence of reaction must be met with the violence of revolution.’ As it seemed that most who attended were from peace, anti-war and nonviolence movements, it was possible her rhetoric missed the mark.

Despite these tensions, congresses under the title of ‘International Conference of Solidarity with the Chilean People’ would go on to be held in Lisbon (1974), Athens (1975, 1982), Helsinki (1973, 1976, 1979), Paris (1976), Madrid (1978) and Rome (1980). It was also the start of a pattern of international conference participation by Australians.

The International Labour Organisation ILO provided another international forum for Australian representatives. Jim Baird, for example, was invited by Chilean unionist Luis Figueroa to appear before the ILO’s Commission of Inquiry on Chile Trade Unions in Geneva in October 1974. He was one of 19 witnesses called to present information on the violation of trade union rights in Chile. The ILO was assessing whether the Chilean Government was breaking ILO directives and whether they should be entitled to ongoing representation in the organisation. Baird’s trip was endorsed and paid for by the AMWU Commonwealth Committee, the ICFTU and the WFTU and was as a result of his
firsthand experience in Chile as a part of the delegation of 1974 (Chapter Seven). Baird was one of only six trade union witnesses at the event, and he spent a week waiting to be called to give evidence. The documents he supplied were cross-examined by the ICFTU, WFTU and CUT as well as junta representatives.

Baird’s high-profile ILO visit and the Madrid conference in 1978 were pinnacles of internationalist participation. Yet the series of conferences that received the most consistent patronage by Australians was the freshly created ‘International Commission of Enquiry into the Crimes of the Military Junta in Chile’ (referred to as the commission and not to be confused with the International Conference of Solidarity with the Chilean People). The commission held its first session in Helsinki from 21 to 24 March 1974, just six months after the coup, proclaiming that it was ‘one of the most important non-Government bodies dealing with continued violations of human rights in Chile’. The liaison committee sent letters to prominent citizens all over the world, with invitations to join the commission. Its body was intended to be populated ‘by international recognized political figures, jurists, men of science and culture, particularly from those countries not yet represented’.

The commission essentially heard witnesses and brought material about the repression in Chile together. They then took it upon themselves to spread the word about the wrongdoings of the junta, and the international interference in the affairs of Chile leading up to the coup. The public positions of the commission’s members were used to give subsequent activities authority. By inviting high-profile, internationally recognised members, the commission sought to surround itself with persons of unshakeable moral authority in the eyes of the public. They gave press conferences, published proceedings, supported documentaries and sent delegations to the United Nations, ILO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Health Organisation. After the first session in Helsinki, the commission, or its subcommittees, met in Copenhagen, Lisbon, Mexico City, Athens, Berlin, Algiers and finally returned to Helsinki in 1983.

37 Baird to Cameron M. Re: I.L.O. Inquiry on Chile Trade Unions, 4th October 1974, AMWSU, E262/137, NBAC: ANU, Canberra.
38 ‘Chilean Report’, Harbour News, April 1975. The commission’s headquarters were in Helsinki. ‘Call for World Trade Union Action against Chile Junta’, Seamen’s Journal 30, no. 3 (March 1975).
39 It was formed by the same Finnish liaison committee that started the Conference of Solidarity in Helsinki a year previously, but was distinct from that and separate to the ICFTU and WFTU conferences. First Session of the International Commission of Enquiry into the Crimes of the Military Junta in Chile, Dipoli, Finland, March 21–24, 1974, STUC, STUCA 531/2, GCUA, Glasgow; Amalgamated Metalworkers and Shipwrights Union (Australia), Chile! A Report from the International Commission into the Crimes of the Military Junta in Chile, held in Algiers in January, 1978 (Sydney: The Harbour Press, 1978).
40 Concluding Statements, STUC, STUCA 531/2, GCUA, Glasgow.
Yet as time went on, in the case of Australia, delegates became less and less well known and more politically factionalised. Among the 55 members of the commission at its first sitting was George Georges, the ALP senator from Queensland. At the same session from Britain was Arthur Booth, a Quaker and vice-president of the International Peace Bureau. By the third sitting, little-known unionist Don Henderson was among the Australian delegates, and his ascension makes an interesting case study that will reveal itself in the coming pages.

The commission’s third session, from 18 to 21 February 1975, in Mexico City was opened at the Palace of Arts in Mexico City by Luis Echeverría, the populist Mexican president, who had been a supporter and ‘great friend’ of President Allende. The Chilean regime had recently commuted various life sentences to exile in an attempt to change its international reputation, and this contributed to the higher number of Chileans present for what was the first meeting of the commission in Latin America. Many ex-prisoners who were exiled to countries all over the world met up for the first time at this session.

Don Henderson of the Firemen and Deckhands of New South Wales attended the Mexico session. His union was a very small niche union including those who worked on the ferries of Sydney Harbour. He was there representing his own union, the SUA and the SPA, and also along from Australia was Henry McCarthy of the Amalgamated Metal Workers’ and Shipwrights Union (AMWSU). Henderson was elected at the Mexico City meeting to be one of the 30 members of the commission. McCarthy had already been elected at the Copenhagen session in 1974. Interestingly, the only countries which had trade unionists as representatives on the commission were Australia and the USSR. The other members were in the main representatives of political parties, lawyers, academics and jurists.

It was at the Mexico City session that the decision was taken to seek the ‘active support’ of the trade union internationals, and the idea was put forward to the commission in a letter by Don Henderson. Though this seems very late—a full year and a half after the coup—it must be said that it had been assumed that the military government would not last long. Furthermore, Henderson’s

41 Ibid.
43 ‘The affection with which they greeted each other as fellow survivors … gave all of us at the Conference an air of hope.’ Ibid., 12.
45 ‘Call for World Trade Union Action against Chile Junta’. Trade unionists from Costa Rica, the United States, Chile, Mexico, the USSR and Australia were present at the congress. ‘Chilean Report’.
46 There were no trade unionists from Britain represented at the commission. Ibid.
union outlook, his ‘prolier than thou’⁴⁷ attitude, gave him a point of difference to the rest of the commission members, even to McCarthy, who was much more experienced in this form of international non-governmental diplomacy.

When Don Henderson spoke to the conference he first identified the groups he was representing and brought greetings from the BWIU, WWFA (Sydney Branch), NSW Fire Brigade Employees Union, and the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen (AFULE).⁴⁸ These were all unions and branches that had substantial SPA member involvement. When he spoke to the conference he said there was no doubt that ‘unionism died in Chile on September 11, 1973’ and that Australians believed the world trade union movement had a responsibility to the Chilean working class.⁴⁹ It was ironic that he was talking for Australians, for even counting the backing of the BWIU and WWFA, SUA and Firemen and Deckhands Union, he did not represent as many people as McCarthy did as a spokesman of the AMWU (let alone with the backing of the ICFTU and WFTU unions of Australia and the world). Though his speech was admirable in sentiment, it may have been slightly misdirected, given that relatively few representatives of the world trade union movement were present. Still, he finished off his speech with the rallying cry: ‘Long live International Friendship, Solidarity and Peace. Long live the Democratic Forces of Chile.’⁵⁰

Upon his return to Australia, Henderson wrote of the growing support for the conference by comparing the 19 attending countries in Copenhagen with the 33 in Mexico City.⁵¹ He did not take into account that Copenhagen was an extraordinary session and it had been organised on a limited time frame with little chance for gathering of funds or forming travel plans.⁵² Henderson also ensured that the readers of Harbour News, the newsletter of the Firemen and Deckhands, were not misled as to who the real Australian unionist involved was: ‘Whilst Henry [McCarthy] is listed as an Australian Trade Union leader, in fact he is, as you know, a journalist responsible for the publishing of the A.M.W.U. Trade Union paper.’⁵³ Finishing his union report on the Mexican session of the commission in the Harbour News, he wrote: ‘Every victory of the

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⁴⁷ Burgmann and Burgmann, Green Bans, Red Union, 54.
⁴⁹ ‘Call for World Trade Union Action against Chile Junta’.
⁵⁰ ‘Wider Bans on Chile Junta’, 67.
⁵¹ Representatives of 32 countries attended the Mexico City session of the commission. ‘Call for World Trade Union Action against Chile Junta’.
⁵² Still, the 30 members met in Copenhagen in order to draw attention to the military trial of UP leaders that was occurring in Chile in March 1975. ‘Commission Calls on Chile to Halt Political Reprisals’, The Times, 29 June 1974.
working class wherever it may be, is another step towards the sort of society that Marx, Engels and Lenin believed in—the sort of society that I believe in and continue to strive for.”

Figure 6.1 Luis Figueroa, Don Henderson and Luis Alberto Corvalan at the Mexico Commission of Enquiry.

Source: Photo from ‘Solidarity Call to World Trade Union Movement’, Socialist, April 1975, 3.

Henderson’s platform oratory, however, was not a reliable measure of his influence.

McCarthy’s connections and experience were actually what led to the visit of former Chilean minister of labour Luis Figueroa to Australia, and subsequently one of the most substantial gestures of Chile solidarity that the ACTU mustered during the dictatorship.

Figueroa’s relationship with Australian unionists began prior to the coup when Tas and Carmen Bull passed through Chile in 1971. Post coup, Figueroa had spent weeks fighting in the underground; but when the military junta put out a reward for his capture, it was decided that he would be better off leaving Chile and strengthening the anti-dictatorship cause from without. The only time Henry McCarthy had met Figueroa was when the latter was seeking

54 Ibid.
57 ‘Aid to Chile Struggle’, Maritime Worker, 14 May 1974.
58 ‘Chilean Thanks for Australian Help’, Maritime Worker, September 1975.
asylum in an embassy in Santiago, and there were still grave fears for his safety at that time (see Chapter 7). McCarthy was pleased to greet Figueroa at the Mexican session of the Enquiry into the Crimes of the Military Junta and he extended an invitation to Figueroa to visit Australia as the guest of the AMWU Commonwealth Council. As Figueroa was president of the CUT in exile, McCarthy suggested he also attend the ACTU congress.

In the role of president, Figueroa had travelled all over the world attending conferences, sessions and congresses; and in September 1975, he visited Australia. He addressed the 1975 anniversary rally in Martin Place, Sydney, where more than 600 people had gathered. The crowd had shrunk since the first anniversary, but even so, Figueroa pronounced that ‘there has been no greater concrete example of working class solidarity than that initiated by the Australian unions’. It surprised Chileans, he continued, ‘as we did not realise how deeply the Australian trade union movement felt about the international solidarity of trade unionists and of working people’.

He also said he thought the days of military rule were numbered.

Figueroa’s relatively high-profile position as president of the CUT in exile, and as minister of labour in Allende’s cabinet, allowed him to meet high-profile Australians such as the secretaries and presidents of unions. He also met at the AMWU research office with David McKerlie, Brian McGahen and Steve Cooper, all three of whom were involved in the CSCP organisation. Cooper recalled that they took Figueroa and his companion Luis Meneses down to the wharves just as the men instigated a half-day strike for Chile. The Chileans were pleased to see that sort of action occurring.

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60 The AMWU paid for Figueroa’s domestic transport and accommodation. Atkins to Figueroa, June 24 1975, AMWSU, E262/137, NBAC: ANU, Canberra; Cable: August 6 1975, AMWSU, E262/137, NBAC: ANU, Canberra.

61 Programme Results—Chilean Trade Union Delegation to Australia, 11–20 September 1975, Amalgamated Metal Workers’ and Shipwrights’ Union, E262/137, NBAC: ANU, Canberra; ‘Chile Venceremos’, Tribune [Australia], 16 September 1975.

62 ‘Chile Venceremos’.

63 ‘Support Chilean Workers in their Struggle to Free their Country from Fascism’, Tribune [Australia], 16 September 1975.

64 The existence of the research office was also imperative to the AMWU’s ability to take part in extra-industrial activities. Programme Results—Chilean Trade Union Delegation to Australia, 11–20 September 1975; Deery, ‘Union Aims and Methods’, 77.

65 Luis Meneses was the CUT secretary, and he visited Australia in 1975 with Figueroa and again in 1977. Meneses was to return in May 1977 to impress upon Australian trade unions the importance of maintaining boycotts. Baird (AMWU) to Robertson (CSCP), 11th May 1977, Papers of GMM; Central Unica the Trabajadores de Chile: Comision Exterior Paris, May 1 1977, AMWSU, E262/137, NBAC: ANU, Canberra.

66 Cooper et al. Conversation, 2007; Programme Results—Chilean Trade Union Delegation to Australia, 11–20 September 1975.
Both Meneses and Figueroa travelled to Melbourne for the ACTU congress on 16-17 September 1975. It was probably their most important action in Australia. In Figueroa’s statement to the ACTU congress, he congratulated and thanked Australian unions for their solidarity. He urged the ACTU to protest through the ILO and follow the five points of action that were passed at the ILO conference in June 1975. Bob Hawke, president of the ACTU at that time, declared that the ACTU would support the ILO measures. One hundred and fifty trade unionists present signed the petition to free Luis Corvalan and all prisoners, which had been circulated by Pat Clancy (Building Workers Industrial Union/SPA), Dick Scott of the AMWU and Taylor of the ARU.

Figueroa spanned the hierarchy as a symbol of solidarity, from grassroots to international industrial national organisations. Any investment from social movement or unions in him could reap huge internationalist brownie points. This sort of tour could also be conducted with minimal resource output from trade unions: ideological internationalist obligations were completed without imperilling the interests of the members.

Just less than one year after his Australian trip, on 8 September 1976, Figueroa died in Stockholm after an illness. Don Henderson wrote in the Seamen’s Journal that his death far away from his homeland served to remind the world that the ‘fight was not over’.
To continue the fight for solidarity, the CSCP used films, tours and other cultural activities to widen the understanding of the situation of Chile in the Australian community. These activities had the added benefit of raising funds. There were always accounts of torture and detention emerging from Chile as well as stories such as the banning of music that ‘make people mad’, and music tours reinforced and extended the support, but their organisation was a big undertaking given Australia’s distance from Europe and also the distance between towns.\(^{72}\)

Two of Chile’s most famous folk groups were outside the country when the coup occurred, so they immediately started their exile and found sympathetic homes and audiences all over the world. Both groups were part of the Chilean new song movement that had emerged, according to a concert program from Britain, ‘out of a deep-rooted need to rediscover and revive Chile’s genuine popular music’.\(^{73}\) New song, wrote Maurice Rosenbaum in 1978, used the ‘basic instruments of Latin America’ such as guitars, zamponas, drums, tambourines, woodblocks and Andean flutes. It was acknowledged in the Socialist at the time that ‘the New Chilean Song has thrived and spread in exile and has become a powerful weapon in the Chilean people’s struggle’.\(^{74}\) Notwithstanding, Jill Sykes noted in her review of a Sydney new song concert in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that they could sing songs with political points without resorting to polemics.\(^{75}\)

The first major tour organised was of the seven musicians of the group Quilapayun, who were based in Paris.\(^{76}\) ‘Quilapayun’ literally means ‘three bearded men’, as the band had started with three hairy university students.\(^{77}\) Their musical director had been Victor Jara, the most famous new song protagonist, who was killed in the stadium in Santiago in the days immediately following the coup.\(^{78}\)

In fact, it was because of the friendly relationship between Joan Jara and Mavis Robertson that the tour happened at all. The tour was presented by the CSCP in conjunction with New Chile Song Productions and with Mavis Robertson as the main organiser with the help of David McKerlie in Sydney and Philip Herington in Melbourne.\(^{79}\) While the bulk of organisation fell to Mavis Robertson, there was also considerable strain placed on the Association for International

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\(^{72}\) Robertson Interview, 2009.

\(^{73}\) Chile Solidarity Campaign (UK), *Pete Seeger and Quilapayun*.

\(^{74}\) ‘Chilean Folk Artists to Visit’, Socialist, 18 February 1977.

\(^{75}\) Though how Sykes could interpret the intricacies of the lyrics through the language barrier is unknown. Jill Sykes, ‘Inti Illimani’s Poetic Message’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 February 1977.

\(^{76}\) They negotiated the terms of their tour to Australia through Juan Carlos Valenzuela at the Discoteca del Cantar Popular in Paris. Chile Solidarity Campaign (UK), *Pete Seeger and Quilapayun*.

\(^{77}\) Ibid.

\(^{78}\) Quilapayun: Ambassadors without a Country, Rob Fruchtman, Chile 1975, Papers of Barry Carr.

\(^{79}\) Quilapayun, Papers of GMM; Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM; Quilapayun and Jeannie Lewis: Party Bookings now open, Papers of GMM. New Chile Song Promotions was the company set up by Joan Jara, widow of Victor Jara. Robertson Interview, 2009.
Cooperation and Disarmament (AICD), as the Chile campaign still used their offices.\footnote{Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.} Robertson also knew popular folk singer Jeannie Lewis, who was tactically selected to ensure an audience for the locally unknown Quilapayun.

Furthermore, Robertson was acquainted with Kevin Jacobsen, entertainment company owner and tour organiser. He was on the left of the ALP, and a very experienced promoter. Robertson approached him for advice and he gave her a plan and a sheet that would help her organise what would turn out to be a very successful music tour. For example, he suggested that activists and groups sold tickets, because 10 people selling 10 tickets each was 100 seats sold. This strategy meant a reduction in advertising costs and little chance of failure. Each trade union connection within the reach of the committee was contacted to sell tickets and there was not a progressive union in Sydney without such contact.\footnote{Robertson Interview, 2009.}

As soon as Quilapayun stepped off the plane, they were put to work at a press conference. When Robertson wrote to them before their departure for Australia she had requested that they ‘please make sure that the group come off the plane wearing their dramatic ponchos’.\footnote{Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Valenzuela, 13th June, 1975, Papers of GMM.} Despite this level of detail in organisation, very little appeared in the mainstream press before the concerts in Melbourne and Sydney, although there was more success in other cities. This was put down to the fact that ‘all too little is known yet about “Quilapayun”’.\footnote{Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Valenzuela, May 7th, 1975, Papers of GMM.} The band’s tour proved very popular with radio stations, with various features being played across the nation as well as 2JJ recording the Canberra concert to make a radio feature.\footnote{Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.}

Joan Jara came to Australia at the same time as the band and spoke at the beginning of each concert on the tour, which included Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Wollongong, Adelaide and Canberra.\footnote{Della Elliott, ‘Special Supplement: Quilapayun Singers in Australia—The True Voice of Chile’, Seamen’s Journal 30, no. 7 (July 1975), 165–8.} Jeannie Lewis supported at all concerts and Lucia Abarca explained things between songs.\footnote{Robertson Interview, 2009.} The concerts had a deep effect on those present. When the lights went up on stage, there were the seven men and Joan Jara. Jara gave the introduction. She told of the killings and the oppression in Chile and called for concrete actions. She said ‘Chile is not alone’, and continued: ‘We are not here tonight to weep. We bring you music prohibited in Chile today but it is the music of living Chile.’\footnote{Elliott, ‘Special Supplement’.}

The concert in Sydney went very well, despite the poor acoustics at the Town Hall.\footnote{Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.} While no Quilapayun record was available, interested persons could buy
Victor Jara’s *Manifesto* from Don Henderson at the Firemen and Deckhands for only $5.89. The commercial opportunity was not lost for long, as after the tour EMI decided to release two of the band’s records into the Australian market.

While in New South Wales, the band played for students and visited workers on the South Coast, and in Newcastle and they visited the Chullora workshops as the guests of the shop committee and the AMWU. Not everything was a popular success, and everyday work pulled unionists in the opposite direction. On a visit to the Sydney waterfront, it had originally been hoped that Jara would speak at a stop-work meeting but the union failed to establish a quorum. Instead, Jara and the band visited some ships and were hosted by the WWFA for a function. One of the members of the band delivered a speech in which he said: ‘Our people will win. Our people will defeat the Junta. Our people will triumph for Chile and also for all the democratic movement all over the world.’

Afterwards, the SUA journal proclaimed that Quilapayun were ‘the true voice of Chile’. The fact that the band had not lived in or visited junta-controlled Chile was ignored in this judgment.

The Chilean community of Sydney wanted to meet the band members, and so did many of the Spanish-speaking community; but it was decided that the Chileans would have exclusive time together first. Robertson wrote to the group stating that the reason behind the decision of exclusivity was that ‘some Latin American[s] are in the “armchair revolutionary class” and were therefore critical of the Chilean left’.

On top of that, tension was developing among the Chileans resident in Australia as to whom, or where, the money from the tour would be going. Some Chileans suspected that the Chilean Communist Party controlled the international solidarity movement and that all the money was going towards their political dominance. While Robertson remembered that at the start of that first tour she was ‘singularly unaware’ of the sectarian tensions behind the use of musical bands in solidarity, by the end, it was very clear. Despite this and the normal difficulties of organising such a large tour, Robertson remembered that ‘[i]n general everything went smoothly. In a few places there were minor tensions which arise out of cultural differences, e.g. attitudes to women’.

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89 Elliott, ‘Special Supplement’.
90 Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.
91 Vines (Australian Union of Students) to Robertson (CSCP), 12/12/74, Papers of GMM; Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Valenzuela 13th June, 1975, Papers of GMM.
92 Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.
93 Elliott, ‘Special Supplement’.
94 Ibid.
95 Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Valenzuela 13th June, 1975, Papers of GMM.
96 Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.
While Robertson politely reflected that Quilapayun were a ‘group of personalities’, it is obvious the musicians were very vocal chauvinists. They were often very offensive and progressively more unkind the older the woman. Ironically, it was the presence of a woman, Joan Jara, with the band that made the whole tour a musical and political success rather than just a series of exotic folk concerts. Jara had crisscrossed the countryside fulfilling speaking engagements with workers and feminists, activists and politicians. In order to fit all of her activities in to the 10 days allocated, she must have had little or no time to rest.

For example, an evening was organised by women involved in the peace movement and women’s organisations such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Women’s Liberation, the Women’s Electoral Lobby and the Communist Women’s Collective. The gathering was primarily for women and it was hoped that Joan Jara would show a film. Of course, the members of the band were welcomed also, though apparently declined the invitation.97

Jara also travelled to Armidale and attended an International Women’s Day lunch in Wollongong along with 50 other women,98 met with the Port Kembla WWFA branch99 and was called upon to meet with the NSW Trades and Labour Council. While the council was ‘not exactly left’, they were nonetheless very important for action in New South Wales.100 Jara also met the Victorian Trades Hall Council, where the Creative Arts Committee organised a reception with 100 unionists in attendance. A later report noted that ‘Joan made an outstanding contribution at the [reception]. She was given a standing ovations (which is unusual) by the 150 delegates except for 5 members, said to be of the Clerks Union, who remained seated.’101 Jara spoke at several meetings in houses, gatherings in Adelaide and met with representatives of the CPA, SPA and ALP and also with students and the church.102 Meanwhile, the band hosted two workshops for musicians, with 50 attending in both Melbourne and Sydney.103

Jara’s personal presence and easy cultural similarity with Australians smoothed other problems and boosted the success of the tour. The one event that defined her life, at least publicly, was the loss of her husband. His martyrdom gave Jara

97 Though it is unclear if any men took up this offer. Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Valenzuela 13th June, 1975, Papers of GMM.
98 Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.
99 Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Valenzuela 13th June, 1975, Papers of GMM.
100 Ibid.
101 Report on the Tour of Inti Illimani (Melbourne 5.4.77), Papers of GMM. The clerks were a noted right-wing union. They had even put forward a proposition to stop the use of political strikes at the 1971 ACTU Congress. Schmutte, ‘International Union Activity’, 85.
102 Jara also attended the reception that was given to farewell Jeria Bachelet, who was leaving Australia to go to live in Europe. It was a particularly moving meeting, with the two widows in attendance. Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.
103 Ibid.
an air of incorruptibility and moral authority. Though it seems insensitive to discuss and was by no choice of her own, the manner of the death of her husband furnished Joan Jara with a huge amount of moral capital. This alone, aside from her connections in and out of Chile, obliged and propelled her to use this immense legitimacy and strategic ability.

The concerts and meetings represented the biggest gatherings in solidarity with Chile that had occurred up to that point in Australia. Both the Sydney and the Melbourne concerts had audiences of 2000 people. The tour resulted in a burst of support for the campaigns in all the cities visited and the tour report declared it to be an ‘enormous success politically and artistically’. It also spurred on the organisers to continue with a musical theme.

The second tour of a high-profile Chilean band was that of Inti Illimani in 1977. ‘Inti Illimani’ means ‘condors of the sun’ in Quechua, and all members had been students at the Technical University in Santiago. When the coup occurred, they had been outside Chile on tour and had since been living in Rome. In the four years since the coup, Inti Illimani had toured to Washington, Hanoi, Paris, Moscow, Berlin, London, Rome, Caracas, the Hague, Milan, Lisbon, Venice, Havana and Mexico City. The band earned no money personally from the tour, but all their expenses were paid. Any profit was to go to the ‘movement for solidarity with Chile’. The tour of Inti Illimani benefited from the Quilapayun tour before it. Less education of the audience was now needed and many Australians now knew of the new song movement.

The main problem was visas. A change in government since the Quilapayun tour in Australia meant it was difficult to obtain entry without extensive travel documentation. Ever conscious of their support base, the CSCP also sought permission from Actors’ Equity to allow the Chilean musicians to perform. Again, Robertson was at the helm of the organisation, but this time she was

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104 ‘I fully trusted Joan Jara and anyone who thinks that she is … on a narrow sectarian side, doesn’t know her.’ Robertson Interview, 2009.
105 8, 10 July 1975. Quilapayun, Papers of GMM. The United States had bigger concerts, but did not make as much money for the cause. Robertson Interview, 2005.
106 Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM.
107 Inti Illimani also returned in 1985 and 1987. The Chilean Community in Canberra presents: Inti Illimani in Concert, Papers of GMM.
108 Inti Illimani: Chile’s Famous Folk Singers, Australian Concert Tour, March 1977, AMWSU, E262/137, NBAC: ANU, Canberra.
109 Chile Democratico, Sydney, March 1977.
110 Listed elsewhere as the Movement for Restoration of Human Rights in Chile. Agreement/Contrato, Papers of GMM; ‘Inti Illimani’, Tribune [Australia], 23 March 1977. The contract was signed mainly to make sure that ‘the movement’ avoided excessive taxation. Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Rivas, 17th January, 1977, Papers of GMM.
111 Robertson (CSCP) to Rivas, 10th December, 1976, Papers of GMM.
112 Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Rivas, 17th January, 1977, Papers of GMM.
113 Evatt (AAEAA) to Robertson (CSCP—Syd), 23/12/76, Papers of GMM; McGahen (CSCP) to Patten (Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs), 28th January, 1977, Papers of GMM.
assisted by a more efficient national organisation. Brian McGahen (Young Communist Movement and subsequently AMWU Research Officer)\(^\text{114}\) helped Robertson organise the Inti Illimani tour, as he was unemployed at the time.\(^\text{115}\) Inti Illimani sent extensive requests for sound equipment that exceeded the wattage capacity of most Australian venues, and furthermore, 12 microphones were needed and these details stretched the resources, and no doubt the patience, of the organisers.\(^\text{116}\) Five hundred posters, and 700 programs were printed.\(^\text{117}\) The Electric Record Company looked after the pressing of an Inti Illimani record. They promoted the $6.95 record extensively in Sydney and Melbourne, but the concerts in other States did not benefit from the company’s work.\(^\text{118}\)

The CSCP had to outlay approximately $9000, and so asked affiliated and friendly organisations for donations.\(^\text{119}\) Again, the political and fiscal generosity of trade unions was imperative to the campaign. The fact is, despite the large outlay and difficult liaison with the musicians and the expatriates the music tours were probably the most solid moments of Australia-wide organisation. Support for the tour was given by the AMWSU (Vic.), BWIU, Chilean UP Committee of Australia, Firemen and Deckhands Union (FDU) (Vic.), WWFA, various student groups, Teachers’ Chile Solidarity Group (NSW), Miscellaneous Workers’ Union (MWU), Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen’s Association of Australia (FEDFA), Clothing and Allied Trade Union and Food Preservers.\(^\text{120}\) Clearly, little would have occurred without the unions. Every little bit counted, even the $25 donated by the Printing and Kindred Industries Union NSW branch and the WWFA’s $100.\(^\text{121}\) Funds were also boosted by student and workers’ concerts, as well as collections at the interval of the main performances.\(^\text{122}\)

In Melbourne, Philip Herington battled to organise the Victorian leg of the tour among his suite of other political activities and ‘pestering’ from locally based Chileans; but he succeeded above all expectations when the band visited the West Gate Bridge site to play at a stop-work meeting and the workers struck

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114 ‘Chile Popular Unity Adopts New Program’, *Tribune* [Australia], 1 October 1975.
115 Much of the incoming correspondence to the CSCP Sydney on the topic is addressed to him.
116 Philip [Herington] (CSCP—Melb) to Brian [McGahen], 25.1.77, Papers of GMM; Rod Williams (CSCP—Perth) to Brian, Papers of GMM.
117 Philip [Herington] (CSCP—Melb) to Brian [McGahen], 25.1.77, Papers of GMM.
118 McGahen (CSCP—Syd) to friends, 23rd February, 1977, Papers of GMM.
119 McGahen (CSCP—Syd) to [blank], December 1976, Papers of GMM.
120 Report on the Tour of Inti Illimani (Melbourne 5.4.77), Papers of GMM.
121 Kelly (PKIU) to CSCP, 21st March, 1977, Papers of GMM; Fitzgibbon (WWFA) to McGahen (CSCP), March 21, 1977, Papers of GMM.
122 It was made clear that only CSCP material was allowed to be distributed and sold at the concerts: McGahen (CSCP—Syd) to [all States], Jan 23 [1977], Papers of GMM.
for half an hour to extend the concert. They then passed an excellent resolution and promised to work towards action for Chile in the future. This was the highlight of the trip for the members of the band.

Meanwhile in Perth, the solidarity committee did its best to find a venue for a concert that met the Chilean’s requirements, and to be fair, they struggled even to find a typewriter to write their letters on.

Inti Illimani was made to work hard from their arrival in Sydney from Japan on 24 March 1977. They were kept constantly on the move, with press engagements, small performances and large concerts as well as solidarity meetings with Chileans and trade unionists. The tour organised would take in Wollongong (Warrawong Hall, 25 March 1977), Sydney (Town Hall, 26 March), Brisbane (Teachers’ Union Hall, 27 March), Melbourne (Dallas Brooks Theatre, 29 March), Adelaide (Norwood Town Hall, 30 March) and Perth (Octagon Theatre, 31 March).

At the Sydney concert, the two most important organisers, Mavis Robertson and Philip Herington, attended, having been saved good seats so they could at last, and at least, enjoy the concert. Tas Bull, the prominent unionist, had been coopted as a compere and did a ‘splendid’ job under the difficult circumstances.

It was reported in the Tribune that almost 10,000 people attended the concert tour. Sykes described in the Sydney Morning Herald ‘whether you were stirred by their appeal for the return of socialism to Chile, you could not help but be moved by the beauty and power of their material, and the quality and strength of their performance’.

In a letter to the organisers all around Australia after the tour, Mavis Robertson wrote that there was ‘no doubt that the tour has been a success both financially

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123 Final Report of Quilapayun Tour, Papers of GMM; Philip [Herington] (CSCP—Melb) to Brian [McGahan], 25.1.77, Papers of GMM; Report on the Tour of Inti Illimani (Melbourne 5.4.77), Papers of GMM; From Philip Herington, Papers of GMM.
124 Rod Williams did his best to organise the concert there. Rod Williams (CSCP—Perth) to Brian, Papers of GMM; Williams (CSCP—Perth) to Brian, 11-2-77, Papers of GMM; Robertson (CSCP—Syd) to Friends, 13th December 1976, Papers of GMM.
125 McGahan (CSCP—Syd) to [blank], December 1976, Papers of GMM.
126 Inti Illimani Itinerary, Papers of GMM.
127 ‘Inti Illimani: Chile’s Famous Folk Singers, Australian Concert Tour, March 1977’; ‘Inti Illimani’, Socialist, 2 March 1977, 4; ‘Inti Illimani’, Tribune [Australia]. The group did not travel to Tasmania due to travel costs, although the Tasmanian State Council of the AMWSU did donate $50 and offer to assist in organising the event if it was to go ahead. Ridley [AMWU Tas State Council] to McGahan (CSCP), 4th April 1977, Papers of GMM.
128 He was in Sydney for the SPA anti-war conference in that week. Philip [Herington] (CSCP—Melb) to Brian [McGahan], 25.1.77, Papers of GMM.
129 Robertson (CSCP) to Bull (WWFA), 22nd April, 1977, Papers of GMM.
130 ‘El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido’, Tribune [Australia], 20 April 1977.
131 Sykes, ‘Inti Illimani’s Poetic Message’. Similarly in the report in the Tribune, it was written that ‘Inti Illimani’s powerful combination of music and politics inspired audiences wherever they played, bringing the strength and spirit of the Chilean resistance alive’. ‘El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido’.
Philip Herington, however, noted in his report that ticket sales in Melbourne were slower than for the Quilapayun tour two years earlier because the passing of time had taken ‘the edge off the enthusiasm about Chile’, as well as organisational issues and overlapping events (such as the uranium moratoriums). Despite this, the tour was hailed a success, so much so that Chilean music events in the future promised music ‘in the style of Inti Illimani’.

Trade unions in Australia were opportunistic just as those in Britain were and just as they were around the world. Though Australia’s Chile movement lacked the coherence of that in Britain, trade unions were provided with ample opportunities to use the movement to express their internationalism at little organisational cost. The indirect actions described in this chapter illustrate the symbiotic relationship between radical unions and the Chile committee. Each was being used by the other.

But actions that were light on the use of resources could be undertaken by almost anyone. Did Australian unions have the commitment to put their backs into it and really push in the name of internationalist ideology? And was there anything that the solidarity movement could do to encourage independent union action?

Those within the movement were certainly aware of the challenge. After the tour of Inti Illimani, Philip Herington wrote:

> Our task now is to develop in the coming period a political program of solidarity work which can consolidate the impact that the Inti had and to translate it into [concrete] actions that Australians can do. This demands careful work to spread our message among trade unions, the ALP, Church groups etc.

The following chapters will assess the campaign’s success in their work of encouraging trade unions to take action independently.

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132 Robertson to ‘friends’ re: Inti Illimani, Papers of Barry Carr.
133 Report on the Tour of Inti Illimani (Melbourne 5.4.77), Papers of GMM.
134 ‘Concert for Chile’, Tribune [Australia], 30 November 1977.
135 Report on the Tour of Inti Illimani (Melbourne 5.4.77), Papers of GMM.
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