

Pause for thought.

If you went to university in the UK in the 1970s (and I did) and were involved in university politics (and I was) then it's easy to recall the impact that the overthrow of Allende in Chile had on some on the Left at that time. The Chile Solidarity Campaign was a fact of university life at the time.

I did not then, and I do not know, support communism. But if anything the image of Allende's overthrow is more powerful for me now when we know what followed it. Pinochet was a mass murderer and a thief. Only death has prevented him being brought to justice on charges of tax fraud, I am sure. Despite which we know that the US supported his overthrow of democracy and Margaret Thatcher showed herself as the supporter of the far right I always knew her to be over her support for Pinochet (opposition to which position, in general, ended my career as a student Conservative, I've always been rather pleased to say in retrospect). As I suspected in 1977 and as we now know she had a callous disregard for democracy, ethics, or the welfare of humans, as her support for Pinochet proved.

It was therefore poignant for me to stand outside the presidential palace in Chile tonight and to see the way in which ordinary people can and do approach the place. This is where Allende died. Do you remember those images as the place was bombed? This is where Pinochet, a force for evil if ever there was one, came to power. I'd love to believe that if the same thing happened today the Neo-Conservatives in the UK and USA would let democracy have its way and would stand back and let the ballot box be the place to test acceptability of outcome. I wish I were confident that this were true, but I'm not.

So I went to the cathedral down the road from the presidential palace tonight and made that my prayer. My faith is based on the assumption that prayer only works if humans intervene to make what is asked for happen. This blog is part of that process. We all know power can corrupt. Tax havens, the Riggs Bank (and its successors) and all who are suppliers of corruption services help power corrupt absolutely. That's why they are so dangerous. We all lose from what they do. That's why the professions have a duty to stop the supply of such services.

Which gave me a second prayer: that the professions might rise to the challenge.

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