

CHILE COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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SECRETARY: Wendy Tyndale. SPONSORS: Bishop Michael Ramsay, Lord Soper, Bishop Colin Winter, Monsignor Bruce Kent, Rev. John Reardon, Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Harold Pinter, Adrian Mitchell, Judith Hart MP, Eric Heffer MP, Stanley Clinton Davis MP, Greville Janner MP, Neil Kinnock MP, Norman Buchan MP, Russell Johnston MP, Cyril Smith MP, Graham Tope.

The Chile Committee For Human Rights was set up in January 1974 as a response to the need for work to be done specifically on human rights issues in Chile. The Committee's fund, the Chile Relief Fund, is a registered charity (No.268063), and the committee works on a purely humanitarian basis.

Our main areas of work have been:

- a) work with political prisoners and their families
- b) work with refugees
- c) research and information about the situation of human rights in Chile
- d) fundraising

a) Work with political prisoners and their families.

This work has involved publicising the plight of political prisoners in Chile and doing everything possible to put pressure on the military authorities to release them. We have campaigned for individual prisoners, for the closure of particularly notorious prison camps, such as the one on Dawson Island, and for persecuted groups, such as trades unionists and doctors. In the latter work, we have received the support of similar groups in Britain.

Our work in this field is increasingly extending to calling for the adoption of individual prisoners by groups here, and to helping make arrangements for their release. We have also been acting as a centre of information for friends and relations who are negotiating for the release of Chilean prisoners.

b) Work with refugees

Until the election of the Labour government in March 1974, the committee's work in this area was limited to trying to persuade the Conservative government to change its policy of denying entry to Britain to refugees from Chile. We also gave considerable help and finance to the few refugees who did manage to arrive here.

With the change of government, the committee began to work very closely with the British Council for Aid to Refugees in setting up a reception programme. We were instrumental in gaining the first government grant for the resettlement of refugees from Chile in the UK. However, in June it was obvious that the work involved was too great, and a joint working group was set up, with the CCHR (Chile Committee for Human Rights) participating.

The other organisations involved in this project are Christian Aid, whose representative is the chairman, the British Council for Aid to Refugees, the World University Service, the Chile Solidarity Campaign Committee, the Ockenden Venture and the Standing Conference of British Organisations for Aid to Refugees, whose representative attends meetings as an observer in an advisory capacity.

A reception centre has been set up in London and the Chile Solidarity Campaign Committees have set up local centres all over

Britain with the help of local trade unions and other groups.

c) Research and Information about the situation of Human Rights in Chile

The CCHR is in close contact with sources of information both within Chile itself and in other countries all over the world. The Chile Solidarity Campaign Committee keeps us constantly supplied with detailed information here.

In August 1974, however, we decided to send someone to Chile to get first hand information, to make better contacts there and to see what more could be done for prisoners and refugees. Our representative spoke to a wide variety of people, including workers and trade unionists, shanty town dwellers, representatives of the churches (mainly through the Committee for Peace), lawyers, academics, rich middle-class Chileans, the British Ambassador, The British Consul and other embassy staff, staff from the Argentine, Colombian and Danish embassies and international organisations such as the UNHCR, ICEM and the Red Cross.

The findings of this visit were published in our report "Chile one year after the coup" which sells at 15p.

We have tried to inform the British public about the situation in Chile through reports we have published, articles in other publications and the press, films, slide shows and meetings. We have also organised visits to this country by such people as Harald Edelstam, the Swedish ambassador to Chile at the time of the coup, who came in September 1974 at the invitation of Amnesty and the CCHR.

In addition, our president, Joan Jara, has made tours throughout Europe and the United States and has managed to reach vast numbers of people through her work.

d) Fund Raising

The Chile Relief Fund was set up as the fund of the CCHR and it was originally decided that money collected should be spent on the following:

- a) to help families in Chile whose breadwinner has been killed, is in prison, has had to seek asylum or has been thrown out of work for political reasons.
- b) to help with legal costs for the defense of political prisoners.
- c) to help refugees.

However, now that an official refugee programme has been set up in Britain, our money will go straight to Chile. There it will be administered by the Committee for Peace.

This is an ecumenical committee which was founded in October 1973 to help those who have in any way suffered from the repression of the military junta, for example those whose relatives have died, been detained or disappeared. More than 15,500 people have registered with the committee during the last year.

For those in prison, the committee has a team of lawyers and provides legal aid free of charge. There is a department which deals with students and academics in trouble and another which gives legal aid to those thrown out of work. Limited financial aid is sometimes given directly to families. The committee has set up a series of projects to provide sources of work for people as a longer-term form of help. It has branches in fifteen provincial towns and helpers in about a dozen more.

We can provide detailed information on request about the administration, costs, needs and work of the Committee for Peace.

Our most successful fund-raising effort has been the concert given by the Chilean folk group, the Inti Illimani, in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on Sept. 16th 1974 in aid of the Chile Relief Fund. The net profit from the concert was £2,121.

Apart from this we have made collections at meetings and are now selling a recently-published record of Victor Jara's songs. Victor Jara was a well-known Chilean folk singer who was tortured to death by the military on September 15th 1973. His songs express the spirit of the Chilean people both in their words and music. Joan Jara translates them on the record so they can be easily understood by people in Britain. The record sells at £1.75 of which 55p will go to Chile.

So far the Chile Relief Fund has given £821 to refugees and £500 was taken to the Committee for Peace in Chile in August.