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Chile Committee for Human Rights

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Nov 25th 1975

Dear Mr. Murray,

I enclose our latest newsletter and an extra report with information about the worst wave of repression that the people of Chile have had to face since the coup in September 1973.

We hope very much that you will be willing to join in our campaign to do all we can to secure the release of Dr. Sheila Cassidy and to save the Committee for Peace, by signing the enclosed letter to Mr. Callaghan. We are sending it to several other people hoping they will help. Please return it to us.

Yours sincerely,

Wendy Tyndale

NOV 27 1975

CHILE COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, 95 ST. PAUL'S ROAD, LONDON N.1.

URGENT NEWS

COMMITTEE FOR PEACE

November 20th 1975

The Committee for Cooperation for Peace in Chile, the principal organisation for the protection of human rights in that country, is under heavy attack from the military government.

The Committee, which was formed in October 1973 by representatives of almost all the Christian and Jewish communities in the country, has been able to help thousands of political prisoners and their families and has assisted with projects for the unemployed, medical projects and soup kitchens for undernourished children. There are over 100 such "dining rooms" in Santiago alone.

Ever since it was set up, the Committee for Peace has been an embarrassment to the junta because its humanitarian actions towards the oppressed have been a constant denunciation in themselves of the violation of human rights in Chile under the military regime.

In September of this year, the junta denied re-entry to Chile to one of the Committee's co-presidents, the Lutheran Bishop, Helmut Frenz, who had gone to Geneva for a meeting of the World Council of Churches. Last year Bishop Frenz was awarded the Nansen Prize by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the outstanding help he had given to foreign refugees in Chile after the coup.

During the last month attacks have been made not only on individuals working in the Committee, at least twelve of whom are under arrest, but on the Committee as an organisation. Several of the children's dining rooms have been threatened with closure. In a letter to General Pinochet, Cardinal Raul Silva Henriquez, Archbishop of Santiago, said he would comply with the junta's demands that the Committee in its present form should be closed within three months, but that the churches would continue with their human rights work in Chile.

Last week, Jaime Guzman, one of the leaders of the extreme right wing group "Fatherland and Freedom, which was at work during the time of Allende, accused "important sectors of the Catholic Church" of collaborating with left wing groups in Chile. The Cardinal had previously stated that Christians should be allowed to show mercy indiscriminately on the basis of Christian love. He answered Guzman's speech, which was televised, by threatening to excommunicate those who sought to create divisions within the church.

In spite of the atmosphere of tension, the Committee for Peace is continuing to function. Five more of its members have been hunted by the DINA (secret police) within the last few days.

Among its members who are being held in detention are the Jesuit priest, Fernando Salas, who was the first executive secretary of the Committee, Father Patricio Cariola, a member of the executive of the Committee, a young American Holy Cross priest called Daniel Panchot, who was badly beaten at the time of his arrest and has not been seen since, and Jose Zalaquet, the head of the Committee's legal department, who has also disappeared.

Three women workers from the Committee have been arrested too: Georgina Ocaranza, a lay Lutheran worker who is seven months pregnant, Dr. Sheila Cassidy, the English surgeon and Betty Walker, a social worker. The first two are being held incommunicado.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

Please send telegrammes or letters to:

1- Cardenal Raul Silva Henriquez
Arzobispado de Santiago
Santiago de Chile

expressing your deep concern and strong support for the Committee for Peace.

2- General Pinochet
Edificio Diego Portales
Santiago de Chile

expressing your deep concern and protest at the treatment of the Committee for Peace and its members.

3- Ambassador Kaare Olsen
Chilean Embassy
12 Devonshire Street
London W.1.

expressing the same as to General Pinochet and asking for information as to what is going on.

This is the first time that the Chilean junta has risked an open confrontation with the churches. It is vital that all churches and Jewish communities abroad should act immediately to give all support possible to their co-religionists in Chile.

If the Committee for Peace closes, there will be no organisation left which can work effectively for human rights and give real humanitarian support to the people who are suffering under the military regime.

We would therefore urge you to raise this matter within your churches and synagogues with the utmost urgency.

PLEASE ACT NOW BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

The sources of information for this newsletter are first hand accounts given to us by people recently arrived from Chile, documents sent from Chile to the Centre Oecumenique de Liaisons Internationales in Paris, the Boletin Informativo of the Chile Solidarity Committee in Cuba which is written with the help of Prensa Latina by a group representing the whole of the Chilean Left, documents from the World Council of Churches, Chilean and British newspapers and press agencies.

Introduction

It is important to see the continuing and increasing regression carried out by the military regime in Chile in the context of the history not only of Chile itself but of Latin America as a whole. What is happening in Chile is happening as the result of a serious threat having been made to the richest sectors of Chilean society, to several large foreign companies and to the United States Government, all of whom were profiting from the export of most of Chile's wealth and the concentration of the wealth that remained within the country in the hands of a privileged minority. (Chile's wealth consists mainly of copper mines -- hitherto owned by American companies-- which account for nearly 80% of its foreign earnings). It was these profiteering groups who organized the coup when Allende's government nationalized the copper and when it started to expropriate industries and land at home and it is these groups who are keeping the junta in power today. And not only the Chilean junta but the nearby repressive military dictatorship of Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia, which all came to power for reasons similar to those which led the coup in Chile.

General Pinochet's campaign against "marxism" is a campaign against anyone who wishes to work towards the building of a more just society, where the gap between the rich and the poor may be reduced and where the large mass of the population may have access to the material goods which are a necessary requirement for self-fulfillment as a human being. It is only when this is understood that it is possible to understand the junta's need to persecute not only members of leftwing parties, but all those who stand up for humanitarian values and social justice. The present wave of persecution of the Churches in Chile and the arrest of a British doctor who had nothing whatsoever to do with politics just bear this out.

This newsletter gives such a detailed account of these events because of the vital importance of the role of the churches in the struggle in Chile today.

Dr. Sheila Cassidy

Dr. Cassidy is a 37 year old plastic surgeon who was born in Lincolnshire. She went to Chile four years ago and at the time of her arrest was working in the medical department of the Committee for Peace. She is well known and loved and respected in Chile for her devotion to her work in the clinics set up by the churches in the shanty towns of Santiago.

On the night of November 6th, plain clothes policemen raided Dr. Cassidy's house but as she was not there they went to look for her in the Catholic mission house of the Columbian Fathers nearby. When they knocked at the door, a maid looked out of the window to see who was there. They shot her dead. At this moment other uniformed policemen arrived on the scene.

Inside the mission, the police found Dr. Cassidy attending to a sick nun, but they accused her of having given medical assistance to Nelson Gutiérrez, the second in command of the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) who was wounded last month in a gun battle.

Dr. Cassidy and her house-keeper were arrested along with two priests Gerald Wheelan, an American-born Chilean and Rafael Marotto. We do not know what happened to the house-keeper, but Dr. Cassidy was held incom-

municado for five days in spite of the British Ambassador's constant efforts to see her. Eventually he was allowed to visit her and bring her books and blankets, but she was then transferred to another prison and again held incommunicado. She may be tried by court martial though she has not yet officially been charged. The junta has decreed that anyone caught aiding "extremists" shall be court-martialled.

It is believed that Father Gerald Wheelan, who has also been accused with this, is to be tried this week and there are fears both for him and for Dr. Cassidy.

Persecution of the Churches

Dr. Sheila Cassidy's arrest is just one further incident in a mounting wave of repression against the churches, and particularly against the Committee for Peace, that has been going on over the last few months. The Committee has been able to achieve a great deal over the last two years, not only for political prisoners and their families but also giving technical and financial aid to popular initiatives such as workshops for the unemployed. The Church is seen as the only body in Chile which can openly demand that injustices be ended. Recently eight trade unions asked the Cardinal to intervene about the economic and social state of the nation.

On Friday 3rd October, the Ministry of the Interior issued a communiqué to the Chilean press stating that Bishop Helmut Frenz, who had gone to Geneva for a meeting, would not be allowed to return to Chile.

Bishop Frenz, head of the Chilean Evangelical Lutheran Church, is one of the co-presidents of the Committee for Peace and the representative of the World Council of Churches in Chile. Last year he was given the Nansen Prize by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for his outstanding work with foreign refugees who had to leave Chile after the coup.

The junta's measure, which took Bishop Frenz completely by surprise, has not been announced officially either to him or his family nor to the Lutheran Church but it has been said to be irrevocable.

The reasons stated for Bishop Frenz's expulsion were that he had carried out "anti national activities" and that he had disturbed the "tranquility" of the country. The press has accused him of spreading distorted information about Chile abroad and giving people to understand that human rights are not respected in Chile.

Other members of the Committee for Peace who have been harassed are the pastors Juan Polanco and Denis O'Shee, both leaders of the Presbyterian Evangelical Church in Chile and both active in the work of the Committee for Peace in Antofagasta, in the north. They were arrested and detained on September 29th but were released a month later.

On September 9th, 31 year-old Georgina Ocaranza Muñoz, a Lutheran layworker and secretary in the Committee for Peace in Santiago was arrested. Though she is seven months pregnant and suffers from anemia, she is still detained in Tres Alamos (a camp in Santiago). The authorities say she is not held "incommunicado" but that she "cannot receive visitors".

The latest raids during which Dr. Cassidy was arrested, have led to the arrest, expulsion and flight of several other church people.

On November 7th, Father Fernando Salas, a Jesuit and the first executive secretary of the Committee for Peace, was reported to have taken asylum in the Papal Nunciature in Santiago. He had been in hiding since the previous Saturday, when Dr. Cassidy was arrested. His presence in the Nunciature seems not, however, to have been confirmed and he may still be in hiding.

Altogether at least 10 priests and nuns have been accused of helping left wing guerrillas over the last week. Three catholic priests were arrested on November 10th; two, Angelo Salvatore Russo, an Italian, and Father José Morineo, were arrested in the northern town of Copiapó, the

third, Father Jaime Patricio Gajardo, a prison chaplain, was detained in Santiago.

Three American Maryknoll nuns have been flown back to the States. We presume they are Helen Nelson, Peggy Lepsig and Paula Armstrong who were accused of helping guerrillas too. An American priest, John Devlin is also being allowed to leave.

After the raids on the weekend of November 6th and the junta's statement about court martialling those who helped "extremists", the Archbishop of Santiago issued a statement in the name of the Roman Catholic Church saying that those who show mercy indiscriminately, based on Christian love, had a right to be heard, understood and respected. This led to the Archbishop, Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez being accused on television of being against the government. The speaker, Jaime Guzmán, one of the leaders of the right wing movement Fatherland and Freedom, said the Cardinal would have to change his mind. The Cardinal demanded the right to reply on the television, but this was refused, though reportedly a message from him is to be read by a regular announcer.

Two more bishops in Chile have been under attack. Bishop Alvear, who is working closely with the Committee for Peace, had his office raided and Bishop Camus has been constantly attacked since statements he made confidentially at a press conference were leaked to the press.

Children's Canteens

The persecution of the churches and the Committee for Peace extends not only to their individual members but to their very actions. One of the largest programmes being supported by the churches in Chile today is that of the "comedores infantiles" or children's soup kitchens.

These canteens have sprung up in the shanty towns of Santiago and other cities and in rural areas as a popular initiative to save thousands of children from physical deformity, mental deficiency, illness or death as the result of undernourishment. In one town alone, Lota, a coal-mining town in the south of Chile, 272 small children died of undernourishment in June alone.

The junta sees the church's support for these canteens as a dangerous influence among the working class and has ordered that they should be closed down in 5 areas of Santiago (Renca, Quinta Normal, Barrancas, San Miguel and La Reina) on the grounds that they have no running drinking water, no separate kitchen and no tiles on the walls -- conditions which are not to be found in a single private house in any of these areas. In the parish of Buen Consejo permission was refused for a canteen to be set up.

The junta's aim is to reduce the contact between the churches and the people, to avoid the "bad image" of starvation that the canteens give and to take over the total control of these and similar organizations. General Leigh has already opened some centers for undernourished children in San Bernardo, near Santiago.

The persecution of the churches in Chile is not a new phenomenon though it has been accentuated recently. We have the names of 70 priests who have been arrested since the coup. Some were freed, others expelled or forced to flee, three were tortured to death and one was shot.

Some sectors of the churches, including the catholic bishops of Valparaíso and Puerto Montt, the Opus Dei movement and some evangelical churches support the junta in its "anti marxist" campaign, either shutting their eyes to the cruelty or seeing it as "necessary". These are in the minority.

The majority of the churches are against the junta and the catholic church is definitely behind Cardinal Silva and Bishop Camus (General Secretary of the Catholic Episcopal Conference) concerning actions such as their refusal to allow any public masses to be said on September 11th to commemorate the anniversary of the coup.

This anti junta church consists mainly of those who give "silent" support to the people in their suffering, devoting themselves to alleviating the misery around them but going no further than trying to find a solution to each immediate crisis. There is a smaller group of Christians, however, who have joined the organized struggle for resistance and see the only means to end the present suffering as united political action.

The Christians who are being persecuted in Chile are those who are taking action whether as individuals or in organized groups. Those who have stayed at home and watched, fearing for their own safety, have not been persecuted and never will be.

The following extract is from a letter from a priest working in a poor area of Santiago.

"At the very same moment that the press prints declarations that indicate that the violence is being reduced and that steps are being taken towards a greater legality of methods of control we continue to be harassed and persecuted in the popular areas. Recently they detained 19 workers here and tortured one in his own back yard within sight and earshot of the neighbours. The fact is that we have become hardened and used to it. Around September 11th we received threats, but although perhaps you won't believe me, we lost no sleep because of them.

I have got great satisfaction from seeing the enormous amount we have been able to organize, for material assistance and among the youth. It hasn't been at all paternalistic or alienating.

Every month there is a meeting of all the teams running the children's canteens in the whole area. At the moment 5,850 undernourished children are being attended, 350 adults from the teams and countless more collaborate. It is indicative to see the strength of those teams which have been able to overcome their fear of threats by the officials.

The clergy working at the grass roots, especially with the working class, are standing firm.

We have the impression that different times are coming for committed Christians but we are determined not to slacken in any way. Material assistance and solidarity are not only absolutely necessary but also provide one of the few possible ways of maintaining people's awareness and hope."

REPRESSION

Detentions

"There are no political prisoners in Chile. There are people detained under the State of Emergency or because they have committed common crimes". General Pinochet, Rio de Janeiro, October 6th, 1975.

He went on to say that people in prison were lucky as they lived in better conditions than the majority of the population in Chile.

During the first six months of this year about eighty people a month were arrested in Santiago. In August the number rose to 125, 24% of whom disappeared for at least a month, and 95 people were arrested in the first half of September. All of these disappeared for varying lengths of time. Many are still untraced.

In the provinces too the numbers have risen; in Curicó (a town in the rural central valley) over 100 people were arrested in one week at the beginning of September.

At the same time raids were carried out by members of the Airforce Intelligence Service (SIFA) in San Bernardo, La Cisterna and San Miguel (Santiago). And the raiders, who carried machine guns, were wearing heavy woollen caps and had painted their faces black so as not to be recognized. Most of the people detained subsequently disappeared and their families have been subjected to constant interrogation and pressure.

The body of one of the detained, Arsenio Leal, a 45 year old transport worker, was found on September 6th in the legal medical institute of the airforce. It was declared he had hanged himself, but there were horrible bruises and wounds on his head and right hand and leg.

Torture

We know of two other recent cases of prisoners being tortured to death in Chile.

Raúl Olivares, 25 year old, died under interrogation on Aug. 1st the day he was detained, in a building belonging to the police. The medical verdict was of "asphixia from vomiting". On August 27th it was published in the press that he had lost his life when resisting arrest.

On August 8th, the family of Fernando González, a 57 year old builder, was called to pick up his body in the Institute of Legal Medicine where where it had been taken on 21st July, the day of his arrest by the military police. The body showed bruises on the arms, legs and stomach, though the official story was "suicide by hanging"

The 119 disappeared Prisoners

The relations of the 119 disappeared prisoners who were reported in the Chilean press in July to have been killed in various countries have written a third letter to General Pinochet to demand an answer about their whereabouts. Since Pinochet said in August that an investigation would be carried out, nothing more has been heard. Relations of at least two prisoners on the list of 119 were detained in September and a third man who participated in the protest hunger strike about them in the camp of Puchuncaví in August, has been moved from the camp with three others. None of the four have been seen again.

Repression of Political Parties

All those working in political parties in Chile are, of course, still subjected to violent persecution. Eight members of the MAPU were recently arrested in Arica, a group from the Communist Party in Curicó, and following the death of one of the MIR leaders, Dagoberto Pérez, in a street fight, two more leaders from the MIR, Nelson Gutiérrez, and Andres Pascal are reported to have been forced to seek asylum in foreign embassies.

Camps

The fate of the political prisoners in Chile continues to be uncertain. In August there was a change in command in the camp of Ritoque which brought with it constant harassment of the prisoners, frequent unprovoked punishment of solitary confinement, raids on the cells in the middle of the night and humiliating and rough treatment of their visitors.

In October a raid was carried out on the Public Prison of Valparaíso where several of the prisoners who are being tried for sedition in the navy were stripped naked and beaten. The cells were torn to bits and personal possessions destroyed. Some of the prisoners were subsequently put into solitary confinement.

The sailors' trial

The farcical nature of this sailors' trial which has now been going on for nearly a year, has been emphasized even more by the addition to the group of Luis Corvalán, head of the Chilean Communist Party, Sergio Vuskovic, Aníbal Palma, Andrés Sepúlveda and Pedro Felipe Ramírez, all of whom were ministers or held other important posts under the Allende government and had nothing to do with the navy at all.

In fact, all but Luis Corvalán had been declared free by the Minister of the Interior (Decree 1,523) on September 13th, but on

Sept. 22nd they were placed under arrest by the navy.

Reduction of the State of Siege

General Pinochet has reduced the State of Siege by one grade from a state of "internal defense" to a state of "internal security". This means that except in judging the crimes included in Decree Law No. 1,000 (which covers almost any action you can think of) the military tribunals will function as in times of peace instead of war, so will the courts martial and the Supreme Court.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

During the first nine months of 1975, the official figure for inflation stood at 250%. The prices of many basic goods will have risen at about twice this rate.

During the first eight months of 1975 industrial production dropped 23.6% compared with the same period last year. (In 1974 it dropped 17.7% compared with 1973)

Industrial sales for the period dropped 21.1% (SOFOPA-Chile's CBI)

Bishop Camus stated in September that unemployment in Chile stood at over 20% and that in one parish he knew of, it stood at 90%. An article in La Segunda on September 13th gives us an idea of the extremes of poverty reached in Chile. It is designed to point out that the beggars in the streets are frauds who beg for "political reasons. The writer tells how a "decently dressed" man asked him for a bus fare while smoking a cigarette. "The scene of well-dressed beggars has become common in the centre (of Santiago)". He goes on to point out that there are 3,000 unfilled vacancies for the government scheme of "minimum employment" in the municipality of La Florida (see CCHR's Report No. 3 for reasons why). Then he says that every day between about 9.0 and 10.0 pm boys of 10 to 12 years old go knocking at doors asking for food but since they don't bring a tin with them (traditional beggar's equipment in Chile) it is obvious they don't care whether they get it or not. The third type of "political" beggar are the children in the centre of Santiago. The article ends with advice to arrest the lot and end this "campaign".

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

Since September 1973, 15 - 25 trade unions have been dissolved and new pro-junta ones created. In September this year, 12 new ones were created. Among those closed down were unions of fishermen, steel workers, book sellers and undertakers.

Mass sackings and redundancies continue. On October 17th, 500 workers of the South American Phosphate Company were sent on a "collective holiday".

On August 22nd trade union leaders in the textile firm Panal stated they were working on a five hour day and their salaries had been lowered. 80% of the workers are receiving 25-35,000 escudos a week and no lunch or fares as before (L1 = 16,000 escudos or 16 pesos in the new currency).

On October 2nd General Pinochet reiterated in a speech to the miners from the copper mine of El Teniente, South of Santiago, that there would be no trade union elections.

On September 13th a worker in the industry Madeco was arrested with his wife and nine year old daughter, allegedly for possessing arms. Many others workers were subsequently arrested. All disappeared.

JUNTA

A public relations officer is being appointed to each military unit throughout the country. They will be provided with books of instructions on what to say.

Relations are very cordial with the military dictatorships of Uruguay, Brazil and Guatemala and even when the executions took place in Spain in September, Pinochet sent a telegramme of solidarity to General Franco.

On September 11th 60,000 primary school children were taken to the National Stadium (the scene of horrific torture and death when it was used as a concentration camp after the coup) and made to shout "Viva el General Pinochet". It is estimated that 66,000 children at least have been made orphans by the junta.

At the demonstration in front of the Palace of La Moneda (where Allende was killed) on September 11th, Pinochet ordered all upper windows to be closed, the whole square was filled with police cordons and helicopters patrolled from the air. In his speech Pinochet said: "Reality has exposed the inadequacy of the concept of liberty as it was understood by classical liberalism and has made it necessary for us to redefine its authentic meaning".

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

"No one is persecuted for their ideas" (Admiral Arturo Troncoso, Ministerio of Education, August 14th).

In August, 44 people were arrested together in the Institute of Education in the University of Chile in Santiago. Altogether 71 people were arrested that month in that University. They all disappeared for a time and were all arrested by plain clothed members of the Intelligence Service.

On October 23rd, 23 people from the Catholic University were arrested.

Proclamation No. 63 of the Chief of the Zone of the State of Siege, Valparaíso says that permission for all courses, congresses and seminars is to be requested in triplicate 30 days before the event together with the subject what people will say, the names of participants, including secretaries, day, timetable, place and if possible, copies of the papers to be read.

In 1975 the number of university applicants from secondary schools dropped by 40%. 61.4% of the total of applicants were refused entry.

The matriculation in some universities has gone up 1.000% since the coup.

The junta is saving 4,000 million escudos in cutting down on primary school teachers. This sum will go to subsidize private schools "Private establishments should be duly financed to cope with the payment of their staff" (Decree Law 1,131)

A new "patriotic song" was written for September. Some lines from it are: "To the pit with the marxists, this land is not theirs, either they leave Chile or they die! They die!!... Let the marxist die, unworthy animal! Pride of Chile, greetings General!!!

REFUGEES

The state of the refugees who have sought asylum in the Venezuelan Embassy is causing a great concern. They are inadequately fed and have no access to medical treatment. Besides this, their safety is not guaranteed. The Ambassador allowed the DINA (secret police) to enter the embassy in February and a conscript who had sought asylum there would have been taken away but for the action of the other refugees. There is now a second member of the armed forces in the embassy --a military policeman who arrived there recently, his body covered in burns and marks of torture. He had escaped from the military hospital. The ambassador has not officially given him asylum even.

