

Chilean TUC names representative in Britain



The Central Unica de Trabajadores (CUT) was founded in 1953. Like the British TUC it was the single unifying trade union organisation in Chile, uniting workers of different political and religious beliefs. A major pillar of the Popular Unity Government of President Salvador Allende, it was the first organisation to be outlawed by the military Junta after the coup in 1973. CUT is recognised by the ILO, the ICFTU and the British TUC as the only authentic organisation representing the Chilean Trade Union Movement.

PEDRO CORNEJO — a Chilean refugee living in London is the representative in Britain of the Central Unica de Trabajadores de Chile (CUT) the Chilean TUC. Pedro Cornejo is a member of the General Council of CUT, having been a Trade Unionist for many years with experience as a leader both of textile workers and of peasants.

Since his appointment as CUT representative Pedro Cornejo has travelled extensively, addressing trade union meetings throughout Britain. He has represented CUT at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in Galway, and at the Annual Conferences of the Firebrigades Union and ASLEF. He has spoken to Trades Council meetings at Swansea, Great Yarmouth, Hull, Northampton, Amersham, Lewisham, Manchester, Cambridge, North Staffs, Oxford, Ipswich, Luton, and Bristol.

Born in Palmilla, in the province of Colchagua Chile in 1930, the son of a peasant family, Pedro Cornejo had to work from his earliest years learning to read and write at a rural school.

In search of a better education, he went to Santiago, the capital of Chile and took what work he could to support himself and to pay for his study at night classes.

He became a loom operator in a textile factory, and later worked as a mechanic on textile machinery. Well-known and respected by his fellow workers, he was elected president of the union branch in the Supertex factory for five successive years.

But he had not forgotten the misery and exploitation which were the lot of the peasants from whose ranks he had come. Determined to fight on their behalf, he joined the National Federation of Peasants and Indigenous Peoples of Chile, and became its National Organiser.

He visited every corner of Chile, encouraging peasants to join the union.

As a fruit of his work RANQUIL Chile's most powerful peasant confederation was formed. Pedro Cornejo was successively General Secretary and President of Ranquil which grew during the time of Popular Unity to a membership of 200,000.

A peasant delegate to the Congress of the CUT, Pedro Cornejo was elected to the General Council in January 1973, with the special duty of organising its National Peasant Department.

He held this position at the time of the coup in September 1973. Immediately Pedro Cornejo joined the underground anti-fascist movement. He was trapped by the military intelligence services of the Junta and spent two long years shunted from one prison camp to another. He was imprisoned and tortured in the infamous National Stadium in Santiago, as well as at Chacabuco, Puchuncavi and Tres Alamos Concentration Camps.

Pedro came to Britain in October 1975 with his wife and three children. His release was in part due to the work of a British Trade Union branch (NUPE) who adopted Pedro when he was a prisoner and brought pressure to bear for his release.

'In Britain, CUT asks trade unions to extend their efforts to adopt imprisoned trade unionists in Chile. We ask for pressure to force the Junta to produce the Disappeared Prisoners. We ask that Britain Halt the Supply of arms and military training to the Junta.

And in response to the requests spelled out to us by our leaders inside Chile we urge that wherever possible trade unionists refuse to work where trade with Chile is involved. Foreign trade is the Junta's lifeline, and we must cut it.'

- Pedro Cornejo

MSS. 21/980

SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF CHILE

PUBLIC MEETING

Saturday September 10th

10 a.m. to 12 noon in the Shopping Precinct, Coventry

TO COMMEMORATE THE 4th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BLOODY MILITARY COUP WHICH ESTABLISHED THE PRESENT FASCIST DICTATORSHIP IN CHILE.

On September 11th 1973 the elected president was murdered, along with 40,000 supporters of the Popular Unity Government, and a reign of terror imposed. The Chilean Congress and Senate were dissolved, and all political parties and trade union activity have been outlawed. Thousands of Chileans have been imprisoned and tortured; hundreds have 'disappeared' altogether; and tens of thousands have been forced into exile. 40 of these political refugees are now living in Coventry.

Speakers invited to the Rally include:

Pedro Cornejo - Representing the outlawed Chilean T.U.C.
Alex Kitson - Executive Officer, T.&G.W.U.
Bob Wright - Executive Officer, A.U.E.W.
A member of the delegation from the N.U.M. Executive which recently visited Chile.
Martin Flannery M.P.
4 Coventry M.P.'s
Coventry Trade Union Officials and Convenors.
Coventry Trades Council.
Gonzalo Chaves - Argentine Trade Union leader (exiled).
Chilean exiles and refugees in Coventry.

Music from 3 Chilean Folk Groups.

- * PUBLICISE THIS MEETING WIDELY
- * BRING YOUR TRADE UNION AND PARTY BANNERS
- * AFFILIATE TO THE CHILE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN
- * ADOPT CHILEAN DETAINEES AND DISAPPEARED PRISONERS
- * NO AID, NO TRADE, NO LINKS WITH THE FASCIST MILITARY JUNTA.

SUPPORT THE CHILEAN RESISTANCE !