

TRIALS IN THE ARMED FORCES IN CHILE

There are two large trials currently taking place in Chile in the Navy and the Air Force. The Chilean armed forces are by no means in full support of the coup as was seen initially last summer when 57 Air Force officers were tried. International pressure was successful then in causing death sentences to be commuted to life imprisonment. We hope that in this case, even if we can't secure the release of the prisoners we will be able to remind the junta of the continuing concern of people all over the world about events in Chile.

Arrests 52 sailors were arrested in the first few days of August 1973 at Valparaiso and Talcahuano after writing to a number of left wing leaders to warn them of the dangers of a coup, and refusing to take part in a "dress rehearsal" ordered by their officers. 5 civilians were arrested in the week after the coup and are being tried with the sailors. 17 air force cadets were arrested in February 1974. It is believed that they had attempted to support the elected government.

Treatment Almost all of these people have been tortured and for long periods deprived of medical treatment. They have been held incommunicado for months on end, unable to see their lawyers. Indeed, four of the lawyers in the naval trial were themselves arrested soon after the coup. They have been shifted from place to place and rarely allowed to see their families.

Charges The sailors and civilians have been charged with sedition and attempted mutiny. Exact charges in the air force trial are not known but are believed to be based on acts supposedly committed before the coup. This is in itself illegal. Sentences called for go up to 20 years for the naval defendants and 25 years for the air force.

Trials The naval trial is being conducted under the Code of Military Justice in Time of Peace. This means a very complicated procedure which is still only in its early stages. The trial in the Air Force is taking place through a secret Court Martial. It was due to start in mid December but the preliminaries are being dragged out.

ACTION

- I) Sign the petitions which are being sent to Callaghan and Pinochet and circulate them among your friends. Further copies available from the Chile Committee for Human Rights
- 2) Write to any or all of the following people. Letters to Chilean officials should be extremely polite and the points to make are the prolonged detentions without trial, the widespread use of torture, the secrecy fo the air force trial and the illegality of trying people for defending a constitutionally elected government.

People to write to:-

- i) James Callaghan - to Callaghan you should ask that
 The Foreign Office the British Government instruct the
 Whitehall Embassy in Santiago to issue a formal
 London protest.
- ii) Admiral Jose Torribio Merino Castro - Merino is Commander in Chief of
 Commandante de la Armada the Navy and a member of the junta
 Edificio Diego Portales He has final responsibility for
 Santiago de Chile naval trials.
- iii) Vice-Admiral Justiniano - thos is one of the judges in
 Juez Naval charge of the naval trial.
 Academia de Guerra
 Valparaiso Chile
- iv) General Gustavo Leigh Guzman - Leigh is Commander in Chief
 Comandante de la Fuerza Aerea of the Air Force and a member
 Edificio Diego Portales of the junta with responsibilit
 Santiago de Chile for air force trials.

Thank you for your support.