

URUGUAY REPORT 1

November
December

COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN URUGUAY

10p.

EDITORIAL * EDITORIAL

The first bulletin of the newly formed Committee for Human Rights in Uruguay appears at a moment when the need for a campaign on behalf of the victims of the Uruguayan dictatorship could not be more urgent. The document* published in this bulletin gives dramatic evidence of the recent wave of repression, directed particularly at Uruguayans living in Buenos Aires.

This monthly bulletin aims to publicise regularly examples of the barbarity of the present Uruguayan regime. However our objectives are broader than to simply draw attention to the constant violation of human rights. We hope to produce a bulletin that will help us all understand the present situation. Thus while the bulletin will provide information both on acts of repression and on the political and economic events within the country, it will also print articles analysing the background to the establishment of the civil-military dictatorship in the country.

Repressive regimes such as those of the southern cone of Latin America today, do not come into being by accident. If so many people who have either died at the hands of the dictatorships or who are at present in prison are not to suffer for nothing, we need to study the processes involved in the establishment of the regimes, and learn from that.

Uruguay, it must not be forgotten, was once known as the Switzerland of Latin America, and its attachment to the values of Western liberal democracies was acclaimed by observers. An understanding of the nature of the decay in this social democracy is thus of relevance to all countries who at present look with pride on their parliaments and liberal freedoms.

The information offered in the bulletin is however a means to an end. The end is to persuade all sectors of the British public who feel as we do, a sense of revulsion at the terror created by the Uruguayan dictatorship, to do all they can to give us concrete aid to the victims of the regime and to join with us in our campaign to end the dictatorship.

We will inform you regularly of the achievements of the campaign, of prisoners released, or of help given to exiles. But we would like to hear from you too; any ideas you have to help the campaign, and offers of support- eg, by writing letters on behalf of those in prison to the Uruguayan government- would be welcome. The following is a list of our general objectives, and the kind of concrete action we believe necessary:

- 1.) To put pressure on the British government to grant visas to Uruguayans trying to leave the country or to escape the wave of repression in Argentina.
- 2.) To provide material aid for those Uruguayans at present forced to live in exile.
- 3.) To persuade the British labour movement to mount a campaign similar to that over Chile, which includes Uruguay and the southern cone as a whole.
- 4.) To give support to prisoners in Uruguay.
- 5.) To provide publicity and information on the present situation.
- 6.) To campaign against the giving of aid to Uruguay and against foreign investment in the country.

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We also have available a bulletin on Trade Unions and Repression in Uruguay, and one on basic background information (statistics, etc.). A limited number of copies are available at 10 p. each.

REPRESSION ON BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER PLATE

The following is a summarised extract from a document produced by Resistencia Obrera Estudiantil (ROE), a Uruguayan political organisation at present organising resistance to the dictatorship. The document outlines concrete examples of repression under the present regime, with particular emphasis on the situation faced by Uruguayan refugees living in Buenos Aires. It also gives evidence of corruption within the Uruguayan and Argentinian armed forces.

Repression against those opposing the dictatorship is not limited to Uruguayan territory. Since 1974 Uruguayan military units have been active in Argentina. Parillo, Levif, and Patronica were murdered in September of that year in Buenos Aires. In December Floreal Garcia, Graciela Stefanel, Mirtha Hernandez, Hector Drum, and Maria de los Angeles Corlo de Brum, members of the MLN (the Tupamaros guerrilla organisation-eds.) were kidnapped in Buenos Aires and later appeared murdered near Soca, some 60 kilometres from Montevideo.

Persecution continued towards the end of 1974 with the disappearance of Dergan, and the imprisonment and torture of many other comrades in Buenos Aires.

After the March 24th military coup in Argentina this year, persecution of members of the Uruguayan resistance increased. Acting with the totally blatant complicity of the Argentine armed forces, Uruguayan police and military units have unleashed a brutal offensive against opposition activists living in Argentina. This plan coincides with a policy of generalised persecution on legal, labour, and other levels, against the tens of thousands Uruguayan workers who have crossed the frontier to Argentina due to the impossibility of using their labour power in the stagnated Uruguayan economy. It is in this context that the following facts have emerged:

- 1.) Within days of the military coup in Argentina, on March 28th, three ROE militants were arrested when trying to cross the Uruguayan frontier; they were taking propaganda material to a resistance nuclei within the country. They were Elida Alvarez de Anzalone, Ricardo Gil and Luis Ferreira.
- 2.) A further three ROE members were kidnapped in the next few days in Buenos Aires: Telba Juarez, Eduardo Chizzola, and Ary Cabrera. The bodies of the first two were found riddled with bullets in the streets of the Argentine capital. It was at this point that bodies began to be washed up onto

the Uruguayan shores of the River Plate often impossible to identify, and bearing clear signs of having been atrociously tortured.

3.) On May 18th Zelmar Michelini, former senator for the Frente Amplio (left wing coalition that contested the 1971 elections-eds.) and Hector Gutierrez Ruiz, former president of the Uruguayan Chamber of Deputies and member of the Blanco party, were kidnapped from their homes in the centre of Buenos Aires. They had been refugees in Argentina since the civil-military coup of June 27th 1973. Their bodies were found, riddled with bullets, on May 21st, together with those of Rosario Barredo de Whitelaw and William Whitelaw, Uruguayan refugees who had also been kidnapped some days before.

4.) On June 8th, Gerardo Gatti, ROE leader, trade union militant, founder of the Workers' National Confederation-CNE, and former editor of the newspaper "Epoca", was arrested in his home in Buenos Aires. A writ of habeas corpus was lodged by his mother on June 15th. The Argentine authorities informed the judge that Gatti was not detained in Argentina.

During the following days numerous attempts were made at national and international levels to find out where he was being held... the Justice Minister, the president of the Inter-ministerial commission (Justice and Interior), and all the civil and military authorities consulted denied any knowledge of the affair.

5.) On June 20th, Enrique Rodriguez Larreta, ROE member, journalist, and former student leader, was arrested in the centre of Buenos Aires. Efforts made by his father and wife to locate him were unsuccessful. A writ of habeas corpus was served, but to no avail.

In the process of making enquiries about his fate, both his wife and father were themselves kidnapped. There has been no news of them to this day.

6.) On the nights of July 13th and 14th, several houses inhabited by Uruguayan refugees were raided, and many people were kidnapped. One of them was Leon Duarte, ROE leader, founder of the CNT,

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member of its secretariat, and leader of the rubber workers' union. Amongst the others were Jose Felix Diaz, of Spanish nationality, (husband of Elena Quinteros de Diaz, the teacher pulled out of the Venezuelan embassy in Montevideo by a group of policemen-see "Events" section of this report-eds) Margarita Michelini, daughter of Zelmar, and her husband Raul. Amongst those kidnapped were two children, one 18 months, the other 20 days old.

7.) On August 14th Washington Perez, former leader of the rubber workers' union, arrived in Alvesta, Sweden, as a refugee. He had been living with his family in Argentina for two years.

8.) In a statement Perez revealed that, in the period between mid June and the end of July he had been forcibly taken by members of the Uruguayan army and police force to a house in Buenos Aires on various occasions, where Gerardo Gatti and Leon Duarte were held. He saw both men alive several weeks after they had been kidnapped, at a time when the Argentine government had denied any knowledge of them. Perez was able to identify some of their captors as members of the Uruguayan armed forces.

9.) In the statement Perez points out that both men had been barbarically tortured. The police and soldiers who held them wanted him to act as an intermediary for the negotiation of a large ransom, to be gathered in Europe. They said they would release the men in exchange for the money.

10.) A photo was taken of Gatti and Pere Duarte, holding a current newspaper with the date clearly visible, to prove that the men were still alive. This photo, which Perez brought with him, corroborates his statement. It also fits in with the statements made by the rest of his family, who were present when he was taken off by the kidnapers to the house, and by his

son, who was taken with him on many occasions.

11.) The declarations made by Perez in Alvesta are exactly the same as those he made to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Buenos Aires before his departure, in the first days of August.

12.) Information in our possession confirms that a large group of Uruguayan soldiers and policemen are active in repressive operations in Argentina. Amongst the leaders of this group are Comisario Hugo Campos Hermida, Lieutenant-Colonel Barrios, Major Cordero and Lieutenant Silveira. These men carry out their operations with the full support of the Argentine military, using vehicles and other military equipment without any attempt at concealment.

On the other hand, we can also confirm that several of the people detained in the circumstances described above have now been taken to Uruguay where they have been interrogated in military buildings*

13.) These facts prove what was rightly supposed for some time: the frontier between Uruguay and Argentina is no longer in existence for the forces of repression. All Uruguayan refugees living in Argentina find themselves in imminent danger. Acting with the complicity of the Argentine authorities the Uruguayan army and police can kidnap or murder with impunity.

14.) These facts also clearly show the degree of corruption reached by the Uruguayan army and police; extortion has now been added to the habitual practices of murder and torture.

*-The ROE document was produced before the regime announced the discovery of the "PVP". (See "Events" section). The fact that many of the alleged members of this group, who are now imprisoned in Uruguay, were kidnapped in Buenos Aires, is further confirmation for 12.).

THE FALL IN REAL WAGES

According to figures released by the Directorate of statistics and censuses, an official body, real wages have fallen consistently over the last three years. Comparing the highest level of real wages since 1968 (an index of 119.65 in January 1971) with the latest available figures (77.03 in June 1976), the overall fall is 35.6 per cent, an annual decrease of approximately 7.0%. The government has granted wage

increases on various occasions, but these have tended to do little more than delay the speed at which real wages diminish. According to the Uruguayan economist Luis Faroppa, the recent increases (11/74, 20%; 2/75, 15%; 4/75, 8.5 per cent; 11/75, 22%; and 6/76, 20%) have been absorbed by price increases within a period of one or two months. The situation is worst for low income groups. -PT.

This is a brief survey of some of the most important events in Uruguay over the last few months.

June

12th- President Juan Maria Bordaberry was forced to resign after disagreeing with the armed forces over plans for the constitutional future of the country. He was replaced by 79-year old Alberto Demichelli, president of the

Council of State, a body appointed after the dissolution of Congress in June 1973.

July

2nd- Venezuela broke off diplomatic relations with Uruguay. The decision was taken as a result of an incident at the Venezuelan embassy in Montevideo.

The ambassador, Julio Ramos, said that plain clothes Uruguayan policemen had entered embassy grounds, pursuing a Uruguayan woman who wanted political asylum. Embassy employees who went to help her were struck in the face, and she was dragged out to a waiting car. Ramos said the incident was a "flagrant infringement of Venezuelan sovereignty" and a violation of the international right of asylum.

14th- The Council of the Nation (composed of the 25 members of the Council of state, appointed by the executive on military advice, and the 21 most senior members of the armed forces) selected 71 year old lawyer Dr. Aparicio Mendez to be the next president of the country. Mendez was president of the Council of State, and therefore was formally next in the line of succession.

September

1st- Aparicio Mendez was sworn in as the new president. His first step was to sign Institutional Act Number 4, depriving thousands of people of their political rights. Mendez had earlier referred to this measure as an "administrative purge". Anyone who stood in the 1966 or 1971 elections as a candidate for a Marxist or pro-Marxist party, or who has been tried for crimes against the nation (lesa nacion) lost all political rights, including the vote, for 15 years. Candidates of all other parties, and all members of the national executives of the parties, lost all rights except the right to vote. In fact, a whole generation of politicians lost their rights, with the exception of those holding office.

The new president also abolished the Supreme Court by decree, replacing it by the Ministry of Justice. Mendez declared that "my hand may tremble but my will

shall not falter in signing any measures that may be necessary."

The most significant change in Mendez's cabinet was the departure of economy minister Alejandro Vegh Villegas, who resigned in mid-August. Vegh, who had been a potential presidential candidate at one stage in July, took a place on the Council of State, thus avoiding the purge. He was replaced by his under secretary for taxation, Valentin Arismendi.

mid September- Hearings in the United States Congress on human rights in Uruguay continue, approaching the stage at which a vote will be taken on whether to cut off military aid to the country or not.

23rd- Anniversary of the death of Jose Gervasio Artigas, Uruguay's national hero. In a speech the commander in chief of the army, General Julio Vadora denied that human rights are violated in Uruguay. "Let our people know this: the imprisoned delinquents live in model establishments which cost the country thousands of millions to run".

25th- In a speech, Brigadier Jorge Borad said "as a member of the armed forces I feel totally committed to the revolutionary process which will rescue this country from chaos and anarchy, forced upon it by international subversion."

25th- General Liber Seregni, presidential candidate for the Frente Amplio left wing coalition in 1971, was taken out of jail briefly so that new charges could be made against him in a military court. The charges include "violation of the constitution" (Seregni was convicted in trying to get the main generals to respect the results of the 1971 elections), illegal possession of arms (the military produced a witness who said Seregni carried a sub machine gun) and "usurpation of public functions" (young members of the Frente Amplio had cleaned beaches and streets in the months before the 1971 elections, and the military now say this was an usurpation of municipal functions, for which the party leader is responsible. Reporters who saw Seregni said he was looking much thinner than he had been before.

28th- The United States House of Representatives endorsed an earlier vote by the senate to cut off all military aid to Uruguay. The move cuts off planned aid of 3 million US dollars

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but leaves intact the regular AID budget of 12 million dollars. Nevertheless, the Congressional decision was seen as a precedent and as an extremely important indictment of the human rights situation in Uruguay. Congressman Koch described Uruguay as the "torture chamber of the continent". The vote was taken after hearings in which the former Blanco party presidential candidate Wilson Ferreira Aldunate and Amnesty International made reports.

October

First days of the month....

-Although the president and high military authorities refrained from commenting on the adverse vote in the US Congress, many lower officials publicly attacked the move. Brigadier Jorge Borad, now head of the state petroleum company ANCAP, somehow combined reference to US defoliation policy in Viet Nam, with the suggestion that, when faced with a real challenge, Washington had gone soft and broken out in a "rash of puritanism". Other spokesmen referred to the assassinations of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King as evidence of the US's disregard for human rights.

-Reliable sources reported that a meeting of the outlawed Workers' National Convention (CNT) took place somewhere in Montevideo. A statement was produced denouncing the arrest of 135 workers and trade unionists. Particular emphasis was placed on the case of Luis Iguini, member of the CNT's secretariat, the Latin American Federation of Public Employees, and the World Federation of Trade Unions. The statement expresses fears for his life. Carlos Julio Pereyra, member of the Blanco party and vice presidential candidate in the 1971 elections, resigned from a teaching post in protest at the removal of political rights decreed in September.

6th- According to the pro-government "El Pais" newspaper, the regime was less worried by the ending of military aid than by the possibility of international lending agencies withholding credits. In particular, "El Pais" claimed the government feared that the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) might withhold loans.

6th- Brun Cardoso, member of the Council of state, described the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as atrocities, and said that the US Congress had no authority to "refer to our country's form of government or politics".

7th- "El Dia" reported that a summit

conference between the government and top military heads had been planned for November/December, to discuss the country's institutional future. 7th- Former president Juan Maria Bordaberry, General Mario Oscar Aguirrondo, Alberto Gallinal Hever, and four others were exempted from the decree removing political rights. The total number of people affected was calculated by some observers as 20,000.

8th- The military magazine "El Soldado" retracted from statements made in the previous issue. That issue had proposed an alliance of Southern cone dictatorships to defend their interests against Washington. "El Soldado" now said that the critical comments it made were not directed at the US government, or the Pentagon, but against Congressman Edward Koch.

9th- The peso was devalued by 1.9 per cent. This was the 16th "mini devaluation" of the year. Fuel prices were put up 13-20 per cent.

19th- Ernest Siracusa, US ambassador in Uruguay, gave an interview for "El Dia" on his return from a trip to Washington. He said "the embassy in Montevideo and the State Department opposed the ending of military aid to Uruguay" but were overruled by Congress. Siracusa talked to Senator Edward Koch and representatives of Amnesty International in an attempt to "give them a better perspective on Uruguay than the one they have at the moment." He denied Koch's accusation that the embassy distorted information on the Uruguayan situation.

12th- The "La Manana" newspaper was closed down for 24 hours for reporting statements made by the president. Mendez told a reporter that the American Democratic party, with Senator Edward Kennedy "at its head" was an "ally of subversion". He also accused Kennedy of being a supporter of "Fidel Castro, who now represents the communist group... but they will pay for it dearly," he added.

The president's comments ranged over a variety of countries which had allowed, in his view, "subversives" to become powerful. "Peron in Argentina- Peron welcomed them with open arms. There you are. Colombia hosted them, there's a state of siege there now. Peru also welcomed them and even began a move towards the left but it has had to reverse its policies now. Ecuador is hanging between life and death", the president continued, "thanks to subversion. Mexico, which received them with open arms, is up in the air. France is paying for it." Mendez also said that Uruguay was overcoming its crisis

slowly, because of internally and externally negative factors. Amongst these factors were "the pressure of Wilson Ferreira Aldunate and the subversives in general." The armed forces made sure these comments were not widely publicised. The government department of Public relations produced a statement "banning the wording of comments attributed to the president in an article in the...edition of "La Manana".

21st- The government decreed Institutional Act Number 5 on human rights. The act allows "the tutelage" of international bodies on human and individual rights under various conditions. These are (a) investigations into human rights in Uruguay will only be allowed by "permanent international professional tribunals designated with a maximum degree of impartiality".

(b) denunciations on violations of human rights will only be accepted when they are made by states which have signed international conventions also signed by Uruguay, and when these states allow Uruguay to investigate the human rights situation within their own territory.

These conditions are described as mechanisms to ensure the "depoliticisation of international bodies."

Diplomatic sources revealed that the decree came as a result of negotiations with a special envoy from the US government. The envoy's visit was also linked to the publication, some days earlier, of segments of the Congressional resolution on human rights in Uruguay in the local papers. One of the government's motives was described as a preoccupation that the adverse Congressional vote would affect the availability of much needed financial credits.

27th- More than 100 members of the Blanco party met in a restaurant in Montevideo to congratulate Carlos Sarachaga, who resigned from the electoral court in protest at the decree removing political rights. One of those present said that the two traditional political parties should fight for democratic rights for the whole population.

27th- The Communist Party's clandestine publication, "The Letter", was reported to be circulating once more in Montevideo.

28th- The combined forces (army and police) claimed they had discovered and broken up a new subversive organisation, called the "Party for Popular Victory".

According to the government, this organisation was based in Buenos Aires.

The security forces said 62 people had been arrested in connection with the PVP, and named 14. Exiles in Europe immediately realised that some of the names belonged to people who had been kidnapped in Argentina during June and July. This was considered as further evidence of a high degree of cooperation between Uruguayan and Argentine military forces in their respective campaigns to eliminate dissidents.

The 14 alleged members of the PVP were shown to national and foreign reporters in Montevideo. Amongst them were Maria Monica Solino Platero (refugee kidnapped 8th July in Buenos Aires), Sara Rita Mendez Lompodio and Ana Ines Quadros de Strauch (both refugees, both kidnapped in Buenos Aires on 13th July, and Victor Hugo Lian Pelaez (kidnapped 14th July). Nine out of the fourteen had been kidnapped in Buenos Aires.

The government said the PVP originated from two Marxist groups that were broken up by the security forces. The party was using Buenos Aires as its organisational centre, and its leaders were arrested as they attempted to enter Uruguay in a caravan. Information obtained led to the arrest of the remaining membership. The statement does not specify whether or not these arrests took place within Uruguay.

A series of later statements made a variety of accusations against the PVP. It had kidnapped Jewish businessmen in Buenos Aires to obtain funds; it was planning to assassinate the Interior Minister, Uruguayan ambassadors abroad, journalists, and political figures. The list included former Economy Minister Vegg Villegas. It formed a "propaganda machine" based in Europe, with the object of "distorting" Uruguay's international image.

"In 1975", one of the statements says, "a press campaign against Uruguay was begun under the control of the well known subversives Hugo Cores and Luis Fresno in Europe, ... using false propaganda on tortures and kidnappings..." (Both men are exiled trade unionists).

28th- The Committee for Solidarity with the Uruguayan people, based in Mexico City, announced that a further 27 Uruguayan citizens had been kidnapped in the first half of October, in Buenos Aires. The committee said "these people must be added to the sixty Uruguayans who have been kidnapped in Argentina during this year, in the course of an offensive by the Uruguayan armed forces, with direct collaboration by Argentine armed forces!"

URUGUAY IN 1976 - AN INTERPRETATION

The many contradictions within the present Uruguayan regime have been underlined in recent months with the various government changes, the renewed repression against Uruguayans living in Buenos Aires as well as within the country, and the confused news items on divisions within the armed forces and between them and the president, Aparicio Mendez. The attempt to keep alive the spectre of subversion indicated in the recent announcement of the "discovery" of a new revolutionary organisation, may well reflect the fact that this is one of the few means of holding together the disparate elements which make up the government. This article offers some interpretation of the events outlined in the chronology. It is necessarily brief, and more detailed information will be provided in later articles dealing with the role of the military.

The fall of Bordaberry in June of this year was a reflection of the uncertainties confronting the regime over future strategy and of its internal contradictions. Discussions over the future of the country had been going on for some time behind the scenes, as elections according to the (suspended) constitution were scheduled for this November, and some type of decision had to be taken. The dilemma facing the regime went deeper than the question of these elections, and concerned the conflicting proposals put forward on the country's future development by the different sectors which have jointly controlled the country since the coup of June 1973. Three different points of view emerged-

- (1) Bordaberry's project,
- (2) Economy Minister Vegh Villega's,
- (3) The military's conflicting points of view.

Bordaberry and the "New State"

I have heard Bordaberry most frequently described as "mediocre" and "ambitious". He is a wealthy landowner, a conservative Catholic, and a fervent anti-communist. He was first a Blanco, (with strong ties with the landowner's Liga Federal de Accion Ruralista), but later became a Colorado, and was a minister during the Pacheco Areco government (1967-1972). Elected president in 1971, in what is generally recognised as a fraudulent count, he became the civilian figurehead of the military regime after the 1973 coup.

The relationship between him and the armed forces was always based on mutual convenience. They needed a civilian facade for international respectability; they also needed civilians to help with the process of government, which was unfamiliar to them. Thus they allied with various technocrats and mediocre politicians who saw it as their mission to cleanse the system of subversives. Within this framework, Bordaberry never had too much room to manoeuvre, but he could at times take advantage of divisions within the armed forces.

The Generals may well have preferred Bordaberry to remain president until his term of office expired, but he precipitated his own fall by insisting on developing a plan for the country's future which clearly found little sympathy among them. The plan was outlined in two lengthy memoranda in December 1975 and June 1976.

The central idea is that Marxism is an aggressive force and some kind of permanent defense against it is needed. Bordaberry therefore proposed the building of a New State, based on the free enterprise system, but with a unified central power (himself) overseeing the whole process of development. Political parties and traditional forms of democracy (freedom of speech/association, etc.) are always prejudicial to the national interest as they are manipulated by Marxists. Thus there would be no political parties or elections. A Council of the Nation would elect a powerful president. The armed forces would be given a permanent role as guardians of the nation, but would not be involved directly in government. Currents of opinion, on the line of the Opus Dei in Spain would be able to influence government decisions, but not to organise as political parties.

Vegh Villegas and Siracusa

In opposition to Bordaberry stood Vegh Villegas, with a close relationship with the US ambassador Ernest Siracusa, and supported by economically powerful groups such as the financiers linked to international capitalism. These groups worried by a situation in which the "rules of the game" were not defined and too much depended on the whims of the military, favoured a limited liberalisation.

Vegh himself clashed with the military on many occasions, frequently over the inflated pay increases they demanded. Nor were they entirely sympathetic to

his intention of dismantling all state intervention in the economy, on the monetarist lines advocated by the Chicago school of economics.

For Vegh and his friends, some form of limited opening of the system, involving the two traditional political parties would offer institutional stability whilst removing all real opposition, allowing them to pursue their political and economic interests.

Vegh's resignation is linked to his failure to get this plan accepted in the armed forces. He also went because of Aparicio Mendez's first measures. As a councillor of state, however, he remains extremely relevant, much more than Bordaberry, for example. His successor, the colourless Arismendi, does not have the contacts or support that Vegh still enjoys in powerful economic groups.

The Military Go to the Cinema

Divisions in the military make it difficult to define their hopes for the future. The divisions are not so much on ideological lines, as some members of the Communist Party have hoped, but are more related to personal ambitions. The former Frente Amplio Senator, murdered in Buenos Aires early this year, Zelmar Michelini, once compared the situation to people looking for seats in the cinema. When there are no seats on the right you are forced to take a seat on the left, but move back to the right again as soon as there is one vacant.

With General Christi usually described as a right winger, Vadora and the Zubia brothers put in the centre, and General "Goyo" Alvarez considered a nationalist, the military is concerned with maintaining their conflicting ambitions in a delicate balance. They would therefore reject the idea of governing directly as a junta, as this would make it difficult to hold the regime together.

The Generals have a long term interest in ensuring that any limited liberalisation will not unleash the enmity which many hold against them. Added to this is a reluctance to give up any of the power, prestige, and economic advantage which they have never before enjoyed as an institution, and which they are now making the most of.

They are, however, aware of the need to give the regime some sort of legitimacy to attempt to end their isolation from the mass of the people, and to ensure against the fragmentation of the force. In this context, the

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pressure which the United States may bring to bear on the lines of the Vegh project will be important.

Overall, the military seem to be in a state of confusion. Evidence emerging from the Washington Perez story, as well as recent news of a dollar racket are indications of a deep malaise within the armed forces. Exactly how much the higher ranks are able to control the lower is difficult to say, and in many ways the situation is probably similar to that in Argentina where torture and murder are carried out with impunity.

The recent purges of all opposition elements is perhaps an expression of the uncertainty and fear within the armed forces. The military must be aware of the latent opposition it faces. The Uruguayan population is small, and most Uruguayans know of at least one person who has been imprisoned and tortured. The murder of Michelini and Gásterrez Ruiz (a Blanco, former president of the Chamber of Deputies), two respected members of the middle class, deeply shocked even members of the army.

At the moment, elections of an extremely limited kind are planned for 1981 (one candidate only is to stand, selected by those sectors of the two traditional parties that are still allowed some sort of an existence). But the uncertainties and contradictions have grown recently, and it is clear that the essential dilemmas have not yet been solved. As far as the economically dominant sectors are concerned, the military have fulfilled their function of protecting capitalism against the threat posed by the working class and middle sectors in the sixties and seventies, helping them over come the internal crisis of the economic system. For them military rule is simply a transition, a "state of exception". But the subjective views of the military themselves are important. They may be forced to make some concessions, but as the new draft law to deal with subversives indicates, they are making sure all opposition is eliminated before it has any opportunity to oppose.

The high level of emigration of the Uruguayan population over the last years is without doubt the objective consequence of policies carried out by the military government. The government's aim is to conceal and to minimise the effects of problems in the labour market, caused by disastrous economic policies.

The large number of people who have left the country between 1965 and 1976 include those escaping political persecution, as well as those who went because of a chronic situation of underemployment and unemployment.

The government's policy is to attempt to diminish in the short term the high degree of economic and social tension provoked by the drastic changes in the economic and social systems.

The figures speak for themselves: first of all they show that the country lost % of its population during the period mentioned above, ie around 300,000 people out of a population of 2,760,000. This is unique in Latin America and probably in the world; it represents two thirds of the expected population growth between 1963 and 1976.

A phenomenon of this magnitude causes wide and deep effects on the whole social structure, and these may not be resolved for some time to come. In other words, the country has reached maybe the worst situation in its history in terms of human resources: skilled workers, professionals, and people with higher education have left. Uruguay, as is well known, had until the latter half of the sixties a very effective and well developed education system, which broke down as the result of repeated government interventions. The primary and secondary levels as well as the university lost the best of their staff and lecturers after 1973. This has caused severe damage to the system as a whole, which will take some time to repair.

The average age of those who emigrate is less than that of the population as a whole - these people are more closely integrated into the economic system, and are clearly crucial for further economic development. Although more men emigrate than women, there is a high proportion of young married couples, some with children. This represents further damage interms of the demographic conditions for population growth.

Long lasting economic stagnation is the basic cause of high emigration. The economy is unable to offer the number of jobs needed by the population, and it consequently cannot absorb those reaching the age at which they become economically active. The economic crisis has also resulted in falling wages for the working class and middle sectors (particularly after 1968), and the gap between professional qualifications and the type of jobs available has widened. Uruguay's position in the international division of labour, that of virtual economic dependence on the export of meat and wool, has also contributed towards economic stagnation, and thus indirectly towards emigration.

The rise of social contradictions in Uruguayan society led to a situation where the economically dominant groups (landowners, bankers, etc.) fought to maintain their economic and social positions, thus creating a general crisis in the political system.

The armed forces and the groups allied with international capital are now unable to define any feasible national project. They have betrayed our national consciousness, imprisoned or expelled what were without doubt the best of our young and skilled human resources, and destroyed the possibility of a national recovery over the short and long terms- BJ.

LETTERS * LETTERS *

Committee for Human Rights in Uruguay
London

My father is on the verge of death in a prison in Uruguay. There are crimes which we all lament, which we all feel responsible for even when we are miles away. Crimes which disturb and move any person whose sensitivity is developed. Hence, this denunciation, and why I am asking for your help, and the help of any man or woman of goodwill who may be able to interced in order to

save my father.

With pain we read a cable (18th June) from Mexico City, which reports that as a result of physical torture and harassment, my father, the cinematographer Lirio Rodriguez, has been driven insane. A prisoner at the age of 67, he was arrested during the last cultural purge in Uruguay, in January of this year. At the time of his arrest he was at the offices of the film distribution centre which he directs, and in full use of his mental faculties.PTO.

More than that, he enjoyed an admirable lucidity, an enviable vitality and zest for life. For seven months they have tortured him systematically, kept him bound hand and foot, subjected him to the cold and humidity for which our country is known, and developed the most refined torture they have taken from him his medicine, needed because he suffers from chronic asthma attacks.

The Uruguayan authorities are not responsible for a person having a heart attack. What could be more "natural" than an old man, nearly seventy, "dying from shock" on entering prison for the first time? But this is a crime and it is my duty to denounce it, to try to get people to help me prevent it.

-A. Rodriguez.

DRAFT LAW ON ESTADO PELIGROSO

The draft law on "estado peligroso" (state of danger) presented to the Council of State for approval on 21st October is the regime's latest attempt according to right-wing newspaper "El Pais" (21/10/76) to "solve the problem which has been created by the lack of legal mechanisms to combat sedition".

The grounds for such a declaration are so wide and so vague as to make possible the arrest of a considerable proportion of the population.

It is not necessary to act subversively, but simply to "show an inclination to commit crimes against the nation (lesa nacion)". Certain vaguely defined ideas are termed the "ideology of violence", and holding these ideas is considered proof of conduct revealing an inclination to commit a crime. In other words, you can be imprisoned for thinking dangerously.

Penalties (article 3) include internment in a work camp, living in certain areas of the country and not others, and reporting regularly to the authorities, giving an account of recent activities.

Article 8 makes those in prison now subject to this law. Generally, the vague wording of the whole document leaves a tremendous amount to the discretion of civil judges, appointed by the regime.

Other provisions of the draft have similarly disturbing implications, but it is hoped that this brief analysis will give some idea of the regime's intentions. The law will clearly create much fear and uncertainty amongst the population (who you talk to, the books you possess, etc.) - JP/PT.

URUGUAY IN THE SOUTHERN CONE

People are becoming increasingly aware that repression and the violation of human rights occurs on a continental scale in Latin America, particularly in 1976. Uruguay, as one of the smaller countries in a group now entirely controlled by military dictatorships, (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile) is one specific example of what is happening to the whole continent.

In our next issue we plan to write at length on these countries, the "conosur". For the moment, we will just outline some of the main similarities between these countries today. (There

are also many interesting differences.)

(a) Military control of the state. Types of institutional arrangements, size of armed forces, use of civilians, aetc.

(b) Economic policies designed to hold down real wages and encourage foreign investment. Statistics on real wages; the economies in the 70s; the collapse of industry..

(c) a continental anti-communist strategy. The doctrine of "national security, proposed military alliances. Don't miss the next issue!