

Ambassador's falsehoods exposed

To His Excellency Abelardo Silva-Davidson, Ambassador of Chile to Canada, Ottawa, P.O.

Your Excellency,

During your four-day visit to Nova Scotia last month, you gave an interview to Ms. Eleanor Gray, the Mail Star staff reporter. In the course of that interview, you considered the trade prospects between Chile and the Atlantic region as good, and you said that you are trying to be a decent country to work for. If that is so, would you be kind enough to explain to me why all the main Christian Churches in Canada (TCCR & ICCHRLA*) strongly oppose any investment and loan to Chile at this time? I would like to quote here the very words of Bishop Adolfe Proulx (Bishop of Hull, Quebec; Vice-chairman, Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America; President, Commission on Human Rights of the Catholic Canadian Conference of Bishops) which he addressed at the International Symposium on the Rights of Man (held at Santiago, Chile, last year):

"Canadian multinational corporations seek out countries like Chile where human rights are violated, where wages are subsistence, where trade union rights are trampled, where unemployment reaches obscene proportions and where social services are decimated by right wing 'free market' governments, in order to maximize their profits. In doing so they support and encourage anti-human economic models which require the continued violations of human rights."

If you are trying to be a decent country to invest in, how is it that the Ad Hoc Working Group of the United Nations on the Situation of Human Rights in Chile had to conclude its report as follows (October 25, 1978):

The Group's inquiry has led it to the conclusion that, in the areas indicated in the following paragraphs, violations of human rights, often of a serious nature, continue to take place and that this situation should continue to be a matter of concern to the international community. In this regard, the Group is convinced that the improvement that has come about in the situation of human rights in Chile is largely due to the international concern expressed . . .

(4) Since 11 March 1978 Chile has been under a state of emergency that legally differs very little from the state of siege which was in force from September 1973 until March 1978. The state of emergency severely limits the realization of certain basic human rights, and it can be said that human rights, in so far as they are enjoyed, are only tolerated and are not effectively guaranteed by the Constitution or laws of Chile . . .

(5) . . . The people of Chile have not enjoyed the right to



"AREN'T YOU GLAD WE SAVED YOU FROM THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT?"

take part in government since September 1973. During this period, and without the participation of the people, basic changes in policy have been imposed on the people in the areas of economic policy, education, health and labour legislation, to mention only a few. Attempts by the people to organize expressions of disagreement with these policies are sometimes met with repression.

(6) Security agencies with wide powers continue to operate in Chile. Most of the powers of the dissolved DINA (which was replaced by CNI) are being exercised by separate agencies today, but in a co-ordinated manner. . . . The consequences of the activities of DINA continue to affect the lives of many people and they relate, in particular, to the responsibility for and fate of missing persons.

(8) The two existing remedies in Chilean law for the protection of human rights, the writ of *amparo* and the remedy of protection, have been applied restrictively by the Chilean judiciary to such an extent that they cannot be

said to protect the right to life, liberty and security of persons in situations in which the Government states that national security or the state of emergency are involved . . .

(9) The amnesty of 18 April 1978 permitted the release from prison of a large number of individuals—which the Group welcomes. It does not however appear to have affected the right of many Chileans living abroad to return to their country, nor has it prevented Chilean citizens from being expelled. One of the principal negative effects of the amnesty appears to be the removal of the criminal responsibility of those who have committed violations of human rights, such as ill treatment and torture and acts resulting in the death or disappearance of detainees . . .

(10) Arrests for political reasons or for reasons of national security continue to take place in Chile. . . . Usually individuals or small groups of persons arrested for political or national security reasons are taken for questioning to unknown places of

detention.

(11) Ill treatment and torture continue to be reported as part of the process of interrogation of persons arrested individually or in small groups for political or national security reasons . . .

(13) The Group has concluded that the remedies at the disposal of the Chilean citizen to protect his life, liberty and personal security are inoperative to such an extent that the Chilean citizen cannot be said to enjoy the right to an effective remedy as required by international law . . . the Group wishes to urge strongly that until the national means of protecting human rights are operating adequately, the international community, especially the United Nations, should continue to be vigilant in the promotion and the protection

of the human rights of the Chilean people . . .

(16) Although the expression of a wider range of opinions in the Chilean press appears to be permitted today, the legal powers of censorship and control, the system of informal government directives and the self-censorship of the media continue to operate . . .

(17) In the field of education, the growing cost of education, together with the difficult economic situation of the lower income groups in Chile, has severely limited the real chances of many children and young people to achieve a full education. . . . Freedom of expression in educational institutions is subject to extensive limitation through the application of the doctrine of "national security" which regards the expression in the schools of any views opposed to the Government's policies as a threat to the nation.

(18) . . . Political parties continue to be prohibited and all political activities are outlawed. Similarly, the enjoyment of trade union rights is severely curtailed. The free election of trade union leaders, the right of collective bargaining and the right to strike are all denied the Chilean workers. The right to hold meetings of trade unions not under government control is subject to serious restrictions . . .

(20) Chilean labour legislation was substantially modified by Decree-Law No. 2200 of 15 June 1978, which was elaborated in its final form and promulgated without the participation or consultation of trade union leaders or labour representatives. Instead of the safeguards for security of employment previously in force, this decree-law provides employers with significantly greater powers to dismiss workers. It also empowers employers to modify conditions of work on grounds

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