

# Power struggles within Chile's junta

by Alan Christensen

Many of the recent events in Chile, including the apparent crackdown on dissent, have centred around a power struggle between various factions in the governing military junta. According to Latin America Weekly Report, the main battle appears to be between two

Whatever the case, the death of Vergara Campos was used as an excuse for a crackdown on internal opposition. Another consequence of the murder was the formation of Comando Vengadores de Martires (Covema), a right-wing terrorist group whose declared purpose was to avenge the Colonel's death.

ballots. Although there was no obvious intimidation of voters by the military there seems to be a wide evidence of fraud. All abstentions were counted as "yes" votes and many known opposition strongholds came out in favor of the "yes." In Santiago voters were cleared from the station for 1/2 hour and after they returned

"Several of them were beating José Miguel Benado; they applied electricity all over his body; I could hear dogs which were being set upon him; I also heard them saying that they were going to put a stick into his anus; then I heard a heart-rending scream."

Claire Frances Wilson, July, 1980

## Testimonials

"This time, they applied electricity to both my breasts, especially the right one, first around the side and then on the nipples. They went on applying the current to my abdomen and navel; then on the external part of my genitals and in my groin, while burning me with cigarettes in the pubic area."

Ines Angelica Diaz Tapia, May, 1980

"Afterwards he was stripped completely naked and left sitting tied to a chair. He was given electric shocks in his testicles by two agents. During the interrogation he was repeatedly beaten about the head and chest and given electric shocks. The questions were directed at finding out what his connection was with the Bishop, if he was a friend of Father \_\_\_\_\_ and about his relationship with other members of the church."

unidentified, May, 1980

"I remember that at about 3 o'clock in the morning Eduardo was moaning a lot and the guards, who had drunk quite a lot of alcohol, reacted in a violent manner and kicked him. He did not complain and went on asking for water and help. Then one of the guards said to the other "What we should do is give him a good bang on the head and then he's certain not to disturb anyone for a good while." When Eduardo next said something, one of the guards treated him to a tremendous blow on the head with what I think must have been a stick. After that sharp blow, Eduardo remained dazed... I think that that blow that they gave him could have caused the injuries that led to his death."

Cecilia Alzamora, July 1980

(The following testimonials were presented to Amnesty International and other Human Rights organizations).



groups; the *aperturistas* who favor a quick return to civilian rule, and the *duras* who favor a prolonged military rule.

Three years ago General Contreras, the commander of the secret policy (The DINA) and said to be a *dura* leader, fell from power amidst the Orlando Letelier scandal. As well, DINA, which had received an international reputation for brutality was abolished. Many took this as an indication that Chile might finally be moving towards a more democratic society. However, DINA was soon replaced by Central Nacional de Informaciones (CNI) and General Contreras continued to work behind the scenes.

Things flared up again last spring with the assassination of Col. Vergara Campos, a leader of the military intelligence. The Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR), an opposition group that advocates fighting the junta by violent means, was immediately blamed for the killing. However, much of the evidence surrounding the murder was destroyed by the intelligence officers investigating his death. The intelligence service was accused of "bungling" the matter and nobody was ever officially charged with the murder. Several officials also pointed out that the assassination was not MIR's style. It might appear then that Vergara Campos, a known *aperturista* sympathizer, was a victim of an internal power struggle.

They kidnapped and tortured many dissidents during the summer. Augusto Pinochet, the leader of the junta and President of Chile, denied any government involvement in Covema but the tactics of Covema were suspiciously similar to those of the juntas of Argentina and Brazil.

In July General Odlanier Mena, an *aperturista*, was succeeded as head of the CNI by General Humberto Gordon, a *dura*. One of Gordon's first acts was to extend the length of time a detainee can be held without charges from the previous five days to twenty days. There were also increased reports of torture during the month following Gordon's appointment.

Later in the summer several members of the civilian police were arrested in connection with the Covema kidnappings. These were the same people who were at the time in the middle of investigating possible tax fraud involving General Contreras and a trading company. Observers said however, that these officers did not seem to have motive enough to take that kind of action.

Pinochet surprised the country in September by announcing a referendum to ratify a new constitution which leaves Pinochet and the junta in power until 1997. On September 12 the constitution was ratified by a 2-1 margin. During the referendum, however, the government was left in charge of all polling stations and of the counting of

the ballot boxes had already been opened. At another station a TV crew filming the count was ordered to stop when the "no's" were leading. "Yes" won the poll by 2-1.

The *duras* have thus seemed to gain Pinochet's ear and the military is apparently planning for a long stay in power. Many now suspect that there will be a renewed campaign to eliminate dissent and "close the space" opened by the referendum campaign.

## Letter to the Editor

### "Ptomaine is a common poison"

Dear Editor:

This letter concerns the November 6 letter printed in the Gazette claiming to "regard" the Dalorama.

The letter it seems has a certain degree of ambiguity, as it states "the purpose (of the Dalorama)... is to provide an entertaining vocabular challenge" but later limits the necessary challenge to 50 minutes, the length of "one (typically lecture room) sitting." This would in effect allow only one minute and 12 seconds per answer in an average 42 clue puzzle.

Messrs Mosher and Lownie seem to believe that the clues should automatically click in their obviously rudimentary vocabularies. Anyone not familiar with such elementary

words as ptomaine and pomander is either illiterate, uninformed, or has a mental block against the letter 'P'.

Ptomaine is a common poison and frequently in the news. Pomander although admittedly more obscure is no where near as clandestine as many of the "linguistic gems" in the history of the Dalorama. A quick survey of any Dalorama will reward one with several more obscure or "strange words" worthy of etymological discussion.

The lack of education in the true meaning of the word on the part of these "complainers" is made obvious by their phrase "...aimless dictionary wanderings..." My wanderings, whether dictionary or coronary, are never with-

out purpose. The purpose of the dictionary wanderings may be beyond some "peasants of the English language" (one wonders how some people get into university).

The game is not to finish the puzzle and be rewarded with the answer to the quiz word, but to attempt the challenge which is the Dalorama. To make it easier would be a violation of trust; the trust of many who enjoy and understand the Dalorama as it presently exists; many of whose comments on said letter are, in the name of good taste, unprintable.

"Ponderously yours"  
(as usual),  
Chris Hartt