

980-31

I.C.3

# TRADES UNION CONGRESS

## INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

From J.A. Hargreaves Department International  
 To Mr. Victor Feather Date August 20, 1973.

### SUBJECT

Chile

1. President Allende is the leader of the Popular Unity coalition government which came to power in September 1970. The coalition is made up of the pro-Moscow Communist Party, Allende's own socialists, a faction of the Radical Party made up of anti-clerical middle-class elements, small but influential Catholic groups (breakaways from the Christian Democrats), and of minor Socialist democratic groups.

2. The opposition consists of Chile's largest single party the Christian Democrats, the National Party (an amalgamation since the late sixties of the Conservative and Liberal parties), and the larger part of the Radical Party.

3. The Popular Unity Government has pursued progressive policies aimed at improving the conditions of the Chilean people. This has produced great resentment amongst the opposition and more especially its right-wing elements which have been engaged in an active struggle with the government with, according to some reports, the assistance of CIA agents and certain elements from Argentine.

4. The opposition, unable to curb Allende's policies in parliament, have been seeking to disrupt these policies by extra-parliamentary means. The Christian Democrats have been very active in the economic field while right-wing elements - especially a grouping known as Fatherland and Freedom have been attempting to undermine the loyalty of the army. In June they had some success. A small number of tanks attacked the presidential palace but the revolt was quickly smothered by loyal units. Undoubtedly the armed forces are a significant force in politics, though probably unwillingly, preferring to preserve the appearance, and in substantial measure, the reality of civilian rule. But recently, under pressure of the opposition, the President accepted direct representation of the army in the government, and gave ministerial portfolios to the heads of the army,

navy, air force and police. This does not seem to have stabilised the situation and latest press reports indicate that signs of tension are appearing between the military and civilian members of the government.

5. In the economic field the opposition have been promoting strikes, the latest being a stoppage by lorry, taxi, and bus owners since 26th July. The reason given was that the transport operators wanted higher rates and a more plentiful supply of spare parts, now limited by foreign currency shortage. The stoppage had resulted in reduced productivity on a national scale, increased unemployment, disruption of food and fuel supplies, and an increase in workers' militancy.

6. The strike started as a protest about a shortage of spare parts and the government's refusal to authorise higher charges, but the dispute then centred on the person of Jaime Faivovich, Under-Secretary of Transport. The lorry owners demanded his removal as a condition for talks with the government, accusing him of brutality in using riot police to requisition strikebound vehicles. In spite of an announcement on August 14 that Faivovich had resigned, the strike seems to continue. His successor, a military officer, failed to settle the dispute, and has resigned in turn, to be replaced by another officer. The transport owners say they will not resume operations until their demands are met and they get a guarantee against nationalisation.

7. Six people have been killed since the strike began, and the danger of an open conflict between government and opposition supporters had apparently been increasing. In a broadcast on August 13 the President warned the nation that the country was on the brink of civil war. The broadcast was sabotaged by elements believed to have belonged to the Fatherland and Freedom group who blew up some high tension cables cutting off electric power. A state of unrest in the country continues.

8. Allende's government is supported by the Unified Trade Union Centre of Chile (CUTCH), the largest trade union body in the country, which has no international affiliation.

9. The ICFTU Executive Board in July issued a statement deploring military coups in Latin America, stating amongst other things that Chile, a country with a long democratic

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tradition faced an attempt by a faction of the army with the support of right wing extremists to overthrow a democratically elected government, and pledging ICFTU support to the workers and people of Latin America in their fight for democracy, freedom and social justice.

10. The "Morning Star" reported on August 4 that Lawrence Daly had written to the secretary of Cutch and to the secretary of the Chilean Miners Union stating that at the May Day rally in London and at the Durham gala of miners on July 21 he has called for the development of a national commission for the defence of the Government of Chile.

11. On August 13 the "Morning Star" reported that John Gollan secretary of the Communist Party of Britain had written to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Chile stating that in the critical hours through which Chile was passing British communists were pledged to win wide popular support in Britain for the democratic forces in Chile. The statement was sent to ORIT to be passed on to the Chilean government.

12. It is clear that the Chilean government has been under pressure for many months and that the situation is moving closer to conditions in which the armed forces will feel compelled to take control. But it is not yet certain whether that will happen, nor is it clear whether the armed forces will themselves be united should intervention occur. Nor is it certain whether the military would intervene to support the government, to replace it, or just to take a larger share of portfolios and to exercise closer control. Over the past month the government have undoubtedly lost ground - on the one hand to the opposition, on the other in the direction of an army takeover - but that is only part of a movement already in progress much earlier, it is not a new line of development.

13. It is thus not possible to be precise regarding the gravity of the situation, nor to say that the difficulties at present amount to a constitutional emergency, though they are serious.

14. The ICFTU drew attention to the situation generally in mid-July, and, by implication, pledged support for the

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Allende government. If the matter is brought to the attention of the International Committee, they could express the hope that the issues at stake will be settled peacefully and constitutionally in the interests of the Chilean people.

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