

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WITNESS THE SITUATION IN URUGUAY

At the end of May this year a delegation went to Uruguay composed of representatives of the following international youth organizations: WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH (WFDY), INTERNATIONAL UNION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC YOUTH (IUCDY), INTERNATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS (IUS).

During its stay in Uruguay the delegation had the opportunity to gather evidence on the political and social situation, and above all to witness the grave atmosphere of repression, and the government's denial of liberties and human rights.

Considering this serious situation, the ceaseless repression of trade union, cultural, political, student organizations and personalities of former MPs, young women, priests and members of the armed forces, we consider it of major importance that international public opinion be informed of the findings of this trip.

The delegation of international youth organizations made a series of interviews and contacted different parts of the population. We could speak to young workers and students, and collect from the parents of political and social detainees evidence about the tortures of thousands of prisoners held in jails in different parts of the country.

For about two years the Uruguayan people have lived through the darkest period of the country's history. Democratic institutions have been dissolved, justice has become

a farce, rights guaranteed by the Constitution have been systematically violated. The country is facing the gravest economic crisis in its history arousing the indignation of the majority of the people.

This situation has resulted in the emigration of thousands of Uruguayans (some sources say about one million) in search of bread, work and freedom.

OFFENSIVE AGAINST EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The repression of the dictatorship is particularly directed against the sectors of education and culture in general, both on the individual plane (imprisonment as in the case of J. Ricaldoni, dean of the Faculty of Technical Sciences and the torture of many university professors, intellectuals, artists and students), as well as on the union level (dissolution of many organizations, associations and unions), also in the field of institutions (interference and submission of institutions of public education to the directives of the dictatorship and an intensified control and governmental interference concerning private educational institutions). Interference has been used for the ideological «cleansing» of the teaching staff and other officials of educational institutions, for the appointment of many new professors who are incompetent technically and morally, but fulfil the requirements of the regime. They have

deliberately destroyed the historic achievements of the university and public education, stopped important services that had been laboriously created in the course of long years and they consider as «crimes» the pedagogical and scientific progress which was appreciated all over the world for its high standard. Repression has been particularly increased against the university and all that it represents in national life. The way the controllers ran the universities was so disastrous that they had to ask Minister Edmundo Narancio (at the same time «Controlling Rector») to resign and also under-secretary Alberto Roca. The new controller has never had anything to do with education. Among the new inspectors of primary and secondary schools is the devoted fascist, Dr. Bosch, who is particularly «active» in secondary education.

Among the attacks and offences against culture reminiscent of nazi barbarity are: police searches of libraries, the selling of tons of stolen books to paper mills, the plunder and destruction of special libraries (as that of Professor Vivian Trias, writer and former MP).

ABOLISHMENT OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

New extreme measures against the official press and journalists destroyed the last vestiges of freedom of the press in Uruguay. The trial and imprisonment by a military

court of *Eduardo Viera*, director of the daily *«El Popular»*, *Guillermo Israel*, born in Germany 53 years ago, a naturalized citizen of Uruguay since 1936, had to flee from the nazis because of his Jewish origin. After being detained and tortured (also) in the presence of his eldest son, he was released for there was no motive for his arrest. For 10 years Israel worked as correspondent of the ADN news agency of the GDR. The Foreign Press Club with headquarters in Montevideo expressed its protest to Bordaberry saying that this action was a «follow-up» to a series of measures taken against correspondents and editors in the last two years. Recently the Uruguayan daily *«El Día»* founded by Batlle y Ordóñez was suspended and threatened with complete banning for having spoken out in a moderate manner (characteristic of it) on the subject of the legislation on the right to strike.

The entire opposition press without exception has been suspended and scores of journalists have been imprisoned and tortured.

ATTACKS AGAINST THE CHURCH

The recent suspensions have also affected the religious press *Informaciones*, a publication of the Catholic Church; *El Mensajero Valdense*, of the Methodist Church; *Vispera*, a Catholic review whose director Hector Borrat, a well-known journalist and sociologist was arrested while preparing to participate in the World Assembly of Catholic Intellectuals convened by «Pax Romana», which expressed its strong condemnation of the arbitrary measure. (All these measures form part of an increasing offensive against the Church including the recent detention of a number of priests — one of them the superior of the Jesuites of Uruguay — finally liberated upon the demand of the Vatican. But anti-religious persecution has resorted to extreme measures: sending politicians and

spies to listen to sermons in the Churches.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS TRAMPLED UNDERFOOT

The repressive policy of the dictatorship has been particularly directed against workers and their trade union organizations. The National Centre of Workers (CNT) has been declared illegal, its leaders persecuted and many of them imprisoned and tortured. At the same time, many trade union premises have been ransacked or closed down by the dictatorship.

From March 11 to 14, the Joint Forces detained a large number of leaders of the Railway Workers' Union, demolished their headquarters, stole the furniture and typewriters as well as the trade union's funds. Since that time the following persons have been detained: *Francisco Maiorana, Ramón Martínez, Angel Alvarez, Nelson Rivero, Uriel Albertini, Hector Altasor, Dorot o Gallo, Juan Michelena and Walter Rosales*. They were systematically tortured. Rosales's three ribs were broken when he was beaten up. From March 21 to 25, the headquarters of the National Federation of Secondary School Teachers was searched and destroyed and many leaders were arrested. *Bouquet and Djaskó Perez* were brutally tortured. On April 15, the dictatorship declared illegal the trade union and all its branches, closed down its headquarters and seized all of its properties.

On February 28, in the town of Las Piedras, 221 cold storage workers were arrested and taken as hostages to get them to denounce the names of their trade union leaders. Dozens of them are still in detention and have been tortured in the barracks of the Canelones riot police.

The building workers, united in one of the strongest and most militant unions, have been claiming the payment of their holiday pay

due since the beginning of 1974. In protest against the official rejection of their claim they stopped work for 24 hours. The dictatorship replied with a 3-day lock-out; scores of workers and shop stewards were arrested, the trade union dissolved, the headquarters gutted and transformed into a police station. Nevertheless, the dictatorship was forced to pay the holiday pay.

TERROR AND TORTURE

Torture and diverse forms of persecution are used in Uruguay — militants, workers and demo especially young people, but always indiscriminately against all social, political and religious sectors and those who — though not actively engaged in activities against the dictatorship — do not adopt an attitude of servility towards it. They are persecuted or used as hostage or reprisals are taken against their families.

In recent months and especially on the eve of May Day and during the May demonstrations hundreds of people were arrested and maltreated, among them many young people. Many of them were children of trade union and political leaders and militants; there were no reasons for their imprisonment. In flagrant violation of the universal principles of law and even of the Uruguayan legal provisions, the minors were not tried by competent judges and, in some extreme cases, they were handed over to the military courts.

TESTIMONIES BY THE PARENTS OF DETAINEES

Below we enumerate some recent facts which are dramatically expressive in themselves.

José Pedro Tizzo, 58, arrested on April 27 by the military in his home in Manantiales (Department of Maldonado). The next day a group of soldiers brought him to his home where they met his wife Mrs. Lavagna de Tizzo, 55, and

began to search the apartment, then the husband and wife were taken away by the police. A few hours later, the daughter of the Tizzos, Mrs. Amanda Tizzo de Rezzano and her husband Héctor Rezzano were told to go and take away the dead body of Madam Lavagna de Tizzo from the Barracks of No 4 Battalion at Laguna del Sauco. They told them that the «senora poisoned herself during questioning». Her dead body was carried away and buried but a post-mortem was strictly forbidden. The widower Mr. Tizzo remained in prison and tried to commit a suicide by pushing a tooth brush into his throat.

On April 30, Héctor Rezzano was arrested and jailed and when his wife took some clothing to him on May 2, she too was arrested and both of them have been in prison ever since. They have a son of 6 and a baby of four who are being looked after by distant relatives.

Luis Maria Bazzano was arrested in Montevideo on April 4. He was brought to a military unit and the next day to Department No. 6 of the Police. On April 21, he was transferred to the local headquarters of the Directorate of Police. On 28th he was brought before the military chief who has not yet made known his decision. Until May 4 his whereabouts were not communicated. During the 5 first days of his stay at Department No. 6 he was brutally tortured; he was beaten on the testicles and the ankles, he had to remain standing with a brick in his hand; a roll of propaganda leaflets was pushed into his anus which caused injuries (he had nothing to do with these leaflets and they were not the basis of the charge against him); they put a mask on his face containing tear gas. Bazzano is married and has a 2 year old baby. His wife, Mariana Hernández was imprisoned from April 22 to May 3.

Ena Massera de Aroztegui. Arrested on April 21 in the town of Melo; transferred to the barracks of the

local military unit. She had to remain standing for three days and three nights with hands on her neck and a hood over her head. Each time she fell on the ground or changed position she was put back in the same position again. Finally, she had a break-down and could not continue but they left the hood on her head for three more days. As a result of this treatment she lost the normal use of her fingers of her left hand as diagnosed by the doctor of the Ministry of Health. Mme de Aroztegui is a secondary school teacher, the mother of three children and she had already been imprisoned and maltreated several times in the past.

As a dramatic evidence for what is going on in Uruguay we quote here the statement of a young detainee arrested just before May Day. Here is the story of his torture.

«I was taken to Battalion No. 9 in Montevideo. I was held there for more than two days. I lost track of time. They beat me on the head, stomach and legs and all over the body and I lost consciousness several times. Then they made me stand on a slippery floor and open my legs till they were about to break. Then they beat me till I fell. This happened 40 or 50 times. For some days I had terrible pains in my legs. Later I was given underwater treatment. Then I was transferred to the San José Barracks (95 km from the capital. There they treated me savagely. For a long time I could not even pass water. For days I received neither food nor drink. They did not let me sleep either. Immediately after arriving there, they beat me incessantly. At night for the first time I was able to stand for an hour and then change to a sitting position. The next day I had to stand. I was beaten constantly and they threatened to liquidate me «while trying to escape». They let me sleep for a few hours and gave me some water to drink. But the following day they kept me in the standing position and I

was in a state of paroxysm in the evening. Then came the underwater treatment and electric shock treatment, blows with wires on the body which left marks on my body for weeks. Six or seven guards took part in the torturing. Then they tied me up inside a bag and took me by truck to Montevideo. During the trip they urinated on me several times. The commander of the barracks is Colonel Sosa. More than 15 young people from San José are detained there for painting an inscription on a wall: «Narancio has fallen. Long live Education». All these students were severely tortured.»

Torture has been institutionalized in Uruguay as a system. This practice which degrades those who do it and offends the honour of the Armed Forces not only continues but is increasing and getting more brutal and sadistic every day using as its model the hideous crimes of nazism and fascism. The Uruguayan people regard as mainly responsible for these inhuman deeds General Cristi, chief of Military Region No. 1, General Linares Brum, minister of the interior, Colonel Ballestrino, chief of police of Montevideo and patent hangmen like Roberto Amorin Maciel (Boiso Lanza), Captain Lacasa (Montevideo), Colonel Sosa (San José Barracks), Bombi, Cruz y Leites (Treinta y Tres) Vieytes y Barreiro (Cerro Largo), Colonel Suarez and commissar Moreira (Canelones) and many others who do great damage to the reputation of the Armed Forces but who will inevitably be judged and sentenced for their crimes. It is necessary to internationally expose the crimes of these men who command and protect a dictatorship which is as cruel as it is weak and isolated. This is a problem which concerns not only the people of Uruguay. Typically fascist types of torture are being used in a country where all democratic traditions have been uprooted, precisely when mankind celebrates the 30th anniversary of the overthrow of nazism. At the

moment when this sad reality strikes the conscience of Latin America and of all fair-minded people the world over, we appeal for solidarity for the Uruguayan people, for action against torture and the violation of Human Rights, we appeal for help to rid Uruguay of the horror of fascism.

ECONOMIC TERROR

The country is facing the sharpest crisis in its history — the dictatorship pursues an economic policy of submission to foreign capital, freezing the wages and social gains of the workers, creating conditions of

unemployment and emigration and investing a great part of the national budget for repression.

Despite the severe repression and the lack of fundamental liberties the youth organizations, workers and students are struggling to overthrow the dictatorship.

June 27 is the second anniversary of the dictatorial government. The undersigned organizations appeal to the UN, to the COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, to UNESCO, to inquire into the arbitrary acts, tortures and killings and also appeal to youth and student organizations

the world over to make their voices heard in protest against the Uruguayan dictatorship, and demand an end to the violation of human rights and the restoration of democratic liberties and rights.

WFDY (World Federation of Democratic Youth)

IUCDY (International Union of Christian Democratic Youth)

IUS (International Union of Students)

Sergio Dubrovsky (WFDY)

Antonio Lucianni (IUCDY)

Gilles Vigoureux (IUS)

Redacted in June 1975

Uruguay's economic outlook still extremely precarious

Montevideo—Although the foreign business community is quite well pleased with the results of economy minister Alejandro Vegh Villegas's efforts, his weekends in Buenos Aires are becoming longer and longer and the limits of his policies daily more evident.

Everything hangs at present on his hypothesis that the world market for beef will show a marked upswing in 1976. 'We are betting that the present state of the market will not continue beyond mid-1976', he told *Competencia*, an Argentine business magazine, in September.

For the time being the minister has been borrowing money abroad to cover the trade deficit, which will be at least US\$150 million this year (against the IMF projection of US\$102 million); to cover the servicing of the foreign debt; and also to cover the budget deficit, another US\$100 million.

Debt burden

The current debt totals US\$950 million, which is the equivalent of two and a half years' exports. This year US\$189 million are to be paid out in amortisation and interest on the foreign debt; as most of the loans contracted in the last few years are short-term, the bulk of the repayments fall due over the next three years. The country's gold reserves are worth about US\$640 million. Gold to the value of US\$27.9 million was sold in 1972, and some argue that more should be sold off now to reduce the burden of debt repayments.

This somewhat precarious outlook led General Amaury Prantl,

chief of the army's powerful internal intelligence service, to make a gloomy speech at the end of September. 'It is necessary for all Uruguayans to reconcile sectional interests, and to understand that unless we save ourselves together, we shall sink.'

The current situation is developing in the context of a free market economy imposed by Vegh Villegas in mid-1974. The key measures were liberalisation of prices, freeing the exchange market, cutting government expenses (particularly in the social welfare departments), and opening the door wide to foreign investment (LAER II, 19).

Given a strong market for Uruguay's major exports, meat and wool, it is not impossible that this plan could have worked. Certainly, Argentine businessmen look longingly across the River Plate at present. Over a period of time, Uruguay also hopes to strengthen its balance of payments through the export of frozen fish and citrus fruits, and by finding oil (see last week's issue). But these improvements will not come in the short term.

Foreign lending

Perhaps the best hope for Uruguay is that the bill for financing the Vegh Villegas plan will be met by foreign banks and multilateral lending institutions, given that the sums involved are relatively small. However, there will be some reluctance so long as the government continues to spend 40% of the total budget on the defence ministry. The fiscal deficit has been around 25% of the total

budget for the past 18 months. There is little immediate prospect of improvement unless the cattle and sheep farmers suddenly strike rich again. Recent tax reforms, according to Vegh Villegas, have not had the beneficial effect on government revenues that had been expected, and the minister is using this argument to oppose proposed wage increases of between 12 and 15% for private and public sector workers. During the first half of 1975 consumer prices rose by 25.6%, while real wages also rose by 4.4%, according to official figures.

Poor results

Vegh Villegas admitted last month that he was very dissatisfied with the results so far obtained in this field. He said 'If we do not make significant progress in reducing social security payments and in cutting other government expenditure, the rest of our achievements will not last for long'. The government's attempts to reduce the state's commitments by selling off public corporations have not met with much success so far, with Administración Nacional de Combustibles, Alcohol y Port (ANCAP) apparently offering particularly unattractive terms to prospective private purchasers of its chemical facilities. The *Review of the River Plate*, for one, argues that the state should sell off its industrial enterprises, but notes gloomily that 'this cannot be expected in the near future'.

The economy minister remains on excellent terms with the United States and with the foreign business community, which has been responding with some substantial investments. However, if the difficulties do begin to pile up during 1976, he has enough enemies within the armed forces to lose him his job. If Vegh Villegas goes, drastic changes in economic policy can be expected and predictions will have to be revised. □