

Visit of C.U.T.

Mr. L. Figueroa, President of the Chilean national trade union centre, CUT, and Mr. E. Rojas, Vice-President, CUT, will be meeting our International Committee on January 6.

ICFTU Workshop

The CUT representatives will be coming in response to an invitation issued by the International Committee in November when the Committee had before them a report of an ICFTU Workshop of Solidarity with Chile at which the CUT had presented proposals for assistance inside and outside Chile.

The proposals sought to raise \$1,077,220 for aid in Chile including \$352,800 for material and equipment, \$60,000 yearly for propaganda, \$127,800 yearly for officials of the National Executive Council of CUT, of permanent federations, of eight provincial Executive Councils and of local unions, \$67,420 yearly for the maintenance of contacts between organisations at all levels and with the exterior, and \$300,000, comprising the payment of \$50 per month ~~for~~ three months for 2,000 families through an inter-denominational religious organisation, the Committee of Co-operation for Peace.

The proposals also sought to raise \$85,060 for external activities, including \$11,760 yearly for members of the External Committee, \$23,400 yearly for missions and meetings of the committee, \$14,900 for material and equipment including \$12,000 recurring yearly, \$30,000 for the publication of a worldwide fortnightly information bulletin, and \$5,000 for representation in international organisations.

The CUT proposed that funds would be channelled into Chile by the CUT External Committee, giving priority to the most industrialised provinces, of which there were eight out of the 15 in the country. The CUT had good relations with the Committee of Co-operation for Peace, and money provided by trade union organisations through this channel would go to trade unionists and their families. The proposed budget did not include all requirements, and it was expected that organisations other than the ICFTU may provide additional funds.

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TUC Action on Aid

The CUT representatives will presumably be seeking financial assistance to help them carry out projects such as those put before the ICFTU. The appeal of the General Council to unions to contribute to help Chilean trade unionists and their families - particularly those who were able to leave Chile to settle elsewhere - raised nearly £5,000. The General Council have allocated £1,000 to the ICFTU Chilean Fund, and £100 for an educational course for Chileans on Merseyside.

It was pointed out in the International Committee meeting in October that the number of Chilean refugees in Britain was increasing and it was suggested that enquiries might be made regarding the provision of trade union assistance to meet their needs. The Foreign Office have stated that about 370 Chileans have come to this country and that 1100 applications have been granted. The Foreign Office do not have a breakdown of the occupations of the refugees but they say that they are mostly professional people, minor politicians, academics, and students.

The main body dealing with the refugees in the UK is the Standing Conference of British Organisations for Aid to Refugees, which is co-ordinating the action of various non-political refugee organisations including Christian Aid, the British Council for Aid to refugees, the Chile Human Rights Committee, the Ockenden Venture and the World University Service. The Standing Conference have stated that individuals and families are eligible for social security on arrival, the Voluntary Services Unit of the Home Office has made a grant of £10,000 for extra accommodation costs, travel in the UK, part of the cost of language courses and staff costs and £5,000 each has been received from the British Council for Aid to Refugees and Christian Aid. The SCBOAR take the view that this is a long term operation which will require additional finance. It is not possible at present for them to tell us how many trade unionists have arrived or are expected, but we may be able to get detailed information from the individual organisations directly concerned. It would however be difficult for any assistance channelled through the SCBOAR to be directed exclusively towards trade unionists. Mr. J. Boyden, MP., Chairman of the European Committee of the SCBOAR has also written stating that the funds available are nearly exhausted, and asking the TUC

to consider making a grant to help with the initial reception and settlement of refugees when they arrive in this country.

It might be pointed out to the CUT representatives that action taken independently by the TUC is primarily directed towards assisting refugees in this country, and that the ICFTU Co-ordinating Committee on Chile which was set up as a result of the ICFTU Workshop can be expected to make further proposals.

Year of Solidarity

The CUT wrote on December 27 stating that they intend to declare 1975 an International Year of Solidarity with Chile and with People Struggling Against Fascism. They propose that meetings should be held in Moscow, Paris, and London on February 12, which is the 22nd anniversary of the foundation of the CUT, to launch publicly the International Platform of Solidarity which has been approved by the CUT external committee, to explain the purpose of the Year of Solidarity, and to initiate an international petition in support of a Resolution (presumably the one adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 6, 1974) concerning the safeguard of prisoners against torture and pressing for the freeing of political and trade union prisoners in Chile.

The CUT visitors may well seek support for the meeting in London on February 12, and for the organisation of a petition, and the distribution of propaganda.

Other matters

Other topics which they might possibly raise could include British diplomatic and trade relations with Chile, and especially the provision of arms, the renegotiation of the Chilean debt to this country, the question of prisoners and the resettlement of refugees.

The General Council condemned the diplomatic recognition of the regime just after the coup but have not pressed for relations to be broken since then, and they have asked that all assistance to Chile should be suspended but they have not asked for the curtailment of trade - excluding military goods. The British Government have stated that recognition of the Chilean regime did not imply approval but was simply the recognition of the fact that they were in control, that no further arms will be delivered to Chile - although the

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delivery of some armaments already contracted for has been allowed to continue - and that the General Council's request that the renegotiation of the Chilean debt be linked to guarantees that trade union and political freedoms would be restored could not be carried out because to do so would result in the non-payment of the debt with no disadvantage to Chile.

It has been reported, however, that negotiations for the rescheduling of the debts due to be repaid in 1975 have been abandoned at least for the time being.

TJ/DG
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