

# Secret Arrests Off Sharply in Chile

## U.N. Seen Trying to Protect Staff, Although Its Powers Are Limited

### Skepticism Mixes With Praise For Change; 1,000 Still Missing

Special to The Washington Post

UNITED NATIONS, Dec. 15—Most U.N. staff members seem to feel that there are practical limits to what the world organization can do for them if they get into trouble with a member government but that it would, in most instances, go to bat for them.

An informal survey here after the U.N. Secretariat was accused of a lack of vigor in a Chilean case showed mixed feelings: Many of those interviewed listed other cases in which quiet but active U.N. diplomacy had helped, but a number of staffers questioned privately whether more pressure should not have been applied in the Chilean case.

In that case, Carmelo Soria Espinosa, a high official of a U.N. agency, was found dead under mysterious circumstances and evidence sent to the United Nations indicated that the Chilean government was covering up the events surrounding his death. Although some U.N. staffers in Chile have criticized the world body as timid, a Latin American staff member here said today:

"Am I disturbed? No. I never expected the U.N. to be able to help me unless the problem I got into was all a mistake."

Another said, "The U.N. is a disreputable organization to work for in many ways, but it has a marvelous record in upholding its obligation to step in quickly and take care of its own people."

A third—pointing out that he must travel next year to a meeting in Argentina, which has been plagued by political violence—was gloomy: "It's a kind of makes you nervous."

Indeed, another case of apparent U.N. failure to act promptly when a

staff member disappears has come to light, and it involves Argentina.

On Nov. 11, Viviana Mancueli, 27, an Argentine local employee of the World Health Organization, disappeared. Accounts differ as to whether she was arrested by the secret police or kidnaped.

"The WHO administration was very timid, either in Washington or in Argentina," said a staffer here. "They didn't act until Dec. 1 and then were forced to do so by the WHO regional staff committee in Washington."

As of now, staffers said, a local WHO officer has approached the Argentine government on the case and been told that it is not the "United Nations" affair because Mancueli is a citizen and not covered by diplomatic immunity.

U.N. legal counsel, Eric Suy, said that the United Nations itself has not formally been made aware of the situation, although a protest on it was registered Dec. 1 with the Federation of International Civil Servants' Association here.

The federation also protested the Soria case and another Chilean case related to it. Enrique Pemjean, a Chilean who worked with Soria, was seized by Chilean authorities in January and held until May. During that time, he charges, he was tortured and suffered a permanent loss of hearing.

The federation has been pressing U.N. officials and Suy, as Waldheim's spokesman, maintained that he has been pressing Chile—to no avail, so far. But he said today, while rejecting claims that the organization has not demonstrated enough vigor, that he would pursue the matter.

Several staff members cited cases of successful behind-the-scenes pressure. See **NATIONS**, A43, Col. 1

By John Dinges  
Special to The Washington Post

SANTIAGO, Chile, Dec. 15—Just a month after the Chilean government announced the release of more than 300 political prisoners, security police arrests without charges have virtually ceased. But while human-rights advocates here praise those changes in the government's actions, they are pessimistic about whether abuses will be permitted in the future.

In numbers, the political-prisoner situation in Chile has changed considerably. After the military junta led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet seized power in September 1973, a dozen prison camps the length of Chile held thousands of prisoners, while embassies bulged with fugitives from the security police.

Now some 650 Chileans held for political crimes are confined in regular jails, and the last concentration camp still open has only four prisoner's remaining.

What has not changed is the mystery of the disappearance of a thousand or more people. Their families charge that they were arrested by the secret police and held in secret and changing interrogation centers, whose existence the government has never admitted.

Although only a few persons have been arrested since the Nov. 16 announcement—none of them under state-of-siege provisions—cases of torture by security police interrogators have continued to be reported to humanitarian agencies, and two persons allegedly arrested were still missing three weeks later.

Beginning Nov. 16, the military government has released some 316 political prisoners held without charges for as long as three years under the pro-

visions of the semi-permanent state of siege.

Only four state-of-siege prisoners are left in the Tres Alamos prison camp, which once held more than 500 and women. Puchunzadi, the other official prison camp, has been closed, men and women. Puchunzadi, the other official prison camp, has been closed, and the closure of Tres Alamos is "under study," according to the government newspaper *El Cronista*.

Tres Alamos, a former hacienda on the outskirts of Santiago, also includes Cuatro Alamos, a center for interrogation of prisoners being held incommunicado by the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA), the Chilean secret police.

According to sources in humanitarian agencies here, Cuatro Alamos is empty and the handful of persons arrested by DINA since mid-November have been turned over to military or civilian courts for trial.

Reports inside and outside Chile that a large group of prisoners had been taken out of a prison camp before the release and that about 20 persons had been rearrested were groundless, according to human-rights organizations.

Arrests for political reasons began to drop off a month before the releases. Security police had averaged about 55 detentions a month, most of whom ended up in Tres Alamos or Puchunzadi camps as state-of-siege prisoners. Although 12 political arrests have been reported since the release announcement, none of those arrested has been made a state-of-siege prisoner—perhaps the most significant change in procedures resulting from the government initiative.

The 650 remaining political prisoners. See **CHILE**, A45, Col. 1



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several of them involving Argentina. On three occasions, Waldheim is reported to have intervened personally.

In one incident, a year ago, the Buenos Aires staff of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees was taken hostage by a group of political refugees.

"Waldheim was on the phone to half a dozen foreign ministers immediately," said an official here. "He pulled out all the stops" and got the Argentine government to act swiftly. The

official who told this story was nevertheless critical of the U.N. silence on the Chilean cases.

More recently, the secretariat here quietly inquired about the arrest of a Bolivian refugee—the father of a U.N. employee—in Argentina. By the time the pressure was applied, however, the man was dead.

In a third case, in which Waldheim pressed the Argentines on the arrest of a leftist who had worked on contract with the United Nations in previous years, nothing could be learned of the effect of the intervention.

Earlier cases involving Bulgaria and Burma were also mentioned, and the U.N. legal office said that the two Chilean cases are the only ones now on its books involving political problems between U.N. staff members and their host government.

Most cases, a legal officer said, involve diplomatic privileges and immunities in such matters as traffic accidents; the office also represents staffers arrested on criminal charges, such as the Soviets accused by the FBI of espionage every few years.

## Disappearances, Political Arrests Drop in Chile

CHILE, From A42

ers were not affected by the release program because they had been charged or tried in military courts and do not come under the state-of-siege category.

Many of those sentenced by military courts in the past three years have been released into exile in foreign countries, however, under a junta decree allowing the courts to commute their sentences to deportation.

About a hundred of the remaining prisoners, who have applications and appeals for deportation pending, are likely to be released around Christmas according to human-rights lawyers.

"For the past several months the government has been in a period of improving its image," said a prominent businessman and junta supporter. "It coincides with the improvement in the economic situation. The government is in a position to give a

little more, to be less hard, less drastic. But there has been no change in the government itself. The political advisers are the same."

The Catholic Church praised the releases as a "kind of hope," but a spokesman for the church's welfare and prisoners' aid agency, the Vicariate of Solidarity, said the agency's work would not be significantly diminished.

According to the church, reports based on accounts of families who seek its assistance, about one of four persons allegedly arrested by security police during 1976 disappeared.

The government, in response to United Nations and Organization of American States human-rights reports has insisted that the missing-persons issue is a Communist scheme to discredit the government and that the persons on the list do not exist, are in hiding, have left the country or have been killed in guerrilla activity in Argentina and other places.

Two persons vanished without witnesses in the streets since Nov. 16, and two others earlier that month, according to family reports.

"Four missing persons in one month is quite low compared to previous months," commented a human-rights lawyer. Another added: "They can't shut up the camps again. They are trying to find formulas that won't create the same international impact as be-