

Chilean Rebels on the Run

Santiago

The only important guerrilla organization ever to operate in modern Chile, the self-styled Movement of the Revolutionary Left, is on the run today, its potential for future activity probably hopelessly crippled.

All of the top leaders of the MIR, as the movement is called locally after its Spanish initials, have either fled the country or been arrested, or captured by security detachments of the military-police junta that has ruled this nation more than 15 months.

Moreover, the MIR's firepower has been hurt by the loss of more than half its weapons, which junta authorities have confiscated in raid after raid beginning Sept. 11, 1973, the day the armed forces deposed the late Socialist President Salvador Allende in a bloody revolution.

An official statement said that arms and ammunition confiscated so far amounted to 55 per cent of "all arms in the hands of the extremists" at the time of the 1973 revolution.

That statement is significant because it points up the junta's confidence today in its total control of internal security and its capability to cope with any attempt to create internal strife with arms.

The MIR began in 1961 as a radical student movement at the University of Concepcion, Chile's third largest city. It soon became the rallying group for youthful dissidents to the far left, many of them Maoist and Trotskyite dropouts from the Communist and Socialist parties, the two Marxist parties that formed the backbone of the People's Union.

The organization became active underground during the Christian Democratic regime of former President Eduardo Frei, staging a series of bank and supermarket holdups and describing their loot as "expropriations on behalf of the people."

Some had been caught and convicted and others were on the wanted list when Allende took office Nov. 3, 1970. Among them was the president's nephew, Andres Pascal Allende, the only "big name" MIRist whose whereabouts is unknown today.

Describing the MIRists

"as youthful idealists." Allende issued an amnesty that freed those in prison and allowed the rest of the organization to come out of hiding.

During the presidential campaign of 1970, MIR described Allende as "the candidate of the pseudo-left." Even after the amnesty, they declined to work in harmony with the People's Union, of which they never

formally became a part.

Instead, they set themselves up as a sort of "revolutionary vanguard," leading illegal seizures of farms and organizing armed cadres among worker, peasant and student groups.

Allende never really tried to bring the MIR under firm People's Union discipline. Some say he was unwilling to do so because of the MIR's ideological identifica-

tion with the extremist left sector of his own Socialist Party. Others say he was afraid to do so lest he alienate his own personal bodyguard, which consisted mainly of elements of the MIR.

The MIR played a key role in each of the four developments that were the precipitating causes of that uprising: the presence in Chile of thousands of foreign extere-

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mists, many of them fugitives from justice in their own countries, working with the MIR campaign urging the armed forces enlisted men to disobey their officers; an abortive mutiny in the navy, and the presence in the country of large quantities of illegal arms.

The shock of the revolution put the MIR off balance, driving it back underground in a desperate effort to reorganize its ranks in opposition to the junta.

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