The disproportionate influence of militarism in Chile is not entirely due to the military dictatorship (1973-90) but rather is a historic feature of the military as part of the National Advance, society became militarily and anti-militarist political or social opposition as “unChilean.” Among this category were syndicalists, anarchism and many human rights movements who, since the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, were persecuted, marginalised, eliminated until a compromise aimed for a social consensus was reached that admitted them into institutionalised politics. This compromise excluded, ideologically, sectors of the Prussian-style military who, under civil governments then preferred to place under influence the military and security doctrines of the USA, especially after the Second World War. This influence would sharpen and would lead, together with nationalist thinking homegrown in the fascist-corporatist womb concentrated in the Chilean Armed Forces, to the military becoming the vanguard of the reactionary anti-Allende movement that took action even before the installation of the government of United Popular Unity (UP - Popular Unity) in 1970.

Having killed the head of state and deified the UF, militiamatism implanted itself in the reconstruction of the country that, above all, was cultural and economic, involving giving the Armed Forces the position of moral and political administrators of the country. This took concrete form in the Constitution of 1980 that was imposed against all opposition, being a militarist and authoritarian constitution that even today governs those who inhabit the Chilean state. This constitution confers to the Armed Forces a decisive participation in the Senate (the stronger chamber in the bicameral Congress) through power to designate senators. The Armed Forces control their own economic affairs, as with retirement and other pensions, as well as various education and cultural institutions, and interfere in many areas of civil life. The democratic government in Santiago has not done enough to dismantle this influence. The proof of this is the situation of conscientious objection in Chile.

Conscientious objection is recognised in only a few countries in Latin America, conscientious objection is recognised in only a few (see page 2). In some countries - for example Colombia, where a war rages - conscientious objection can take a variety of forms, to refuse to be part of the war on either side. All this is not enough reason to focus on conscientious objection in Chile and Latin America. As their fellow COs in Israel, South Korea, or on the Balkans, the CO movements in Latin America need our support, to achieve the right to conscientious objection, and to work for the demilitarisation of Latin America.

Andreas Spack
WRI CO Campaigning Worker

International Conscientious Objectors’ Day

International Conscientious Objectors’ Day is celebrated on 15 May since the early 1980s. It is the day to highlight the struggle of conscientious objectors for the right to conscientious objection, and against war and militarism, globally.

As part of WRI’s programme on The Right to Refuse to Kill, War Resisters’ International aims to establish a tradition of international nonviolent direct action on 15 May in support of a certain CO struggle, accompanied by decolonising work all over the world. In 2002, WRI organised an international nonviolent direct action at NATO’s headquarters in Brussels, in support of CO movements on the Balkans. In 2003, WRI and New Profile jointly organised an international training in Tel Aviv, Israel. This year the international action takes place in Chile, organised by Ni Casco Ni Uniforme.

War Resisters’ International needs to organise a mass of local activities as part of a global day in the Americas, so that the action is not only an expression of solidarity with the COs at the national level. Together with the pressure from local public opinion, this is a key to the success of War Resisters’ International activities. (For details see pages 3 and 4.)

Thank you!

International Conscientious Objectors’ Day

Solidarity with Chile and Latin America

15 May – International Conscientious Objectors’ Day

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Thank you!

International Conscientious Objectors’ Day

The Broken Rifle

The Broken Rifle is the newsletter of War Resisters’ Internatio- nal, and is usually published in English, Spanish, French and German. This is issue is 61, May 2004. This issue of The Broken Rifle was produced by Andrés Spack, with help from Ni Casco Ni Uniforme, Rod Jovotic, and many others, who provided the information used in this issue. The Broken Rifle is made possible through the financial support of the peace organisations: Stiftung Umverteilen, X min Y, and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. If you want extra copies of this issue of The Broken Rifle, please contact the WRI office, or download it from our website.

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The right to conscientious objection in Latin America – a brief overview

Mexico
Conscription exists for men aged 18-40, recruitment is voluntary, as only 60,000 recruits are needed from an eligible pool of 1.8 million reaching conscription age annually. Conscientious objection is not recognised.

Guatemala
A new law on a general “citizen service” was passed in May 2003, which allows for a voluntary service in the National Forces or social institutions for men and women aged 18-24. However, if the ranks cannot be filled by volunteers, then additional youth will be chosen by lot. These two can choose where to serve.

A right to conscientious objection doesn’t exist, which is only a problem for those who voluntarily join the armed forces and develop a conscientious objection later.

Honduras
Conscription is presently not enforced. Article 276 of the 1982 Constitution was amended by Decree No.24-94, ratified by Congress in 1995, establishing voluntary military service from the age of 18 during peacetime and calling for the 1985 Military Service Act to be redrafted. The Government asserted that “military service is not voluntary and will be abolished” and that “there is no compulsory conscription.” However, the 1985 Military Service Act has not yet been redrafted, nor has new legislation been passed since 1994.

The right to conscientious objection is not recognised.

Ecuador (1)
Conscription exists. All men over 18 are liable for military service. Women may be liable for compulsory military service too, if the national defence so requires. Because of Peruvian-Ecuadorean border tensions, the conscription of women was considered in 1997.

Military service lasts for a year. All makes aged between 26 and 55, even if they have not performed military service, are regarded as members of the military reserve forces. All military duties end at the age of 55.

Both boys and girls in their 4th year of secondary school have to take a pre-military course (programa premilitar) if they want to graduate. It lasts for an academic year and consists of attending in barracks and receiving military instruction on Saturday.

According to Art108 of the Military Service Law, conscientious objects can get exempted. However, no COs have used art. 108. The Ecuadorian CO group does not advocate using it, arguing that it does not really recognise conscientious objection and that no genuine substitute service outside the armed forces is available.

Nicaragua
Conscription was abolished in 1990, following the peace accord and the elections of a new government. However, there is no right to conscientious objection for professional soldiers. The Armed Forces are approximately 17,000 strong.

Costa Rica
The country does not have military forces, though there is a paramilitary police. The Guardia Civil (civil guards), have been described by a military expert as armed forces restructured to the lowest level and as one of the best trained forces in Latin America. Furthermore it has both a system of military ranks and highly technical weaponry. In 1997 there was public debate when a secret arms purchase by the Guardia Civil leaked out.

Colombia (2)
Conscription exists. All men between 16 and 28 are liable for military service. Service for those who have completed secondary education (Bachillerato) lasts for a year, for others it is two years.

Those who do not go to secondary schools may be victims of forced recruitment. At bus stops, in market places, on the street the military pick up youths. Those who cannot prove that they have a military service record or have a valid reason to be exempted, are taken to recruitment centres.

Conscientious objection is not recognised, although the constitution guarantees freedom of conscience. Those who announce they are COs have no clear guarantees that they may leave the armed forces. They either have to perform their military service in the police as prison guards or they have to desert and remain in hiding. If they refuse to perform military service, they may face the charge of desertion and be imprisoned.

Guyana (3)
Conscription does not exist. It is believed that the right to conscientious objection is included in the 1960 constitution, but it is not known if it is implemented by law.

Belize
There has never been a conscription since the country gained independence in 1981. The right to conscientious objection is not recognised.

El Salvador
Conscription has not been enforced since the peace treaty of 1992. The right to conscientious objection is not recognised.

Panama
Conscription is anachronistic in the constitution, but is not enforced. Following the US invasion of 1989 the Panamanian Armed Forces have been dissolved. Recruitment into paramilitary forces and the national police is voluntary. There is no right to conscientious objection.

Venezuela
Conscription exists. All men aged 18 to 50 are liable for military service, which lasts for two years. All men are legally obliged to register for military service when they turn 18. In practice many do not register. Of those who register only 20 percent are actually recruited.

Recruitment takes place in public places, such as cinema entrances, schools and market places. Recruitment officers, sometimes dressed as civilians and assisted by the military and police, verify the documents and then arbitrarily force recruits to board buses for the barracks. Conscientious objection is not recognised.

French Guiana
Conscription exists for men from the age of 15, but in practice only 10% are recruited. According to the constitution the Armed Forces are to provide a substitute service for conscientious objectors. However, such a service is neither genuine civilian, not acceptable to conscientious objectors, as it is managed by the Armed Forces.

Peru
Conscription exists. All 17-year-old males and female, must register in order to obtain a military service card (libreta de servicio militar). After registration conscripts undergo a thorough medical examination. Then a lottery is held to decide which conscripts have and have not been selected. The military service lasts for two years.

The right to conscientious objection is not legally recognised.

Chile
Conscription exists. All men aged 18 to 45 are liable for military service, which lasts for 8 to 12 months in the army and air force, and 8 to 18 months in the navy.

There is no legal provision for conscientious objection. On 28 August 1997 fourteen COs signed a declaration of conscientious objection to military service at a notaries office, appealing officially to the Director General of Mobilisation to grant them the right to conscientious objection. Although the Chilean government is supposed to hear an individual’s claim within 15 days, they received no reply. When they complained at the Ministry of Defence and demanded an answer, the latter responded that granting such a right was not within their remit.

At present there is also a petition of 3 COs pending at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (Petition 12.219).

Argentina
Although conscientious objection is enshrined in the constitution, it is not enforced. Since 1994, military service is performed by volunteers. But, if insufficient volunteers present themselves for enlistment, the law allows the government to introduce compulsory military service.

In case the government decides to introduce conscription, all conscripts have a right to a conscientious objection and will be required to perform a substitute social service. At present this is only theory.

Brazil
Conscription exists for men from the age of 19, but in practice only 10% are recruited. The right to conscientious objection is not recognised. There is little information on practice. According to Jehovah’s Witnesses, COs have been dissolved. Recruitment for Jehovah’s Witnesses COs are actually delayed.

Venezuela
Conscription exists. All men aged 18 to 50 are liable for military service, which lasts for two years. All men are legally obliged to register for military service when they turn 18. In practice many do not register. Of those who register only 20 percent are actually recruited.

Recruitment takes place in public places, such as cinema entrances, schools and market places. Recruitment officers, sometimes dressed as civilians and assisted by the military and police, verify the documents and then arbitrarily force recruits to board buses for the barracks. Conscientious objection is not recognised.

Paraguay
Conscription exists. All men aged 18-50 years are liable for conscription, and military service lasts for 1 year (2 years in the navy). In wartime, women must assist the armed forces. Articles 37 and 129 of the 1992 constitution recognize the right of conscientious objection. All conscripts may announce they are COs, but as the constitutional right is not backed by any law, there is no procedure for achieving CO status.

Uruguay
There is no conscription in Uruguay. Although the minimum recruitment age is 18, there are three military schools which accept 15-year-old boys and girls and train them for a military career. They provide courses for air force pilots and marines in the navy. There are no other schools in Uruguay offering courses for (non-military) pilots or ship mates.

The right to conscientious objection is not recognised.
Youth labour force 14 and 25 years old (817 men, 56 women) in Medellín. People murdered here - 873 (some 49 percent of the total). Young women and men go no further than to stay alive and to work hard, sometimes to feel safe, to have access to education sometimes. Young people dream their own lives, rather than to stay alive and to work for some long-expected freedom. It puts distance and disaffection. It puts distance and disaffection.

Actors of violence

Today the situation of armed conflict in the city of Medellín makes it difficult for young people to find a place in the different armed groups - and that is what it is, an armed youth. A few figures help to illustrate the importance of youth in this city about the situation of the population of Medellín are youths, some half a million people, and youths form a majority of the 9,000,000 estimated to be in the 200 armed bands in the city (armed bands including guerrillas, paramilitaries and organised crime).

The armed conflict affects us at many levels from the personal and individual to the social and political. It affects us as actors of violence, both actively and in the making of our life.

There are loads of people who don't have anywhere to go, to have access to education, to have access to education sometimes. Young people dream their own lives, rather than to stay alive and to work for some freedom.

Youth organisation in conflict

Grassroots youth organisations are difficult because the armed actors oblige young people to link themselves to their armies. One activist has commented, "In this sector, there is a saying, 'either put your head into the war or they leave the sector.' It's a sort of repression. It's a sort of repression.

Youth organisations are the only organisation that can give young people a chance to decide their own future. They are the only organisation that can give young people a chance to decide their own future. They are the only organisation that can give young people a chance to decide their own future. They are the only organisation that can give young people a chance to decide their own future. They are the only organisation that can give young people a chance to decide their own future. They are the only organisation that can give young people a chance to decide their own future.
Get involved!
Support COs in prison: co-alerts
In many countries, prison is still the fate of conscientious objectors. Thousands of COs are still in prison in South Korea, Israel, Finland, and many other countries. Despite many countries having introduced laws on conscientious objection, many COs still face imprisonment, either because they don’t fit into the authorities’ criteria, or they refuse to perform any alternative service.

War Resisters’ International supports conscientious objectors who are imprisoned because of their conscientious objection, or face repression by the state or state-like entities.

CO-alerts, sent out by email as soon as the WRI office receives information on the imprisonment or trial of a conscientious objector, is a powerful tool to mobilise support and publicise efforts to grant freedom to those COs on trial or in prison.

CO-alerts are available by email (subscribe at http://wri-irg.org/mailman/listinfo/co-alert) or on the internet at wri-irg.org/cgi/news.cgi.

The WRI office also needs more information about imprisoned conscientious objectors from all over the world.

Get in touch with us at:

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The Broken Rifle
in other languages

The Broken Rifle is published regularly in English, Spanish, German, and French. You can order paper copies in the language of your choice by contacting the WRI office in London. You can also download a PDF file from the WRI website as soon as it becomes available. Feel free to make your own copies.

WRI relies on volunteers for translations of The Broken Rifle and other materials. If you want to offer your help with translations, please contact the WRI office. Translators are always urgently needed! Thank you.

15 May around the world...

Although War Resisters’ International’s focus for International Conscientious Objectors’ Day is Chile and Latin America, activities in different countries obviously respond also to the local situation, while drawing attention to the focus region at the same time.

Britain

There will be a memorial event for conscientious objectors past and present at the commemoratives for conscientious objectors in Tavistock Square, central London, on 15 May. The event will start at noon.

Some MPs started an Early Day Motion for the British Government to recognise 15 May ‘as the day upon which the role of conscientious objectors is to be commemo- rated each year’ (EDM 737). However, some conscientious objectors might prefer not to receive government recognition.

Contact for the event:
Conscience, Archway Resource Centre, 1b Watertore Rd, London N19 5JN; tel +44 20 7561 1061; fax +44 20 7281 6506; email info@conscienceonline.org.uk

Colombia

Red Juvenil is organising a national assembly of conscientious objectors in Medellin from 14–16 May.

Contact: Redes Juveniles A.A.52-215, Calle 47 N 40 53, Medellin, tel +57 A 2923324; email redjuvent@redjuvenil.com; web-site www.redjuvenil.org/

Germany

A demonstration will take place in the Northern German city of Münster on 15 May, which Turkish-Kurdish conscientious objectors who fled from Turkey and applied for asylum in Germany will publicly declare their conscientious objection.

The demonstration will begin at 11am at the Prinzipalmarkt in Münster, and will move to the Turkish consulate.

The evening before, a public discussion will be taking place at the ESO, Breul 43 in Münster, starting at 7.30pm.

Contact: Redaktion Grazeruzzyerревolution, Breul 43, 48143 Münster; tel +49-251-2890-57; fax +49-251-48290-32; email reddjuvent@redjuvenil.net; web-site www.graizeruzzyer.net

Turkey

The “first traditional milisturistion festival” will take place in Istanbul on 15th May. The festival will include a tour, a concert, and an exhibition, highlighting the symbols of militarism in Istanbul, and symbols of resistance - conscientious objectors. The tour will start at 11am at Haydarpresa Train Station.

Contact:
Istanbul Antimilitarist Initiative, tel +90-546-7127931, email iam@kavakistari- lant.org; website www.savakistsarlant.org

USA

The Center on Conscience and War is organising a day of workshops and seminars on conscientious objection, anti-militarism, counter recruitment and war tax resistance, which will take place at the Church of the Brethren in Washington DC. Prior to 15th May, a lobby day is being organised for the 14th, focused on educating Congress about conscientious objection and how any military draft is not a viable option.

Contact: Center on Conscience and War, 1830 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009, tel +1-202-483-2220; fax +1-202-483-1246; email beth@nibsco.org; website www.nibasco.org

Where is your event? What did you do? Let us know! Send us reports and pictures!

War Resisters’ International

— a nonviolent movement to end war

War Resisters’ International was founded in 1921 under the name “Peace”. It was and is based on the WRI declaration:

War is a crime against humanity. I am therefore determined not to support any kind of war, and to strive for the removal of all causes of war.

War Resisters’ International exists to promote nonviolent action against the causes of war, and to support and connect people around the world who refuse to take part in war or the preparation of war. On this basis, WRI works for a world without war.

Nonviolence

WRI embraces nonviolence. For some, nonviolence is a way of life. For all of us, it is a form of action that affirms life, speaks out against oppression, and acknowledges the value of each person.

Nonviolence can combine active resistance, including civil disobedience, with dialogue. It can combine non-co-operation - withdrawal of support from a system of oppression - with constructive work to build alternatives.

As a way of engaging in conflict, sometimes nonviolent choices are attempts to bring reconciliation with it: strengthening the social fabric, empowering those at the bottom of society, and including people from different sides in seeking a solution.

No to war

WRI will never endorse any kind of war, whether it is waged by a state, a “liberation army”, or under the auspices of the United Nations, even if it is called a “humanitarian military intervention”. Wars, however noble the rhetoric, invariably are used to serve some power-political or economic interest. We know where war leads - to suffering and destruction, to rape and organised crime, to betrayal of values and to new structures of domination.

Want to support WRI? (Please tick at least one)

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[ ] [ ] I will set up a standing order of £............to WRI monthly/quarterly/yearly (please delete) to WRI: Bank of Scotland, Bank Sort Code: 96-60-01, Account number: 5072 7388 Sort Code: 08-60-01
[ ] [ ] I will enclose a CAF voucher for £........
[ ] [ ] I will enclose a cheque to A.J. Muste Institute for US$........

Please visit our webshop at http://wri-irg.org for War Resisters’ International publications, Broken Rifles badges, and other WRI merchandise. Thank You!