



THE BROKEN RIFLE

Newsletter of War Resisters' International

No 61, May 2004, donation welcome

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.
WRI declaration, 1921

Solidarity with Chile and Latin America

15 May – International Conscientious Objectors' Day

The disproportionate influence of militarism in Chile is not entirely due to Pinochet's military dictatorship (1973-90) but rather is a historical construction that has given character and form to the Chilean nation-state.

Since before even the Portaliano regime (1830 onwards), the influence of the military, and of military culture, manifested itself in a hierarchical society, controlled by the State that took over social functions from the community and civil society, urban and rural. A national policy was pursued that was at the same time expansionist and centralising, expanding northwards to the coasts of Bolivia and Peru, southwards to the coast of the Mapuche and Patagonian peoples and towards Polynesia. In this advance, society became militarily involved as part of the National Guard and in the colonisation of the territories gained. The army, the military, was presented as the acme of *Chilenidad* (being Chilean).

Such thinking permitted the denunciation of any pacifist or anti-militarist political or social opposition as "unChilean". Among this category were syndicalists, anarchists, socialists and communists who, since the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, were persecuted, marginalised, eliminated until a compromise aiming for a social consensus was reached that admitted them into institutionalised politics. This compromise excluded, ideologically, sectors of the Prussian-style military, who civil governments then preferred to place under influence of the military and security doctrines of the USA, especially after the Second World War. This influ-



Ni Casco Ni Uniforme in action

Photo: Boris Schoppner

ence 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 Unidad Popular (UP – Popular Unity) in 1970.

Having killed the head of state and defeated the UP, militarism embarked on a 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 political opposition, being a militarist and

authoritarian constitution that even today governs those who inhabit the Chilean state. This constitution confers on the Armed Forces a decisive participation in the Senate (the stronger chamber in the two-tier 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 governments have not done much to eliminate this influence. The proof of this is the situation of conscientious objection in Chile.

CO in Chile emerged with the half-turn towards democracy in the 1990s, but it was not until the foundation of MOC (the Movement for CO) and NCNU (Ni Casco Ni Uniforme – Neither Helmet Nor Uniform) in 1996 that it had a noticeable social influence. As a result of MOC and NCNU's activity, CO has become a theme debated at the national level and a movement rooted in youth among the common people and marginalised groups because they are the ones who have least means to confront a concept that, in practice, is only obligatory for the lower classes.

Year after year, more youth object to conscription and refuse to do military service, putting themselves in a situation that is legally indefensible because the Chilean State, namely the government, has bowed to military pressure and has not legalised CO even after recognising it through signing up to various international human rights con-

ventions. The government is embarked in an escalation of spending on arms that creates frictions with neighbouring countries while at the same internally it entails the repression of the Mapuche movement and people's organisations, that can only be explained by the defence to the dictates of the Pentagon which treats Chile as one of its military hirelings needed for the military control of the region.

The work of MOC and NCNU is to agitate for CO and anti-militarism in Chile through nonviolent direct action and civil disobedience to a form of legality as unjust as conscription. This is resistance – social, political and juridical – to obligatory military service; declaring oneself a CO in Chile means not registering for the draft, which is actually a breach of national law, and hence all objectors are in conflict with the law. We also have our educational and research work, developed continuously through courses, workshops, seminar, national and international meetings, and the project for a Study Centre – Centro de Estudios Sociales en OC y Antimilitarismo (CESOCAM).

P. Carvallo, Javier Gárate

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Editorial

The focus of this year's International Conscientious Objectors' Day is a country - Chile - but also Latin America in general.

As Javier Garate and P Carvallo point out in their leading article, militarism is deeply rooted in Chilean society. Even after the return to civilian rule, the military plays an important role in Chilean society. No surprise then, that the right to conscientious objection is still far off in Chile. Although presently no conscientious objectors are imprisoned, those who declare themselves COs refuse to register for the draft, and therefore break the law - they are at the mercy of the authorities, who could easily decide to punish them.

Chile is only one country. Although the situation is different in the different countries of 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 more than 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 American societies.

Andreas Speck
WRI CO Campaigning Worker

The Broken Rifle

The Broken Rifle is the newsletter of War Resisters' International, and is usually published in English, Spanish, French and German. This is issue 61, May 2004.

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International Conscientious Objectors' Day

International Conscientious Objectors' Day is celebrated on 15 May since the early 1980's. It is a 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 decentral activities 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 now the international action takes place in Chile, organised by Ni Casco Ni Uniforme.

War Resisters' International needs hopes that many local activities will take place on 15 May. A very brief overview is given on page 4, but we hope that this is only the 'tip of the iceberg'. Please write to War Resisters' International what you did on May 15th, and send a donation to support the work of War Resisters' International (for details see pages 3 and 4).

Thank You!

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



No army defends peace!

Medellin is a city of contrasts, where you find many ways of life. But in parallel, in different neighbourhoods, people live and wage a war that, besides death and prolonged absences, leaves an odd feeling of normality - as if, here, nothing will happen. But it does happen, and increasingly proposals that people should arm themselves to defend life and institutional normality gain strength, proposals that divide the world between goodies and baddies.

Youths tend to see themselves in the middle of a conflict too big to take measure of. Deaths in their neighbourhoods: families and friends riddled with bullets in the fire that kills the dreams of hundreds of youths. It is a conflict that promotes armies and leads away from alternative possibilities, those of another world and another society where dreams could become reality. At times the dreams of young women and men go no further than to stay alive and to work hard, sometimes to feed their family, to have access to education sometimes. Young people aren't dreaming their own lives, but rather of an imposed model of the life of a consumer.

Actors of violence

Today the situation of armed conflict in the city of Medellín makes youths actors, participating in the different armed groups - and that's how people perceive youth. A few figures help to illustrate the importance of youth in this city: about a quarter of the population of Medellín are youths, some half a million people, and youths form a majority of the 9,000 members estimated to be in the 200 armed bands in the city (armed bands including guerrilla, paramilitaries and organised crime).

The social problems that affect youth are increasingly sharp: employment and underemployment, access to a decent education, the stigma of the adult world and the institutions that claim to be reducing violence by restricting freedom - for example, by imposing a curfew on minors. This facilitates and perpetuates the image of youth as actors of violence - both actually and in the making.

The city's mayor's measures to restrict liberties don't touch the issue. Between 1 January and 15 June this year, there were 1,690 murders here - 873 (some 49 percent) were of youths aged between 14 and 25 years old (817 men, 56 women).

Inciting fear

This conflict opens breaches, cements fear, and strengthens indifference. It puts distance and distrust between people, cuts the ground from under relationships, and discounts the value of friendship and love of life.

One strategy is to sow panic so that armed groups will be obeyed. For example, one of the threats that are painted on house walls is "obedient children are put to bed by their parents; the disobedient ones by us" ("us" being the paramilitaries); "we kill all toads" (referring to suspected collaborators).

An activist of the Red Juvenil (Youth Network), who in 1998 declared himself a conscientious objector, writes about his neighbourhood that "we usually wake up to a dawn song where the noise of cars blurs into the steps of students



Practical antimilitarism...

Photo: Red Juvenil

who don't want to arrive late at college, and the shots, cries and sirens of police patrols and the gossip of neighbours about who the dead man was and why they killed him".

The situation in the neighbourhoods seems so normal at times that it is scary; we are mere passive recipients of information that we don't manage to process because our critical senses are sleeping.

Youth organisation in conflict

Grassroots youth organising is 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 lads into the war or they leave the sector' ... Thousands of youth are forced to participate in the 'network' of paramilitary control that is being built in the city." In sector 13, one of the youth groups has had to learn first aid because wounds from the confrontations cannot be treated in the health centre. Other young groups have had to follow the wishes of the paramilitaries who say what they can do, how they do it, and sometimes offer resources.

Other young people live in doubt about how to become what they want to be. If they live in a neighbourhood where the militias are linked to the guerrillas, they don't have much chance because the security forces see all the young people of that zone as attached to the militia, hence as a military target and an enemy to combat.

The armed conflict affects us at many levels from the losses of close ones to the risk to our own lives. It truncates our fulfilment, limits our freedom to go where we please. It affects the student who is intimidated by someone who lives in another sector from enjoying public space; it affects the autonomy of youth groups to freely carry out their local activities. But above

of us entered the stadium where the procession finished and, as a form of nonviolent action, created a space for cooperative games, inviting people to come and play, play to relax, play to resist. A lot of children found this more attractive than the official programme. We are currently developing various strategies to encourage young people to resist participating in the war, without keeping quiet but, on the contrary, acting and building their own alternatives. For example, we are constantly investigating how youths in neighbourhoods where the confrontation is most visible live the conflict in their daily world. Through this information, we expect that many youths will recognise themselves and know that, like them, there are loads of people who don't want to participate in war. Also, we want to spread awareness of what is happening in Colombia to other parts of the world, because the mass media cover it up.

Active nonviolence

We are coordinating with other youth and community groups to make warresistance stronger and more visible. Currently we are working on a campaign where we have joined with organisations from Cali, Pueblo Nueva and Villa Rica (Cauca), Bogotá and Medellín itself.

These are not just youth groups, but also women's, indigenous and community organisations. As well as promoting the values of active nonviolence and direct action against war, our goal is that more young people gain an understanding of the "why" of this war that goes beyond the mass media - Who benefits? Who dies? And of the value of resisting participation in it.

Those youth who refuse to participate in a war that is made in the name of all also reclaim the interests of quite a few other people, those who are against a war that claims blood, bodies and tears. Those youth refuse to accept the situation of death, injustice, discrimination and despair, a world built on corpses. We resist believing that, when you have a dream, you need arms to reach it.

What we don't resist is to follow the concept of a society without armies and without arms, where dreams create but don't assassinate. We don't resist the desire to live and to dance. There fore we say that we give everything to live and to build the world that we want.

Adriana Castaño coordinates the human rights programme of the Red Juvenil of Medellín.

CO contacts and WRI affiliates in Latin America

This is an - incomplete - list of groups in Latin America working on issues of conscientious objection and related areas.

Brazil

Serviço Paz e Justiça (Serpaj-Brasil) SdS-Ed Venâncio V, Bloco R - Sala 313, 70393.900 Brasília DF; tel +55 61 225 8738; fax 321 6533

Associação do Jovem Aprendiz; email solanott@uol.com.br

Chile

Grupo de Objeción de Conciencia Ni Casco Ni Uniforme; Roberto Espinoza 1839, Santiago; tel +56 2 556 6066; email info@objecion.cl; website www.objecion.cl/

Colombia

Redes Juveniles; A.A.52-215, or Calle 47 N 40 53, Medellín; tel +57 4 2923234; email redjuvenil@colomsat.net.co; website www.redjuvenil.org/

Colectivo Objeción de Conciencia; email campananovabogota@hotmail.com

Ecuador

Servicio Paz y Justicia del Ecuador (Serpaj-Ecuador) Apdo postal 17-03-1567, Quito; tel /fax +593 2 2571521; email serpaj@ecuanex.net.ec; website www.serpaj.org.ec/

Mexico

Paz y justicia para Mexico; Calle Totolin, N° 38, Colonia Santo Domingo, Delegación Coyoacan, Mexico, Df

Peru

Grupo Impulsor contra el Racismo y otras formas de Discriminación; email gimperu2001@yahoo.es

Uruguay

Comunidad del Sul; Avda. Millán 4113, 12999 Montevideo, Uruguay; Tel (598-2)305 6265; Fax: 308 16 40; email eco-com@chasque.apc.org; website www.ecocomunidad.org.uy

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**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, are a powerful tool to mobilise support and protest. 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 on imprisoned conscientious objectors from all over the world.

Get in touch with us at:

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War Resisters' International

– a nonviolent movement to end war

War Resisters' International was founded in 1921 under the name "Paco". 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



Action in front of the NATO headquarters on 15 May 2002

Photo: Andreas Speck

non-cooperation - withdrawal of support from a system of oppression - with constructive work to build alternatives.

As a way of engaging in conflict, sometimes nonviolences 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, by 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.

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 commemorative stone 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 commemorated each year" (EDM 873). However, some conscientious

objectors might prefer not to receive government recognition.

Contact for the event: Conscience, Archway Resource Centre, 1b Waterlow Rd, London N19 5NJ; tel +44 20 7561 1061; fax +44 20 7281 6508; 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, or Calle 47 N 40 53, Medellin; tel +57 4 2923234; email redjuvenil@colomsat.net.co; website www.redjuvenil.org/

Germany

A demonstration will take place in the Northern German city of Münster on 15 May, at 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 ESG, Breul 43 in Münster, starting at 7:30pm

Contact: Redaktion Graswurzelrevolution, Breul 43, 48143 Münster; tel. +49-251-48290-57; fax +49-251-48290-32; email redaktion@graswurzel.net; website www.graswurzel.net

Turkey

The "first traditional militarism 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 Haydarpaşa Train Station.

Contact: Istanbul Antimilitarist Initiative, tel +90-546-7127931, email iami@savaskarsitlari.org; website www.savaskarsitlari.org

USA

The Center on Conscience and War is organising a day of workshops and seminars on conscientious objection, anti-mili-



tarism, 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 tsittner@nisbcc.org; website www.nisbcc.org

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

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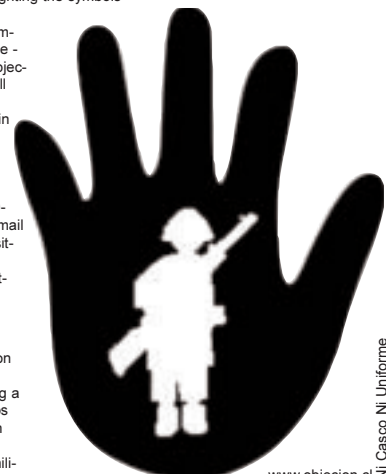
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