



The Chilean regime conveys its message of being a 'humanist' and 'Christian' government through military parades and ceremonies.

Botha learns from Chilean dictators

A FEW weeks after the government silenced 18 organisations and the same number of individuals, South Africa's Foreign Minister Pik Botha paid a fying official visit to Chile.

Chile is a curious choice for an official visit by a South African government minister — or is it?

It is in Chile that 15 years ago the military junta, like the South African government, outlawed all opposition and tried to crush all forms of resistance.

A look at Chile's brutal and bloody history clearly shows that none but like-minded countries can choose the Central American country as a friend.

For almost 15 years Chile has been one of the worst violators of human rights. Brutal repression by the rulers and death squads similar to South Africa's vigilantes, has led to the death of thousands of Chileans.

Ever since the Chilean armed forces launched a coup in September 1973, that country has been in a perpetual state of severe state repression.

After seizing power from the socialist government of Salvador Allende, the military junta, composing the heads of the army, navy, airforce and police force, declared a state of siege. The

constitution was immediately suspended, congress was dissolved and the electoral register destroyed. Rule was by decree.

All political and trade union organisations were declared illegal, political activity was banned, civil liberties suspended, strict censorship and a curfew imposed (it still remains today), and the media brought under government control.

CORPSES

The armed forces, the police and a specifically established security service, the DINA (Direccion de Inteligencia Nacional) killed, imprisoned, tortured or sent into exile hundreds of thousands of people who were either suspected of membership of left wing political parties or who had been activists or sympathisers of the previous government of Allende.

Every morning in Santiago, corpses could be seen floating down the river. Many more piled up in hospitals or were simply left where they fell.

Between 1973 and 1977 an estimated 30 000 people were killed, 2 500 went missing and tens of thousands passed through the prisons or concentration camps. And an estimated one million people have left

Chile since.

To justify its dastardly deeds against the people, the junta under General Pinochet introduced a "doctrine of national security". This doctrine considers the Chilean society in a state of permanent warfare against communism and that the world is divided into two camps — western Christianity and atheistic communism.

In his message to the nation Pinochet said: "Marxism is an intrinsically perverse doctrine, which means that all which it touches, however healthy it may appear, is rotted by the venom which corrodes it".

The protection of society against the "communist cancer" within was the ideological justification for the elimination of the political parties; censorship and control over education; and the banning of the trade unions.

Pinochet's government's slogan is "In peace and order, Chile advances".

The dictators, despite ruling with an iron-hand, realised that they were losing support even from the Christian Democrats who supported them in sabotaging Allende's government.

The junta had to look at some strategies to try and legitimise their terrorist deeds. The junta had to keep

the anger of the masses in check and make sure that the workers in the factories were kept under tight control.

Pinochet's Plan Laboral, introduced in 1979, legitimises unions, but these "legal unions" are very different from the trade unions which preceded them. Under the Plan Laboral, a restricted trade union organisation is allowed only at factory floor level. Free collective bargaining and strike action are also permitted.

However, negotiation is only possible at certain times of the year and only on economic demands.

LOCKOUT

Strikes can only last for up to 59 days, after which the management is allowed to replace the workforce. Employers can declare a lockout during the strike period. No person involved in political activity during the previous ten years can stand for election as a union official.

Unions therefore cannot fight for working class rights and cannot in any real sense act politically.

Like the SA government's National Security Councils, Pinochet has targetted education as a major area of battle against the people.

The Chilean government declaration targets education as an important tool in its ideological control. "It is imperative that we change the Chilean mentality ... the government of the armed forces intends to open a new phase in our national destiny, giving way to new generations of Chileans who have been shaped in a school of healthy civic habits".

It later states more specifically that education is the basis of the solution to the deep "moral and economic crisis of the development of the western world ... where we see that even when material well-being is for everyone, this is not sufficient to have a balanced society..."

Education must therefore "promote those moral and spiritual values which belong to our Chilean Christian tradition which locates everything in its proper place according to man's ultimate end. Our education should, in this context, respect freedom of teaching and each person's individual conscience ... strengthen the knowledge and love of all our compatriots for Chile, its geography, history and its people".

In this document the Chilean government lays claim to both a "humanist" and a "Christian" inspi-

ration.

The regime has used various means to convey its message. One has been through ritual: military parades and ceremonies, which frequently take place, and are obligatory.

The most important means through which government messages are presented are radio and television. There is a national television channel which reaches the whole country, and three channels run by the universities. There is no commercial television although a vast amount of viewing time on all channels is devoted to advertising.

The Chilean government has also moved into the terrain of culture. It is trying to replace Peoples Culture with its own, competitive, individualistic, profit-oriented culture.

The Chilean government's economic policies seem to have been the inspiration for Botha's latest attacks on the working class. Privatisation, deregulation and wage freezes have long been applied in Chile — but massive price increases and unemployment has been the only result.

If you see some similarities between SA and Chile, you are not the only one.