P.S., to the NEWS RELEASE: MARCH 15

by PHYLLIS SCHLA.FLY
Box 618, Alton, lllinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

CHILE'S GIFT TO THE WEST

The government of Chile, which has taken some brickbats from the world's press during the past year, is entitled to our thanks for working out the deal under which Vladimir Bukovsky was granted his freedom from imprisonment in the Soviet Union. Bukovsky has important messages for the West, based on his ten years in Soviet prisons and mental asylums, and it is good to know that President Carter and Vice President Mondale are listening.

If the Chilean government hadn't had the foresight to prevent an important Communist named Luis Corvelan from leaving the country, the Soviets never would have been willing to make the trade and let Bukovsky go free. Corvelan's importance to the Kremlin was shown by the fact that, as soon as he arrived in Russia, he was presented with the Order of Lenin by President Nikolai Podgorny.

Although the Chilean government coulcl never redeem itself in the eyes of the left-wing media for the unforgiveable sin of overthrowing a Communist government, there probably is no other way for Chile to recover from the disaster of the Allende years except through a vehicle such as the present junta.

Life under Allende was intolerable for nearly everyone, especially in the last months of his regime. The annual inflation rate was pushing 1000 percent, and Chile suffered severe food shortages for the first time. Many items could not be bought at any price. Housewives had to spend up to six hours a day standing in line for food and other essentials.

During the Allende regime, citizens could not turn on the radio or television without hearing a political speech. Industrial and agricultural production fell off substantially as the Allende government channeled the energies of the workers into political rallies. His comrades would encourage factory workers to strike, and then use the strike as a pretext to take over the factories.

(more)

Newspapers that published the truth were closed for weeks and their reporters jailed. Government corruption was everywhere. There was a flourishing black market.

At the end, it was the women who initiated the overthrow of Allende. On December 3, 1973, while Castro was visiting Chile, they staged an impressive demonstration called the March of the Empty Pots. Thousands of women marched through the streets of Santiago beating with spoons on their empty pots and pans.

That first demonstration was followed by other Marches of the Empty Pots, during which the women were harassed by tear gas thrown by Allende's police and with potatoes stuck with razor blades hurled by the Communists.

After it became too dangerous to march in public, the women retaliated by leaning out of their windows every evening at ten o'clock and beating on their pots and pans to make a deafening clatter.

The women kept up their demonstrations until,finally, the men had the courage to act and, in a nearly bloodless coup, took control away from Allende, who then committed suicide. The coup came just in time to prevent Allende from sending all the anti-Communists "to the wall" as his buddy Castro had done.

The Chilean people who lived through the economic chaos and political terror f the Allende regime, and who watched how the non-Marxist politicians stook back and did nothing to stop his Communist consolidation of power, are understandably distrustful of all politicians and political parties.

They have no desire to return to a political free-for-all at the present time. They prefer the justice and order of today's Chile to the poverty and injustice of a Communist Allende or Castro dictatorship.

The more Bukovsky talks about life in the Soviet Union, the happier the Chileans will be about their timely decision.

(end)