

## Success Seen Near for Campaign

# Chilean Ex-Leaders May Be Freed

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Intensive efforts by American academics and others to free jailed members of the late Chilean President Salvador Allende's government are believed to be on the verge of success.

Reports through several channels from Santiago indicate that the military leaders who overthrew Allende have concluded that any case they could bring against most of the 34 prominent former officials would be held up to ridicule before international public opinion.

An important factor in deflating the military drive for further vengeance, according to the reports, was a series of job offers by American universities for two of the best-known prisoners: former ambassador to the United States Orlando Letelier and one-time Foreign Minister Clodomiro Almeyda.

Both were members of the late president's Socialist Party and both were held until recently on Dawson Island in the Straits of Magellan at the southern tip of Chile. Letelier, who returned to Chile a few months before the coup, held several important cabinet posts in the final days of the Allende government.

No charges have yet been filed against them or other "Dawson Islanders," as the prominent prisoners taken there after the coup are known. The military has often indicated that it intended to prove that they were part of a plot by the Allende government to seize dictatorial power.

Letelier, 41, who worked for a decade in Washington with the Inter-American Development Bank before becoming Allende's ambassador, has received offers from several universities, including American University in Washington and the State University of New York.

Alberf Michaels, director of the international program at the State University of New York at Buffalo, said his



ORLANDO LETELIER

... Washington job waits

school was also interested in a post for Almeyda, a former sociology professor. Almeyda, 51, was also offered a visiting professorship at Princeton.

Although the Latin American Studies Association, a U.S. academic group, has made a concerted effort on behalf of the Chileans, Michaels said his offer to Letelier grew out of a visit by the then-ambassador to the university several years ago.

The Chilean junta, through its embassy here, has charged that efforts to free jailed officials are part of an international Marxist conspiracy to damage the current government.

Michaels denied any political motivation, as did the chairman of the Latin American Studies Association subcommittee aiding the Chileans, Reardon Roett, of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies here.

Roett, who heads the school's Latin American department, just returned from a visit to Santiago.

"The status of academic freedom is not as bad as I expected, but it is pretty bad," he said.

Using a \$40,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, Roett's subcommittee has placed at least 55 Chilean refugees in

advanced graduate studies or teaching positions in this country, he said.

Roett said he had emphasized in an interview with the air force member of the junta, Gen. Gustavo Leigh, the strong interest in American academic circles have in justice for the 34 prominent prisoners.

"The government is absolutely aware of the maladroitness with which it has handled the Dawson Island prisoners," he said, adding that he felt that the junta wanted to wind the cases up without losing face. He noted that several less-well-known prisoners on Dawson Island have already been released.

While Roett's subcommittee includes professors heavily committed to the Allende government, he pointed out that he had taken no such position and was working on behalf of the Chileans for humanitarian and professional reasons.

Paul Sigmund, a professor at Princeton, confirmed that a visiting professorship there had been offered to Almeyda. He said the fact that the former foreign minister was a Marxist did not affect the school's decision, although it might if it were a permanent position.

"For an awful lot [of professors] in Latin American studies, this would be a plus," Sigmund said of Almeyda's Marxist orientation.

Almeyda's duties at Princeton would include research, consultation with other researchers and lecturing.

Vadin Medish, chairman of the languages department at American University, said the offer to Letelier resulted from his part-time lecturing there during his work in Washington. He would speak on his economic and area specialties.

American University transmitted its job offer through the junta and more than two dozen professors signed a letter calling for Letelier's release.

A similar petition was sent by employees of the Inter-American Development Bank.

These letters, family efforts, pleas by U.S. senators and international organizations and several strong diplomatic initiatives by Latin American governments are reported to weigh heavily in the files the Chilean military keeps on the prisoners and are thought to have motivated the decision in June to move the prisoners from Dawson Island to the central part of the country where the climate is more temperate. The 34 are now held at a navy prison in the Pacific coastal hamlet of Ritoque.

While an air force court-martial has convicted two Socialists once held on Dawson of sedition, high military officers have indicated to families of the 34 who have not yet been charged that most of them probably will not be brought to trial. One ranking officer indicated that they might be expelled from the country soon.

Among the diplomatic pressures on the junta is a Mexican move with serious economic consequences.

Mexico has failed to authorize shipments of urea, which Chile requires to fertilize spring planting next month. Mexican Foreign Minister Emilio Rabassa told Chilean newsmen in Santiago two months ago that a Mexican jet would fly Almeyda to Mexico as soon as the junta authorized it.

Even Luis Corvalan, the secretary general of the Communist Party, which supported Allende through his nearly three years in office, has received non-Communist foreign support.

Joaquin Ruiz, a professor of law at the University of Madrid and a former minister of the Spanish Cabinet, arrived in Santiago and announced that he would defend Corvalan if he is brought to trial.

The Latin American Social Sciences Council, based in Buenos Aires, has also made major efforts to obtain release of Chilean former officials and to find them academic positions abroad.