

# Gabriel Ibarra—An Appeal

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On March 4th, this year, Gabriel Ibarra, Nicole Boyer (a French national) and Maria Paz Sanchez, after spending a year in prison, were tried for political offences by the Public Order Tribunal in Madrid. None of them was taking part in any political activity at the time of their arrest but because Nicole Boyer had previously served a prison sentence for activity with the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (the Spanish section of the Fourth International) all three were accused of illegal association. Ibarra received a three-year sentence.

Ibarra was defended by Dr Ruiz Gimenez, leader of the Christian Democrat opposition in Spain and former Minister of Education. This is of some significance since while Ibarra has never denied his Trotskyist sympathies, Dr Gimenez, whom Hugh Thomas has called the 'lay cardinal' of Spain, will probably lead the Christian Democrat Party when the formation of political parties becomes legal in Spain. So far as the demand for legalizing political parties is concerned, the Church and the left are at one—indeed the General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, Santiago Carillo, claimed in London last December that the most important allies of his party in Spain were the clergy. Again, the sympathy between priests and working people led the Spanish hierarchy to declare recently that it could not support the state-controlled trade unions. This has led to some confusion within Franco's government.

As is well known, there were two priests amongst the Basque revolutionaries court-martialled at Burgos last December. At that time the world-wide protest against the injustice of their trial forced General Franco to relieve those who were sentenced to death.

Political prisoners, whether from Christian or socialist groups, live a communal life throughout the Spanish prisons. They share the gifts and food parcels brought by their visitors and they also share ideas, working out together solutions to the immense human problems of their country. This is not only a source of strength and courage to the prisoners; it also serves to deepen the alliance between the Church and the left. During the Basque trial, for example, political prisoners everywhere went on hunger strike to show their solidarity with the accused.

A British lawyer, Peter Martin, went to Madrid to observe the trial of Gabriel Ibarra on behalf of his British wife, Joanna Ibarra, and with credentials from the Labour Party. An appeal is being made to cover the costs of this and the defence costs. Please send any contributions to Joanna Ibarra, 'Commoners', Brill, Aylesbury, Bucks. They will be gratefully acknowledged.