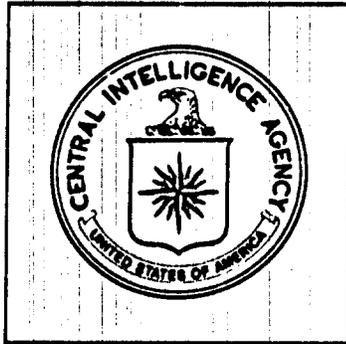


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Chile: Plugging the Hard Line

The military government, which marked its third anniversary on September 11, shows no signs of moderating its tough internal security practices or making any substantial concessions in the area of human rights.

In his anniversary speech, President Pinochet reiterated the regime's hard-line views and indicated that new decrees would soon be issued further restricting the "recessed" political parties. The new measures are clearly aimed at the opposition Christian Democrats, but the church and independent labor leaders, whose criticism has stung the regime, may also be in for harsher treatment.

The President made public several measures to be incorporated into a new constitution that will institutionalize the authoritarian practices now being observed. The guarantees of human rights promised by Pinochet at the OAS meeting in Santiago in June received scant attention, and security forces will probably continue to ignore them. The Interior Ministry has announced that 205 political prisoners are being released, but the state of siege has been extended for another six months.

Pinochet's tough stand suggests there is little room for flexibility in accommodating a visit by the working group of the UN Human Rights Commission; its scheduled trip to Chile last year was abruptly cancelled by Pinochet. Talks between the two sides appear to be stalemated, and the Commission's forthcoming report to the UN will most likely again be highly critical of the military regime.

On economic matters, the Chilean leader gave no hint in his speech that he is considering any policy change, although an acrimonious debate

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[REDACTED] is under way in the government over the social costs of the harsh austerity program. Despite some spotty improvements in economic conditions, the [REDACTED] sees no overall recovery. [REDACTED]

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