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Latin American Trends

STAFF NOTES

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May 5, 1976
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[REDACTED]

Chile: Human Rights Violators Punished

There is growing evidence that the Chilean government is taking stronger measures to punish members of its security forces for human rights abuses. 150

[REDACTED] military tribunals have been conducting secret trials resulting in the court martial of military personnel and carabineros charged with torturing-- and in some cases killing--prisoners.

The top army commander for the Santiago region, General Rolando Garay, who also serves as military judge for the capital, [REDACTED] has heard some cases and is preparing to process others. Garay apparently has been pressed by a group of army generals to explore with President Pinochet the possibility of publicizing the cases to demonstrate the regime's sincerity in safeguarding human rights.

Public knowledge of the trials would have some positive implications abroad, where Chile's image has taken a sharp decline because of the human rights situation. On the other hand it might open a Pandora's box by focusing a glaring light on specific instances of grave abuse of power by armed forces and intelligence personnel since the September 1973 coup. In fact, officials are probably justified in their fears that outsiders might dig deeper into the evidence and uncover a web of officially condoned violations that could implicate some in high places as well as undermine the morale of security forces.

It is still too early to determine whether the Pinochet regime has pulled out all stops to end maltreatment of prisoners, but word of the trials is likely to have some remedial effects [REDACTED]

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often, however, this regime tends to undo with one hand what it has done with the other, slowing any real progress on human rights. [REDACTED]

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