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## Chile: Resurgence of University Student Politics [REDACTED]

The intensification of university student political activities in recent months constitutes a serious blow to President Pinochet's efforts to maintain controls on academic life and prevent students from regaining the political influence they had before the 1973 coup. The most significant development was the sweeping victory in October 1984 of a centrist-leftist coalition in student elections at the University of Chile, the country's largest and most important university. This election capped a skillful campaign by opposition groups to undermine the regime-imposed student organization, to revive the proscribed Federation of Chilean Students, and to reinstitute direct university-wide student elections. This and similar ferment at other universities demonstrate the staying power of such political parties as the Christian Democrats, the Socialists, and the Communists, which historically have dominated the student movement. Conversely, these developments underscore the failure of the regime's "cleansing" operations in universities and the weak appeal of the far-right groups that had been foisted on student associations and sustained by government aid since the coup. [REDACTED]

From mid-1983 through last October, the regime seemingly felt obliged to accept a speeded-up transition to democratic rule. The government tolerated heightened political activity on university campuses, evidently because it did not expect a major challenge to its authority. The regime was caught short by the intensity of the student opposition's efforts during the second half of 1984. The elections at the University of Chile triggered a series of government countermeasures there and at other institutions. Pinochet publicly characterized student activists as irresponsible and pointed to the centrist-leftist victory at the University of Chile as contributing to his decision to delay the transition process and to impose the state of siege on 6 November. [REDACTED]

Opposition student leaders have reacted sharply to the state of siege and the renewed restrictions on political activism on campuses. Although antiregime political demonstrations in recent months were generally effectual, students were in the forefront and clashed with security forces on several occasions. During the current vacation period that began in December, opposition student leaders have issued statements denouncing regime actions against students. They have called for academic liberalization, dismissal of regime-designated military rectors, and student participation in university governance: [REDACTED]

When the vacation period ends in mid-March, student agitation probably will increase as part of the political opposition's campaign against the state of siege and to achieve an accelerated transition to democratic rule. (S NF)

### Background

The revitalization of the university student movement is remarkable, considering the sweeping purges carried out when the military came to power in 1973 and the regime's actions to maintain tight control over all universities. According to several scholarly articles, government measures included wholesale dismissals of leftist professors and some centrist Christian Democrats and other nonconformists, reductions by 10 to 15 percent of nonacademic personnel and 15 to 18 percent of students, appointment of military officers as rectors in all public and private (Catholic) universities, and the virtual elimination of political science as an academic discipline and sharp curtailment of other social sciences. The purges of faculty, students, and others were pervasive at institutions the military deemed especially subversive, such as the University of

Concepcion, long a hotbed of leftist sympathies and the birth place of the extremist Movement of the Revolutionary Left. [REDACTED]

As part of an apparent plan to modify the class composition of university student bodies, the regime decreed sharp tuition hikes, reductions in student financial aid, and an upgrading of aptitude test scores required for university admission. Because of curriculum changes ostensibly geared to anticipated job market requirements, technological and business fields predominated among openings for prospective students, and the humanities and social sciences were neglected. The effect was to reduce sharply access to higher education for the lower-middle classes and drop enrollments from 146,000 in 1973 to about 120,000 in 1984. [REDACTED]

From 1973, the regime insisted on depoliticizing student movements and discouraging student self-government. It abolished existing student and teacher organizations and gradually established essentially powerless student centers in most universities, whose officers it appointed while allowing some elected delegates. In 1977, the regime fostered the creation of a new student federation at the University of Chile and placed at its helm student members of the gremialist movement, a group comprised predominantly of conservatives, lay Catholics, and strong nationalists who held many key government positions. The regime's political strategists evidently hoped that these student associations would form the nucleus for an enduring rightist political party to which the military eventually could hand over power. Although gremialists at the University of Chile and elsewhere attracted minimal student support, their control over student associations was guaranteed by periodic indirect elections. [REDACTED]

Following a reorganization of the university system in 1981, the provincial branches of the University of Chile became separate institutions and several new universities were created in more remote areas. The underlying purpose, according to news commentators and scholars, was to disperse the concentration of students away from major urban centers and to establish conservative, proregime universities. [REDACTED]

List of Chilean Universities

Name (Location)	Enrollment	Student Association/Political Orientation
<b>Total</b>	<b>120,000</b>	
University of Chile (Santiago)	26,000	Christian Democratic/ Communist-led coalition
Catholic University of Chile (Santiago)	12,000	Gremialist; elections recently canceled
University of Santiago	15,000	
University of Valparaiso		Christian Democratic/ Communist-led coalition
Catholic University of Valparaiso	7,000	Rightist coalition; elections recently canceled
Santa Maria Technical University of Valparaiso	2,000	Communist-led coalition
University of Concepcion	10,000	Christian Democratic slate; academic year ended early
University of Biobio (Concepcion)		
University of the North (Antofagasta)	2,000	Far-left coalition
University of Antofagasta		Communist-led coalition
University of La Serena (La Serena)		
University of the Frontier (Temuco)		
Austral University (Valdivia)		
University of Tarapaca (Arica)*		
Arturo Prat University (Iquique)*		
University of Atacama (Copiapo)*		
University of Magallanes*		
University of Talca*		

\* Recently established.

[REDACTED]

**Developments at the University of Chile**

Antiregime student organizers at the University of Chile worked hard throughout 1983-84 to overcome the political apathy on campus and to undercut the regime-imposed student association. Their most effective tactic was to put up candidates for the at-large delegate positions on the universitywide student association. [redacted] by mid-1984 opposition groups had won several seats and were threatening to oust the gremialists from control of the association. [redacted]

Elections last October for the reconstituted Federation of Chilean Students—the first free University of Chile elections in 12 years—produced a large turnout. A combined slate representing the Christian Democratic Party and the Communist-led Popular Democratic Movement received 66 percent of the vote and gained full control of the Federation. About half of the coalition's vote went to the Christian Democrats, whose top votegetter became the Federation's president. The Communists received about a fourth of the slate's votes and elected the Federation's vice president. Rightist students split into several groups. Most considered association with the gremialists a liability because of the latter's identification with the regime. [redacted]

[redacted] The combined vote total of the right was about 27 percent, and because the gremialists received only about 6 percent they are widely viewed as likely to disappear from the University of Chile's political map. [redacted]

[redacted] the elections as having a significant impact, largely because for the first time since 1973 a substantial number of Chileans were allowed to vote for candidates representing clearly labeled political parties and under conditions that were not rigged. [redacted] agreed with several local commentators that the results constitute the best rough indicator to date of the relative appeal of the various political parties. [redacted]

The reaction of the authorities was speedy and negative. [redacted] The university's military rector questioned the right of the new Federation to represent students and charged that portions of its statutes were "unacceptable." He said the University administration would not officially

recognize the Federation, grant it office space or funds, or permit its representatives to have any say in University decisionmaking. The rector's statement was quickly endorsed by the Minister of Education, who threatened reprisals if student leaders engaged in antigovernment protests. In announcing the state of siege on 6 November, President Pinochet said the elections demonstrated the students' lack of "political maturity" and how some groups had taken advantage "irresponsibly" of the more open political activity the government had permitted. [redacted]

University and educational officials had tended to ignore the growth of student political activism. [redacted] They acted only when the right lost the elections and the new Federation leaders pledged to increase attacks on the government and to seek the early ouster of the rector. The authorities probably were also provoked by the Federation president's statements that he considered it legitimate for students to seize university buildings or campuses to dramatize their protests and that in 1985 he would seek to organize a national confederation of university students as a means to increase pressure for an early return to civilian government. [redacted]

**Effect on the Christian Democrats**

The Federation elections also worsened internal differences in the Christian Democratic Party. [redacted] Moderate and conservative party leaders wanted the Christian Democratic student group to disavow the alliance with the far left in the contest. The party's left wing, on the other hand, favored the alliance, evidently fearing that without it a leftist coalition would defeat the Christian Democratic student ticket. Christian Democratic President Gabriel Valdes, who argued for the alliance and ultimately prevailed, was opposed on this issue by his rival for the party chairmanship, Juan Hamilton. [redacted]

[redacted] Hamilton said he feared this development would provide the regime with additional

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ammunition to argue that the Christian Democrats are unreliable because they will never forgo alliances with the Communists at the national level. [REDACTED]

Despite failure by the moderates to prevail on the University of Chile elections question, they provoked such a furor that [REDACTED] student members were prohibited from allying with the far left in subsequent university student elections. Nevertheless, [REDACTED] the issue is not dead. Valdes and his wing still believe that the Communists are a significant political force and oppose the regime's demands that the Communists and other far leftist political parties be formally proscribed before the transition process will be permitted to advance. [REDACTED] the continuing acrimony over this issue was a factor in the party's decision to delay internal elections. [REDACTED]

Meanwhile, elections for President of the Christian Democratic Youth Movement held in mid-December resulted in a tie vote. The incumbent—a strong critic of alliances with leftists—reportedly was expected to win reelection easily before the dispute arose. His opponent belongs to the party's left wing and is closely associated with Valdes. The tie vote underscores the continuing divisiveness among Christian Democrats regarding alliances in university elections. This situation is likely to be aggravated once the new academic year begins in March and student leaders agitate for elections throughout the university system. [REDACTED]

#### Developments in Other Universities

Elections at the University of Chile stimulated students at several other universities to try to follow suit. [REDACTED] At the Catholic University in Santiago, probably the country's second most important university and a gremialist stronghold, a plebiscite in September over whether to permit direct student elections received overwhelming approval. As a result, elections for a new directorate for the Federation were scheduled for November. [REDACTED] the contest was shaping up as a close race between a Christian Democrat-leftist coalition and a centrist-rightist group led by the gremialists. On 14 November, however, the military governor of Santiago banned the elections, citing state of siege prohibitions. [REDACTED]

The authorities adopted similar measures to thwart opposition victories in student elections scheduled at other institutions. Included were an order on 22 November ending the academic year early at the University of Concepcion, the cancellation of student elections at the Catholic University of Valparaiso, and the refusal of officials at a campus in Osorno to recognize student elections won by a Christian Democratic-headed slate over one led by the Communists. Student elections held in several other universities before the state of siege prohibitions were implemented resulted in victories by either Communist-led tickets or those headed by the Christian Democrats. [REDACTED]

Opposition student groups reacted to the restrictive measures by calling short protest strikes or class stoppages at several universities, issuing demands for replacement of military rectors, and staging a few hit-and-run provocations against the police near university campuses. Most of these activities fizzled, however, and campuses quieted down with the onset of the summer vacations in December. Nevertheless, several groups in Santiago mounted a successful public fund drive to finance what had been a summer volunteer service by university students in rural areas but was now prohibited by the government under the state of siege. In January and February, according to local radio reports, police arrested several hundred students engaged in this activity in small towns and threatened further action if the student Federation of the University of Chile did not suspend its program. [REDACTED]

#### Outlook

The coming academic year probably will be more agitated than any in recent memory, leading to growing polarization between opposition student groups and the authorities. When university classes resume next month, student opposition groups will try to expand on their already appreciable gains. Their first priority probably will be to renew pressure on university administrators to permit direct student elections in those institutions where hardline rectors have prevented balloting. Two places where this tactic probably will be tried are at the capital's third university, the University of Santiago, and at the [REDACTED]

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University of Concepcion. Tight control continues to be maintained at each institution. In addition, student groups at the Catholic University of Santiago and elsewhere will press for an early scheduling of postponed elections, despite the authorities' reliance on the prohibitions of the state of siege. The new president of the Federation at the University of Chile probably will take the lead in planning a national confederation of students, perhaps attempting to tie this campaign to the United Nations' designation of 1985 as the worldwide Year of Youth. [REDACTED]

Opposition student groups also probably will continue pressing for liberalization of university life. Their demands are likely to include replacement of military rectors by civilians chosen by the respective academic communities, increases in student financial aid and softening of admission requirements, and a return to the pre-1973 practice of granting student representatives a voice in university affairs. A theme likely to permeate the revived student activism will be the need to return universities to center stage in the study and debate on major national issues, with particular emphasis on how to persuade the regime to speed up the return to a civilian government. [REDACTED]

The regime's reactions to most, if not all, of this activity will almost certainly be negative, involving new repressive measures to forestall opposition gains through elections or demands for liberalization. In fact, as long as the state of siege remains in effect, there is little chance that the regime will tolerate renewed student activism, such as participation in antiregime protests or efforts of student groups to play a role in discussion of the transition process. Moreover, the outcome of the University of Chile student elections has reconfirmed Pinochet's suspicions regarding the Christian Democrats. If nothing else, this factor probably will provide an additional pretext to delay the transition dialogue. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]