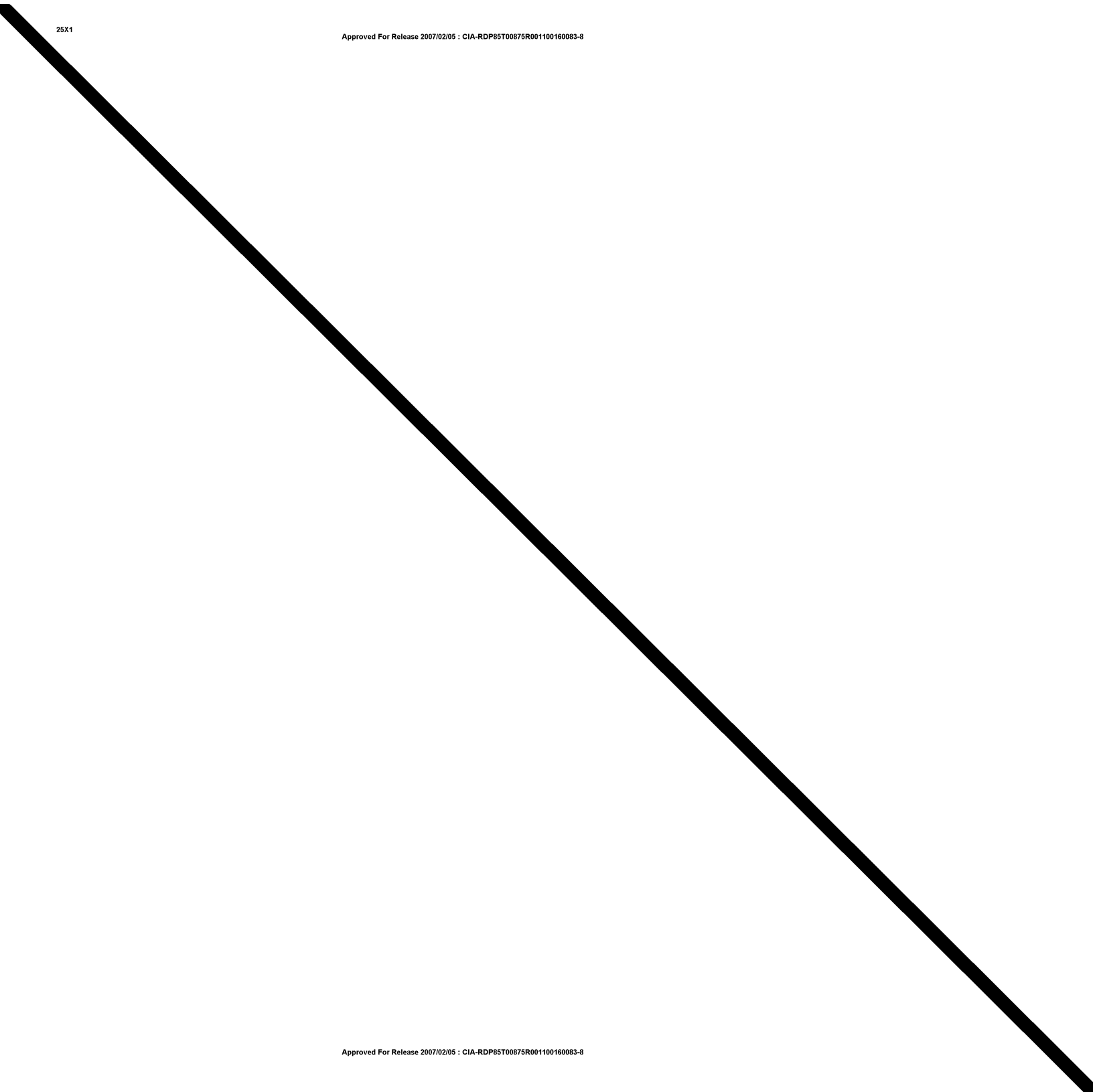

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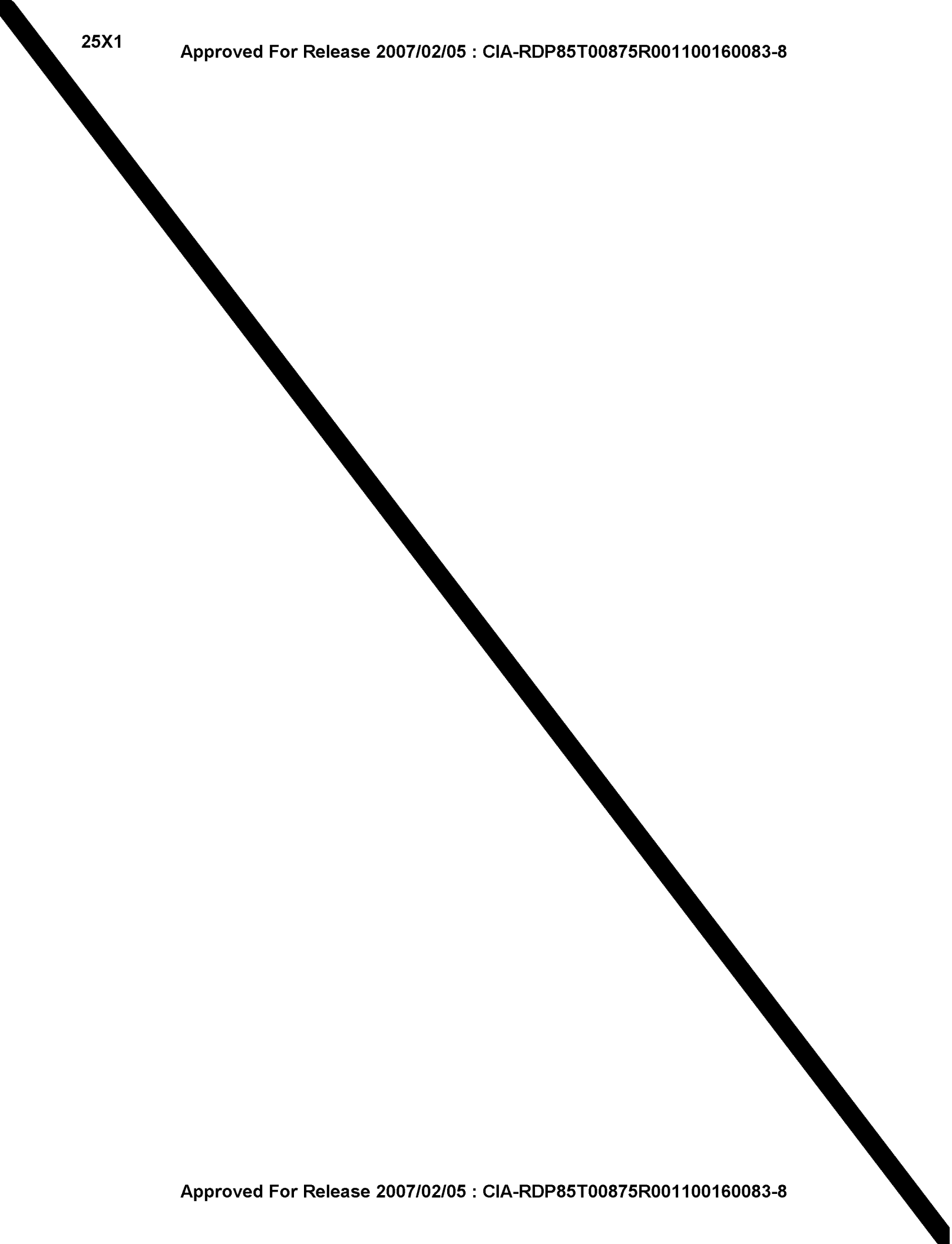
Intelligence Memorandum

Latin America: The Aftermath of the Chilean Coup

State Dept. review completed

Secret

15 November 1973
No. 2468/73



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15 November 1973

Latin America: The Aftermath of the Chilean Coup

Summary

In Latin America, where there is a strong propensity to believe in historical rhythms and cycles, the demise of the Allende government is widely viewed as a watershed event that will have important and enduring repercussions. Latin Americans traditionally have studied and often have attempted to imitate Chilean political institutions and practices because they were considered among the most advanced in the area. Under Allende, who delighted in suggesting that his government represented a major turning point in Latin America's political evolution, this interest became even more intense. Groups on the left and right throughout the region looked to the actions and programs of the Popular Unity government for lessons applicable to their own affairs, and for many, their Chilean counterparts were surrogates in a symbolic contest between ideologies and interest groups.

Chile was a model for the rest of Latin America, moreover, because under Allende its internal politics were conducted simultaneously on three distinct levels. Marxists and anti-Marxists, civilians and military leaders, and generational groups contended with each other with greater intensity than anywhere else in the hemisphere. It is those sectors, therefore, that in a number of other countries have been most affected by the coup.

On the **ideological level**, Marxists throughout the region probably are now under more concerted attack than in many years, largely because of events in Chile. Anti-Marxist elements in those countries where they are in power, feel vindicated and are generally less inclined to compromise with their opponents. In countries where anti-Marxists do not control the government, they have been emboldened by the success of Chilean conservatives, and some are in stronger positions to win concessions from reformist governments. In a few countries, communists and other leftists have come under new attack, [redacted]

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On an **institutional level**, the coup will have a particularly strong effect on relations between civilian and military elites. Officers have a crucial new precedent to cite in their efforts to augment their political roles. Leaders of some countries under civilian rule are steering unusually careful courses because of the impact of the coup on domestic political balances. Some are concerned that they may be forced to make fundamental changes in their programs because of new pressures from

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conservatives, or that they will be faced with outbreaks of leftist-inspired violence. The effects of the coup are likely to be felt to some degree in national elections that will be held in eight Latin American countries during the next 11 months.

It is on the **generational level,** however, where the most enduring reverberations of Allende's death and the demise of his civilian government are likely to be felt. Youths throughout the hemisphere generally reacted more angrily and violently than their parents and mounted demonstrations in a score of cities. For many of them, Allende's death confirmed their suspicions that peaceful and democratic methods to gain their ends are hopeless if not suicidal. With more than half of the countries of Latin America controlled by military-dominated governments, youths will be strongly tempted to turn to violence. Young revolutionaries, who were more quiescent while Allende was in office than they had been in preceding years, presumably are already planning subversive efforts in several countries. Fidel Castro, who in recent years has also pursued a more cautious line, has new cause to reappraise his position and could decide to increase the amount and types of support to revolutionary groups.

The **international affairs** of the American states also have begun to reflect the impact of the coup. The Brazilian military government, which was Allende's arch-rival in Latin America, and other conservative military regimes have gained confidence and prestige. Radical and reformist governments, on the other hand, have lost their strongest ally and may now see some of their foreign objectives sidetracked. The current negotiations aimed at revitalizing the Organization of American States probably will not conclude with more than superficial recommendations for change now that Chile's vote has moved to the opposite column. Similarly, the movement to reintegrate Cuba into the inter-American system has been stalled for the present.

Chile's Importance as a Model

Salvador Allende's government was watched as a weather vane for Latin America. Few governments in the history of the region were pondered with such attention, or have been so thoroughly dissected. This is partly because Chilean political dynamics have customarily been viewed in the rest of Latin America as exemplary and exceptional. Practitioners of the gentle art of political compromise, Chileans pioneered the first effective parliamentary system in the region, enjoyed stable governments for lengthy periods, and were the first to assimilate a large and influential Marxist electorate. Since the beginning of the century, other Latin Americans have looked admiringly on the theory and practice of Chilean politics for guidance in their own affairs.

Aliende played enthusiastically to his Latin American audience. During his nearly three years in power he portrayed himself and his government as the sharp edge of the new politics, relishing his role as the most controversial figure of the period. Santiago became the favorite haven in the hemisphere for revolutionaries, leftist exiles, and an assortment of intellectuals and activists who believed that Chile's experience with socialism was merely the first step in a continental movement. A sizable Cuban colony took root, and Castro even seemed to surrender to Allende some of his own pretensions to the leadership of the left. Leaders of all persuasions throughout the region agreed that Chile's political struggles represented a decisive stage in the conflict of ideologies and power groups and that the outcome would provide vital lessons for the rest of the hemisphere.

Chile's role at the center of the Latin American stage was also a result of the rising mood of nationalism in the area and the changing political orbits of the 1970s. In the past, Iberian American nations were satisfied to imitate European and North American examples, but in recent years they have become eager to formulate political and economic methods responsive to Latin America's particular circumstances. The Latins, for instance, want the inter-American system to reflect their own conditions and needs, and a growing number of them now choose to be identified as nonaligned. In this climate, Allende's experiments loomed as models that might be adapted by other Latin American governments in formulating their policies.

As Marxists and anti-Marxists, civilian and military leaders, and generational groups waged simultaneous battles, Chile offered precedents and examples on three different levels. These three connecting rings in the Chilean arena included virtually all of the major contemporary issues in Latin American politics. On the ideological plane, Chile provided multifarious lessons to groups in other countries arguing over how to control national resources and to stimulate economic development. On an institutional level, the behavior of the Chilean military, which had refrained from an active political role for more than 40 years, was closely observed in an area where

contests between civilian and military elites are more widespread than ever. On the generational plane, other Latins watched Allende's attempts to assuage radical youths and to bridge the generation gap. For all of these reasons, and because of the cultural, linguistic, and historical affinities of the Latin American countries, the coup will have continuing and powerful repercussions in the region.

Because of the military coup on 11 September, however, many of the lessons that might have been recorded from Allende's rule have been obscured. His failures and inadequacies and even the chaos of his last months in office will be forgotten by many because he was not permitted to complete his program, or his term in office. Because of the violence that accompanied and followed the coup, in fact, many Latin Americans who did not support Allende have been moved to sympathize publicly with him and with some of his objectives. Even Allende's epitaph is clouded by the dispute over how he died. His widow, daughters, and some supporters insist that he fell heroically while battling the fatal assaults on the presidential palace by the army and air force, a version that has been richly embroidered by Fidel Castro. The junta, however, has brought out evidence that strongly supports its claim that Allende committed suicide. In either event, his martyrdom is likely to sustain the emotional pitch of many of the controversies that were associated with his government, not resolve them.

The Coup and the Civilian Governments

Argentina was the first country outside Chile to experience important effects from the coup. The campaign for the presidential elections on 23 September—only 12 days from its conclusion when Allende died—quickly became absorbed in Chile's trauma. There were large, violent demonstrations by radical youths who were joined in expressions of indignation by left-wing Peronists and Communists. Juan Peron tried to mollify his leftist followers and to keep them in the Peronist column on election day by denouncing the coup and suggesting that the US bore some of the blame. With this goal achieved, however, Peron moved forcefully against the Communists, radical youths, and the left wing of his movement. Although Peron's efforts to contain the left are motivated primarily by domestic considerations, his decision to move so soon after the election suggests that his resolve was stiffened by the success of the Chilean junta.

By swerving to the right he has won greater support in the military at a time when the commitment of senior officers throughout Latin America to political missions is growing. The Argentine military, with a long tradition of political involvement, ceded power to civilians only last May after more than six years in power, but many senior officers continue to believe that they will soon be required to intervene again. This conviction has reportedly been reinforced by the coup in Chile. A senior army staff officer recently told a US Embassy official in Buenos Aires that the military is impressed with "the Chilean solution" and is waiting in the wings

until Peron dies or is incapacitated or until his government founders. Argentina's regional position has also been directly affected by the coup. Now that Argentina is encircled by conservative military governments that have more in common with its arch-rival Brazil, Peron will have little room to maneuver for a greater leadership role in South America. His "third world" foreign policy could well be inhibited, and in the short run he may yield to pressures for a more moderate line both at home and abroad.

Reactions to the coup by Mexican officials and the public were exceptionally strong. President Echeverria, who enjoyed a close personal relationship with Allende, deplored the coup, decreed a three-day period of mourning, and probably encouraged the public demonstrations that occurred in Mexico City. He granted asylum to a large number of refugees from Chile. Allende's widow and daughters were his house guests and have enjoyed easy access to the Mexican media for their tirades against the junta.

Because of its attitude, the government will face some new problems. It will be some time before cordial relations between the new Chilean government and Mexico are developed, and Mexico will be even more isolated in the shrinking ranks of reformist countries in the hemisphere. Domestic opposition to Echeverria has also been stirred up. Business leaders, other conservatives, and segments of the press charge that [redacted] the government has stimulated subversive and criminal groups like those which recently murdered a Monterrey business tycoon. 25X6

With only about a month remaining in the closely contested Venezuelan presidential election campaign, the coup has so accentuated differences between major political sectors that the outcome of the voting on 9 December could be affected. The ruling Christian Democratic (COPEI) government of Rafael Caldera, which agreed with Allende on many issues, declared a three-day period of mourning after his death. COPEI, nevertheless, has come under attack by Communists and other leftists because of its ties with the Chilean Christian Democrats whom they accuse of complicity in Allende's fall. Many leftists claim that they cannot now support COPEI. Democratic Action (AD), the principal opposition party, will indirectly profit from leftist dissatisfaction with COPEI, adding to the ten percent lead that some polls show it already enjoys. It apparently intends to capitalize on adverse reactions to events in Chile during the remainder of the campaign.

Official circles are concerned that youth will be further alienated because of events in Chile. Venezuelan students and youth traditionally have resorted to violence more readily and more often than their contemporaries in other Latin American countries. Many demonstrated violently against the coup, and an AD adviser recently told a US Embassy official that they may now lose what faith they had in the democratic process and turn from the ballot box to violence. Although the militant left has been reduced to minuscule proportions in recent years, it is still capable of isolated actions such as the recent ambush of an army patrol that took the lives of three soldiers.

The coup has had varying degrees of impact in other countries run by civilian governments. In Colombia, two of the major candidates in the presidential election next April have taken divergent stands on the military take-over, but events in Chile are far from the minds of most Colombian voters. In Costa Rica, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador, all conducting national elections in coming months, issues generated or highlighted by the coup are likely to be important. In El Salvador, moreover, the military has been bolstered significantly. Officers at all levels reportedly have expressed "overwhelming approval" of the coup and some assert that the Chilean junta has demonstrated "the way it has to be done." One direct result of the coup was President Molina's decision to delay plans for an agrarian reform law because of opposition from conservatives, including some senior officers.

The Coup and the Military Governments

More than half the Latin American countries are dominated by military officers; for the first time since 1931, Chile is among them. The statistics are particularly weighted in South America. In 1961 there was only one military government while today there are seven. There were other times when as many countries were under military rule, but before the 1960s, almost none of the caudillos and "men-on-horseback" in charge had comprehensive programs to carry out. There is no precedent, therefore, for the belief prevalent among military elites today, that they have a transcendent mission to govern indefinitely while carrying out far-reaching changes. This concept became a strong force following the military coup in Brazil in 1964. It gained a number of other adherents in subsequent years, and seemed to become almost irresistible this year as both Uruguay and Chile, the countries with the longest traditions of civilian rule, came under military dominance. The impact of the coup in Chile on the major military governments is discussed below.

The Brazilian military was one of the first to announce recognition of the Chilean junta and privately is gloating over the collapse of the socialist regime. Allende and his supporters were the Brazilian generals' principal adversaries in the hemisphere, both because Chile was the host for a large contingent of Brazilian exiles and revolutionaries and because the two governments were ideologically at opposite poles. The change of government in Chile has materially advanced Brazil's growing importance in South America. Argentina, Brazil's traditional rival, has been further isolated by the addition of another conservative military government on its flanks. In the new Chilean Government, Brasilia may again have an ally on the Pacific coast and an advocate in the Andean Group of nations that have endeavored to create an economic counterweight to Brazil's increasing influence. Brasilia already has provided at least $70 million in credits on terms highly favorable to Chile, and Brazilian Government officials have said that they are prepared to make sizable additional loans.

The coup has had an important impact in Uruguay. After the military assumed effective power earlier this year, the government attempted to neutralize the extreme left, but until recently it was unwilling to pull out the stops in a decisive crackdown. Buoyed by the repression of Marxists in Chile and the current drive against Communists and terrorists in Argentina, it recently undertook its own vigorous campaign against the left. The university has been closed until at least the end of the year because it is a center of anti-government activity. A daily newspaper and a radio station run by the powerful Communist party were recently suspended and their principal officers are to be tried by military courts for subversion.

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Foreign Communists are also targets. Uruguay's National Security Council convened shortly after the coup to consider "the situation resulting from events in South America" and decided to admonish the Soviet ambassador for his statement criticizing the coup.

The Uruguayan Government believes that its security situation has improved now that all of the countries of the southern cone are inhospitable to the hundreds of refugee Tupamaro guerrillas who had found haven in Chile and a base from which to plan operations. Increasingly convinced that its conservative line is correct, the military government will probably continue to move gradually toward the right and may even try to arrange a coordinated regional policing effort against Communists and revolutionaries. Similarly, the Stroessner government in Paraguay undoubtedly believes that its foreign critics will be quieted for awhile. It could directly profit from the coup, moreover, if Argentina, because of its increased isolation, seeks to reduce its rivalry with Brazil, thus lessening the pressures on Asuncion to choose sides between its two large neighbors.

General Hugo Banzer's government in Bolivia has also enthusiastically applauded the coup. Even more than his fellow conservative military rulers in the area, Banzer was convinced the Allende government posed a real threat to his regime. A large number of Bolivian revolutionaries and several of Banzer's most influential opponents found haven in Chile, where they received some aid from the Allende government. Because of the vulnerability of Banzer's administration, the general's fears were probably legitimate. The threat dissipated when most of the exiles in Chile either were imprisoned by the new government or scattered to other countries. Moreover, events in Chile made it easier for Banzer to undertake his own roundup of leftists. Chile and Bolivia presumably are now entering an era of closer relations, but formal ties, suspended in 1962, probably will not be renewed in the immediate future.

In Peru, the coup has had an unsettling effect by sharpening the long-standing controversy between radicals and moderates in the Velasco government. In the wake of Allende's demise, the regime has taken new initiatives to keep opposition groups on the defensive. It took unusually harsh retaliatory measures against an ineffective teachers' strike, exiled several prominent critics, and fanned a dispute with the

Supreme Court. Moderate leaders probably do not want Peru to assume the role of lightning rod of the Latin American left that was played by the Allende regime. They are likely to urge caution in developing relations with Cuba and to favor the continuation of constructive relations with the US and the Chilean junta. They were probably dismayed by Foreign Minister de la Flor's recent trip to Cuba and by the anti-Chilean tone of President Velasco's message to the World Peace Council in Moscow.

While moderates are fearful that the government may move, or appear to move, to the left, radical leaders are likely to argue that Allende's downfall has placed Peru in an excellent position to expand its relations with the Communist countries and possibly to elicit more aid from the USSR. The debate on the pace of revolutionary change has in the past centered on specific government programs. Now, the basic purpose of the revolution itself may be seriously questioned by some moderates. Thus far, however, there is little evidence that Velasco will slacken the leftist pace of the nationalistic Peruvian revolution.

In his brief remarks about the coup, Panama's General Torrijos regretted Allende's fall. The Chilean had aided him by adding weight and momentum to the Latin American left and shared Torrijos' basic antagonisms toward the US. With Allende gone, Torrijos realizes that he has lost a strong ally in the quest to regain control of the Panama Canal. The coup could influence internal Panamanian affairs as well. The local Communists and radical students have been under intermittent attack by the government this year, and these efforts could escalate if Torrijos feels sufficient new pressures from the right.

The Coup and the Inter-American System

The collapse of the Allende government will have some important effects on the international affairs of the American states. In 1970, Chile became the second Latin American country to abrogate the OAS sanctions that prohibit diplomatic and commercial ties with the Castro government. Since then, six other nations have also established relations with Havana. This group, supported by four more countries, was within one vote of becoming a majority in the OAS and of approving a resolution sponsored by Venezuela that would make adherence to the sanctions optional. Since the new Chilean Government is as hotly anti-Castro as Allende was pro, Venezuela has decided to withhold its proposal rather than see it defeated. The Caldera government reportedly intends to recognize the Castro regime, despite the OAS position, but not until after the December elections.

Allende's Chile was also in the forefront of the countries that have been seeking a major overhaul of the inter-American system. This reformist group wants to revitalize the OAS and reorient it toward the needs of the Latin American countries, to restrict the scope of the Rio Treaty, and to reduce the influence of the US

generally. These objectives have suffered a sharp setback as a result of the reversal of the official Chilean attitude. During the third phase of talks by the special OAS commission on reorganization that are scheduled to begin in Lima in mid-November, the reformist group is likely to be on the defensive. Only superficial or cosmetic changes in the structure of the inter-American system now seem likely, and the US will encounter considerably less opposition in regional organizations.

Castro and the Extreme Left

Allende's death and the collapse of his government caused more real regret in Cuba than anywhere else outside of Chile. Allende and Castro were intimate friends, their governments were spiritual siblings, most of their objectives were parallel, and many of their foreign policies were synchronized. The Popular Unity government in Chile had considerably reinforced Castro's position. He gained respectability and influence in Latin America after Allende's inauguration, and his hopes for a coalition of radical, nationalistic states opposed to the US seemed for the first time to be near fulfillment. Allende's assumption of power through democratic means was a factor, moreover, in Castro's decision to replace the militant foreign policy he had pursued through the 1960s with the more restrained and orthodox approach he has since followed.

Castro learned of the coup while in New Delhi, but made few public comments there or during his subsequent visit to North Vietnam. On 28 September, when he was back in Cuba, however, he devoted an entire speech to Chile. He stridently denounced the military junta and insisted that Allende had died valiantly resisting attacks on the presidential palace by the army and air force. Castro, with Allende's widow and daughter with him on the dais, labored to inspire "revolutionary Chileans" to take up arms against the new government. He said they had no alternative except "armed struggle," although he avoided a more encompassing endorsement of violence. He pledged that Cuba would do anything to support resistance to the new government and promised that Cubans stood ready to shed their blood for the Chilean people.

Despite this and other shows of bravado, Castro has been careful to adhere to his current pragmatic foreign policy. He did not portray the coup as a pivotal event that might require Cuba to reappraise its position or make any commitments to provide Cuban volunteers or material assistance. Although he may well decide to assist an underground movement in Chile, he probably will insist--as he does in other countries--that it be a viable movement acting on its own initiative. He probably has no illusions about the immediate prospects for such an opposition force in Chile and is disgusted with the failure of most of Allende's followers to fight.

Although the coup is not likely to cause significant shifts in Cuban policy, Castro's efforts to play the simultaneous roles of revolutionary luminary and Soviet ally may have been complicated. He will continue to seek closer ties with Latin

American governments while maintaining a harsh line toward the US. Events in Chile and the Middle East may have convinced him to escalate his criticism of detente and to amplify his warnings to favored groups and governments to be wary of US intentions. He has urged the Velasco government in Peru, for instance, to strengthen itself and prepare for the hostile US actions that he believes are more likely now that the spotlight is off Chile. He undoubtedly is concerned over the resurgence of conservative strength in some countries and the mounting assaults on Communists.

Castro may be sorely tempted to give in to young revolutionaries who want him to resume his old role as their patron, but this would be difficult. He now lacks an adequate forward base in Latin America for implementing clandestine operations, and in the wake of the new Chilean government's revelations about Cuban activities there during Allende's tenure, the suspicions of other Latin American governments have probably been heightened. Juan Peron, for instance, commented recently about what he considered Cuban interference in Chilean affairs, and warned Havana to stay out of internal Argentine politics. Cubans accredited in Latin American countries probably will come under increased surveillance, and Havana will be pressed to pursue a generally cautious line.

All of the major Latin American Communist parties have joined Cuba in vigorously protesting the coup and now are attempting to generate international support for their beleaguered colleagues in Chile. Luis Corvalan, secretary general of the Chilean party, who was arrested after the coup and is awaiting trial for treason in a military court, is the object of an intensive propaganda campaign. The Latin parties are endeavoring to portray the junta as fascist and bloodthirsty, hoping both to ameliorate the anti-Marxist crusade in Chile and indirectly to hit back at conservatives and military officers in their own countries. The parties have little capacity to help the shattered Chilean party, [redacted] Almost all of the parties will probably remain firmly committed to the legalistic, pacific programs that they have followed for decades.

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The Generational Factor

Some of the coup's most enduring repercussions in Latin America will be experienced by the generation under 30. The first tracings of the impact were evident in the days immediately following the coup when youths in a score of cities demonstrated, often violently, against the new government. In Chile and the rest of Latin America, youth had been Allende's most enthusiastic constituency. Hundreds of young people loitered in Santiago to watch the Popular Unity government's efforts to carry out a socialist revolution by democratic procedures, looking for lessons applicable to their own countries. Others were refugees from conservative regimes who went to Chile to organize subversive movements. Curiously, during the three years that he was in power, Allende had a generally leavening effect on the radical youth of the region.

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The debates that had raged through the 1960s between young advocates of violence and old guard Marxists who prefer peaceful paths to power abated, and violence and guerrilla activity decreased. Many youths, including a large number who had been active members of terrorist groups, seemed to acknowledge that the Chilean model—if it worked—might be appropriate elsewhere. As a result of the coup and the harsh prosecution of leftists that has followed, however, many of them are likely to conclude that they have no alternative but violence. There are no longer any havens in South America for them, and many probably will return to their own countries with appetites for violent encounters with conservative elites and with their cynicism about legitimate and democratic practices reinforced.

The most far-reaching effect of the coup during the next few years may therefore be to encourage dissident elements throughout Latin America to turn to more violent methods. With about half of the Latin American countries under the effective control of military elites that came to power illegally, and in many cases violently, arguments for peaceful, democratic methods will seem singularly inappropriate to many. Youths, in particular, are likely to be attracted to attempt violent solutions, especially in countries where military regimes proscribe normal political activity. Some of the immediate effects of this tendency may be a growth of urban terrorism, violence and unrest on university campuses, and perhaps renewed rural guerrilla episodes. With Allende as a new martyr and the Chilean junta a new target, youthful revolutionaries in Latin America may now be on the threshold of a new phase of violent struggle.

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