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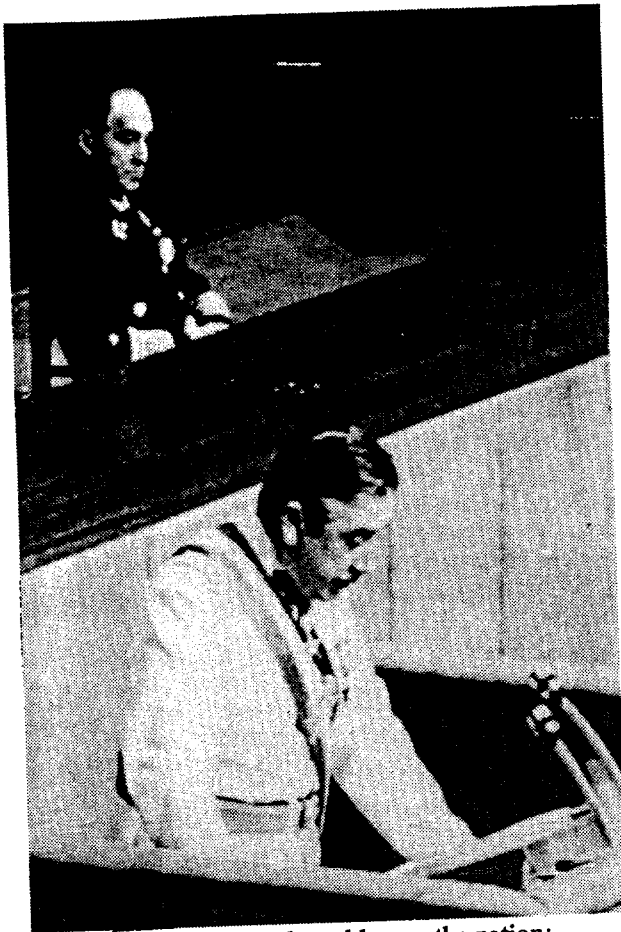
Weekly Review



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September 19, 1975

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President Pinochet addresses the nation;
General Leigh looks on

CHILE: POPULAR SUPPORT REMAINS

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The size and enthusiasm of the crowd in Santiago—estimates range as high as 300,000 persons—that celebrated the military government's second anniversary last week are likely to reinforce President Pinochet's conviction that the junta has chosen the proper path for the country. Although the lower classes were underrepresented at the ceremonies, [REDACTED] the crowds appeared genuinely exuberant and the mood was largely nonpolitical.

In his prepared remarks during the celebration, Pinochet gave no indication that the regime intends to change its policies of economic austerity and tight control over civilian political activity.

At the same time, in response to continued foreign and domestic criticism of Chile's human rights posture, the President did announce a number of programs that are likely to be viewed by the average Chilean as a loosening of restraints. Pinochet announced that a "council of state" composed of former presidents and other prominent citizens will be formed to advise the junta on important policy matters; a number of high-level political detainees will be released from custody and be allowed to remain in the country; the state of siege, in effect since the September 1973 coup, will be "reduced" by "one level"; and new constitutional "standards" will be adopted by mid-1976.

Although these programs may to some extent mute domestic criticism of the regime's hard-line policies, they are unlikely to affect foreign criticism noticeably. The President's initiatives are vague and contain important caveats likely to limit their effectiveness. For example, although the lowered state of siege means that a number of criminal offenses now come under joint military-civilian jurisdiction, the most serious crimes—including terrorism—apparently remain exclusively military matters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] those released continue to be answerable for any civil charges or sentences outstanding against them.

Pinochet's new programs nevertheless suggest an added degree of flexibility in the military's overall scheme for restructuring the nation's political system. Recent strong criticism of the President by fellow junta member General Gustavo Leigh may be causing Pinochet to examine more closely the regime's economic policies and the particularly severe economic plight of the lower classes. Leigh believes that Pinochet is moving too slowly in correcting these economic imbalances, and he will probably continue to press for further policy changes.

Former president Eduardo Frei has reacted cautiously to Pinochet's call for civilian participation in a council of state. Spokesmen for Frei's Christian Democratic Party have stated that

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further clarification is needed before the former president would agree to join such an organization. It is unlikely that Frei will respond quickly to Pinochet's overture, and at any rate he would demand a clear public statement of the council's role before lending his party's support and prestige to the enterprise. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]