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## Chile: Pinochet's Victory in Referendum

The endorsement of the Chilean Government's position in the national referendum last week was a clear personal victory for President Pinochet that exceeded his own expectations. The turnout was exceptionally heavy—about 5.4 million of almost 6 million eligible voters, with 75 percent favoring the government's rejection of the 1974 resolution censuring Chile for human rights violations.

There is no evidence that the government employed fraud in the plebiscite. The government position was carefully worded to appeal to the strong nationalism of the Chileans; Pinochet thereby assured himself of an overwhelming advantage against those groups that urged a negative vote.

Pinochet's victory will consolidate his support within the military, particularly the army, where doubt about his judgment and leadership was beginning to spread, and will reaffirm his preeminent position in the junta. As a result, he will have a freer hand in many areas.

**Domenico Palley**

Pinochet will not hesitate to point to the referendum results as evidence of his government's legitimacy and of his own political astuteness. He has remarked that there will be no more elections or voting for a decade, and evidently intends to act as though he now has a mandate for the

slow transition to civilian rule that he outlined last July.

His remarks on presidential and congressional elections have been inconsistent, however, and he may show some flexibility on this point. The Chileans, having been allowed to exercise the vote, are now likely to be more strident in demanding greater political participation.

We expect no harsh crackdowns, but Pinochet will almost certainly be tougher toward his opponents in the outlawed

political parties and in labor and church circles. Although he has proclaimed that the curfew and the state-of-siege restrictions will remain in force, there is a good chance that he will relax them when he thinks he has made the point that Chile is not bending to foreign pressure.

Pinochet will, however, weed out dissenters within the government. He has announced his intention to reorganize the Foreign Ministry. A number of of-  
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officials in this ministry—including the Foreign Minister, Admiral Carrvajal—had protected the call for the referendum. The junta members who opposed the vote—Air Force chief Leigh and Navy chief Merino—may be forced to step aside.

Leigh is still sniping at Pinochet. Although he has publicly reaffirmed his loyalty and brushed off suggestions of a split in the junta,

that Pinochet is becoming a power-hungry dictator. Leigh also alleged that the CIA is backing hard-liners in hopes of toppling the President.

Leigh's motives are far from clear, but his statements—almost certain to leak—will make his position even more untenable. Leigh may be trying to provoke Pinochet into removing him, perhaps on the assumption that such a step would catalyze opposition within the armed services and lead to Pinochet's removal.

Foreign Policy

Pinochet has stressed that his government will now adopt a more aggressive foreign policy, presumably including a harder line toward the UN and other critics.

It is difficult to judge how he will play

the relationship with the US. Although improved relations with Washington remain a fundamental objective of his government, Pinochet probably believes that a specific quid pro quo—such as support for Chile's requests for loans through international organizations—should be forthcoming in return for further responses on human rights issues. The Chilean approach to the US for mediation on the Beagle Channel dispute with Argentina demonstrates some hope for good relations with the US.

Chile has made substantial progress in improving its human rights practices, and most Chileans probably resent what they regard as a lack of recognition of this change. Among the improvements noted

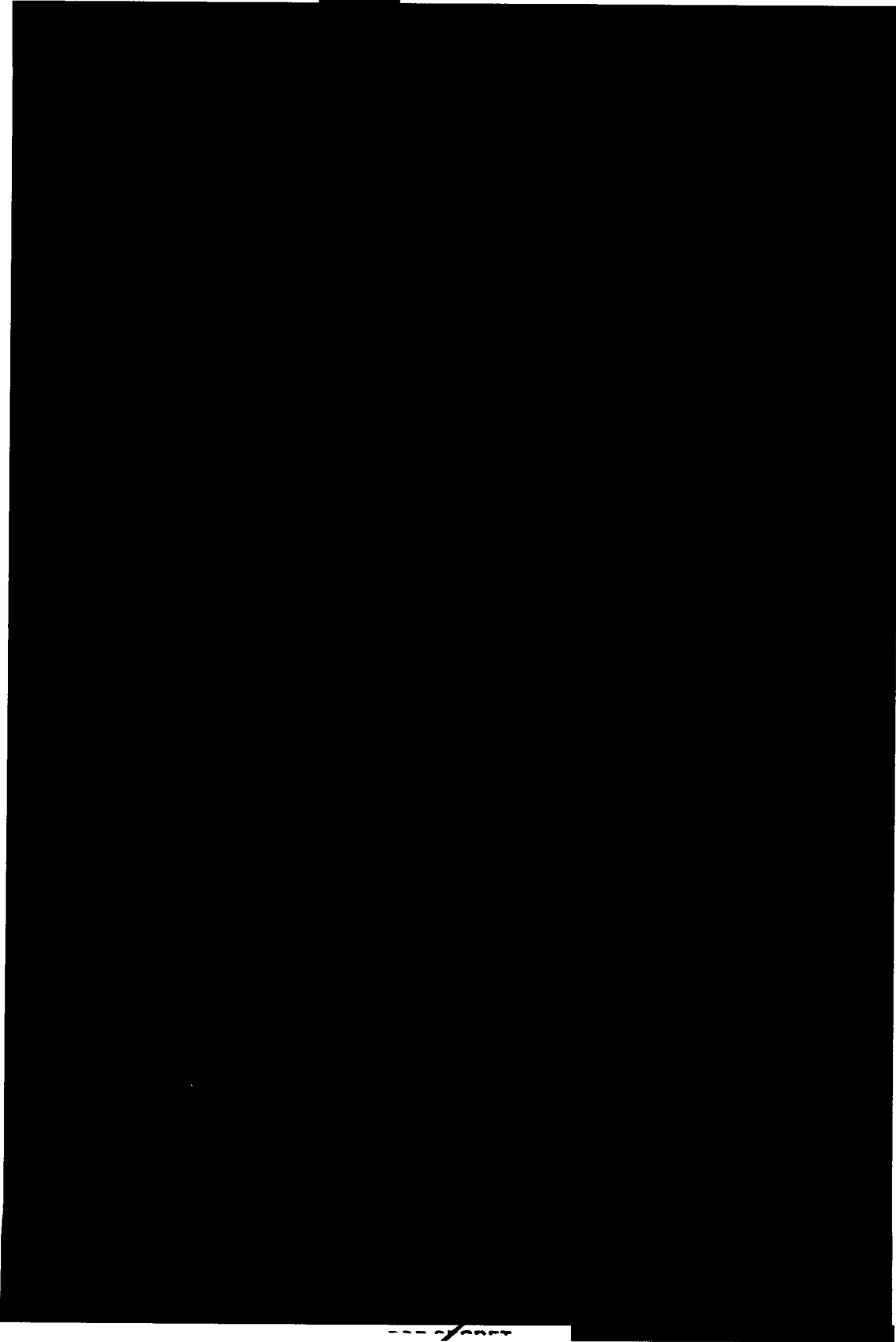
etc.

- A marked reduction in reports of torture, illegal detentions, and "disappearances."
- Considerable improvement in treatment of political prisoners. About 250 persons remain imprisoned on security-related charges.
- The release of 4,000 political prisoners over the past several years.

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