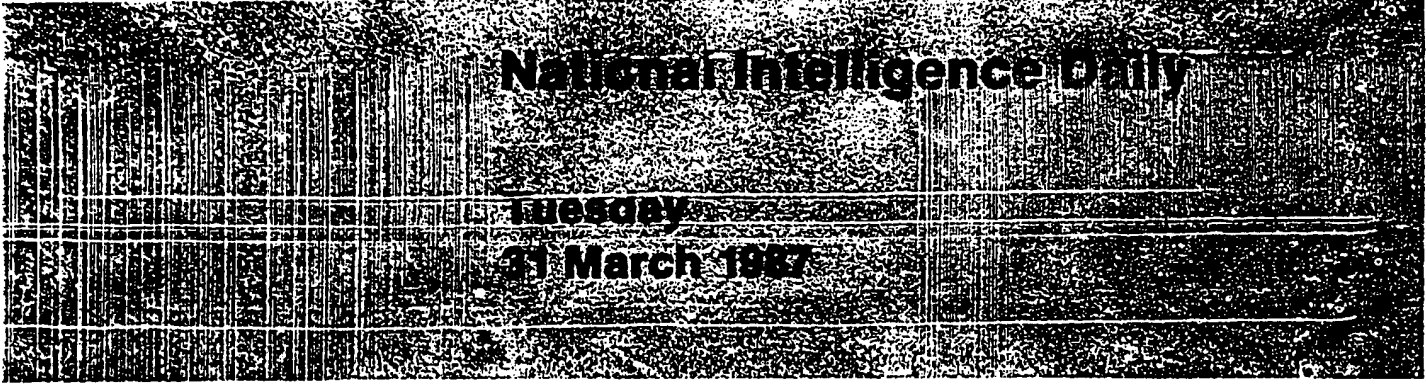




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Special Analysis

CHILE:

Political Implications of Papal Visit

Chile's opposition parties, the Pinochet government, and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church have conflicting objectives for the visit of Pope John Paul II beginning tomorrow. Although the visit will not overcome Chile's growing political crisis, it probably will help to strengthen the moderate opposition, further discredit the far left, and somewhat restrict President Pinochet's room for political maneuvering. The Communists and their allies want to exploit the Papal visit by dramatizing repression in Chile, and Pinochet hopes to use it to show that he has good relations with the Vatican. Moderate opposition leaders hope the visit will encourage the armed forces to accept the need for a transition to civilian rule despite Pinochet's continued resistance.

opinion polls show most Chileans hope the Pontiff's presence will create a climate for reconciliation and help to reverse the trend toward political polarization. The government is counting heavily on the visit to boost its international legitimacy. Pinochet, however, strongly distrusts the Chilean Church—the bishops are divided over how strongly to press for social justice and democracy—and fears that its activist wing may lead the Church into open opposition. He therefore recently enacted a law legalizing political parties and substantially reduced the number of political exiles. views these moves as an attempt to curry favor with the Vatican.

Plans by Leftists, Moderates

at a minimum, the Communists will stage several disturbances to provoke the security forces into overreacting—possibly killing and injuring demonstrators—and embarrassing the government.

The Communists' terrorist affiliate has announced a "truce" for the visit, while the principal leftist political coalition has organized a letter-writing and petition-signing campaign aimed at informing the Pope of Chile's "other face," and coalition leaders have publicly asked for an audience. the government anticipated the Communists' plans and has strengthened Army units in Santiago to quell demonstrations.

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Leaders of moderate opposition parties intend to forgo any effort to organize antigovernment demonstrations or to cooperate with the far left. They are concentrating on internal debates over whether to register under the new, highly restrictive political parties law and on launching a national campaign for free elections. The moderate opposition wants to avoid street protests during the visit because the government would use such events to discredit them and because they realize the public would not welcome disruptions during the Pope's visit.

In his public appearances, the Pontiff probably will convey a spiritual boost and message of hope to Chile's poor, without giving Pinochet any comfort. The moderates realize that they must follow responsible policies after the visit to improve prospects for an accommodation with the armed forces and to promote open elections. They consider it vital for the Pontiff to endorse these objectives publicly. The head of the newly formed conservative political coalition recently called openly for political liberalization, an end to political exile and human rights abuses, and collaboration with the moderate opposition, a stance the moderates hope will encourage the Pope to speak out in support of the opposition's objectives.

Outlook

Pinochet probably will fail in efforts to portray the Pope's visit as an endorsement of his government, although he probably will benefit from the national pride stirred by this first Papal trip to Chile. The key beneficiaries likely will be the moderate opposition parties, along with the Church's activist wing, especially if the overall impact of the Pope's message is to encourage a mood of national reconciliation and a sense that social improvements and political liberalization must be accelerated. The Communists probably will become more politically isolated if they follow through on plans to incite disruptions and violence during the visit.

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