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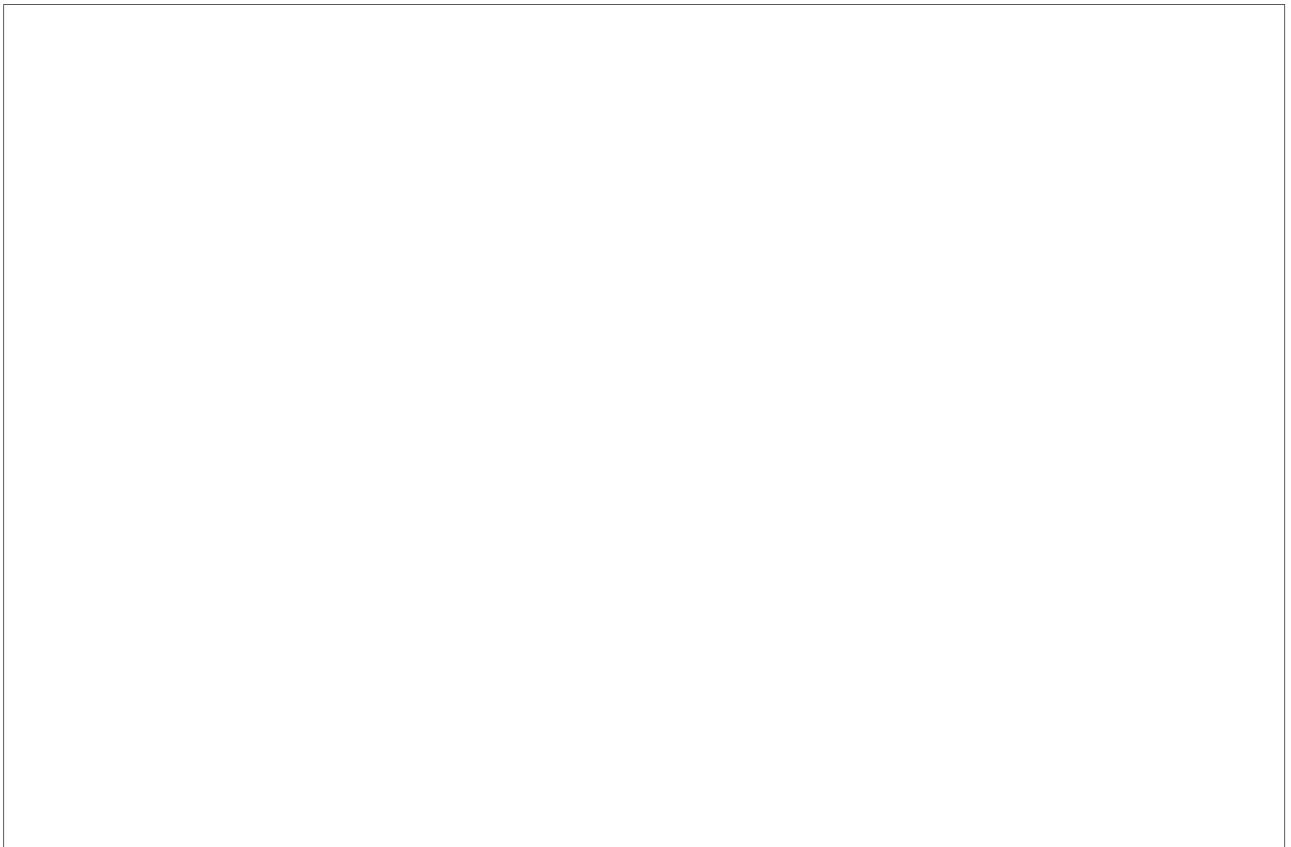
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HUMAN RIGHTS REVIEW
(15-28 September 1978)

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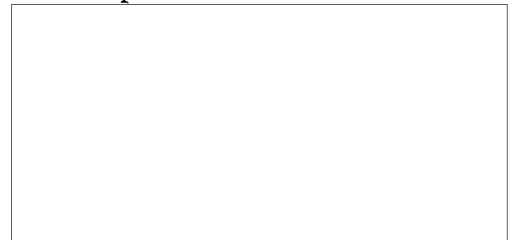
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LATIN AMERICA

--Chile: In his speech marking the fifth anniversary of the overthrow of the Allende government on 11 September, President Pinochet outlined the latest and, as yet, most definite plans for the transition from military to civilian government. According to Pinochet, a new constitution, prepared under his guidance, would be submitted to voters next year, but elections would not be held until 1985. Initial reaction to the speech has focused on the long interval before civilian rule. Probably of greater significance, however, is the developing controversy over the Pinochet constitution, which differs markedly from Chile's 1925 constitution. Pinochet intends to submit the new constitution for approval in a national plebiscite, some possible outcomes of which could produce serious, even critical problems for the regime. Whether Chileans accept or reject the new charter, the Pinochet constitution and the opposition to it disclose once again the political consequences of the regime's perception of the profound cleavage in Chilean politics.

In his lengthy speech, often polemical in tone, Pinochet dealt with more than the transition to civilian rule. As he has in the past, he defended the legitimacy of the coup and the moral mandate of his military regime, reviewed its progress, highly praised its economic performance, and covered a wide range of domestic and international issues. He met head-on many of the past and present criticisms of his administration and its policies and boldly raised some thorny matters, most notably the Letelier case. All in all, it was a long and strongly worded defense of his embattled regime in its continuing struggle against the forces and ideologies allegedly manifested in the

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overthrown Allende administration. In that struggle, Pinochet claims to enjoy majority support against his opponents. His claim will be put to an important test when Chilean voters are given the chance to accept or reject the regime's constitution--a controversial document, one of whose major purposes is to prevent legally another Allende-type government.

So far, there are no signs the regime sees any great risk in permitting the plebiscite. It apparently believes it enjoys high civilian support, a perception perhaps colored by the success of its plebiscite victory last January. Then, 75 percent voted against the UN resolution condemning the human rights situation in Chile. Though the choice was forced upon the voters, the election seems to have been totally honest. It was also a great and unexpected victory for Pinochet, who spoke of the vote as "legitimizing" his regime. Pinochet's position in the forthcoming constitutional plebiscite will not be assisted by the nationalistic bias of the earlier vote, however, and a negative outcome is possible. [redacted] 3.5(c)

--Argentina-US: Argentina has indefinitely postponed formal ratification of the Tlateloco Treaty, which seeks to ban nuclear weapons from Latin America. There is a possibility that it will reverse its earlier decision and decide not to adhere to the accord. The change of mind stems in part from growing hostility in Buenos Aires to US pressure on human rights. It also reflects the fact that Argentina has not received any assurances it will get heavy water technology from the US. Contrary to the US position, the Argentines insist that the US offered them heavy water technology last November in exchange for their ratification of full-scope safeguards. President Videla went against the advice of many of his advisers when he signed the treaty earlier this year. He has been under strong pressure to withdraw his support by those who believe that delay or refusal is the only way to stand up to the US. [redacted] 3.5(c)

--Ecuador: A plot by some senior Ecuadorean military officers and election officials to announce widespread voting irregularities and fraud as a prelude to voiding the country's two-stage presidential election apparently has been shelved temporarily. The postponement seems to have been prompted by broad exposure in the media and by denunciations from civilian political leaders. It remains uncertain whether the conspiracy can succeed, but US Embassy officials in Quito believe that the plotters probably will try again after the public furor subsides. [redacted]

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