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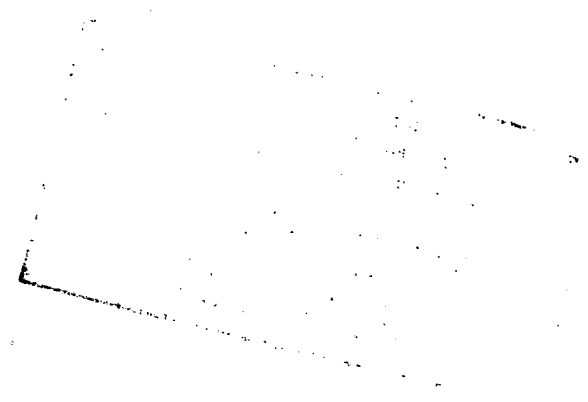


Chile: The Opposition Movement



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An Intelligence Assessment



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ALA 83-10184

December 1983

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Chile: The Opposition Movement

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [Redacted] Office
of African and Latin American Analysis, and [Redacted]
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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
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**Chile:
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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 14 November 1983
was used in this report.*

The economic recession that began in Chile in late 1981 gave impetus to the most serious political challenge the Pinochet government has faced during its 10-year rule. The opposition movement is widespread and cuts across political ideologies, class lines, and age groups—but it is therefore amorphous and has multiple leaders and varied goals. As such, it is likely to undergo further realignments over the next several months.

The leading groups in the opposition movement are:

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- The most active coalition, the Democratic Alliance, demands accelerated democratic transition to civilian rule and has avoided close cooperation with extremist elements. The Alliance's success stems from the leadership of the Christian Democratic Party, Chile's most significant opposition political force.
- The traditionally fractured Socialists have operated largely at the periphery of the present opposition movement. Most factions nominally affiliate with the Democratic Alliance, but one major group works with the violence-prone left.
- The Popular Democratic Movement, which favors violent opposition, is a coalition of radical leftist groups led by the Communist Party. It seeks greater legitimacy—so far with limited success—through cooperation with the Democratic Alliance.
- Most conservative groups, such as the National Party, have ceased criticizing the regime in response to the government's tentative political opening but are rebuilding long-dormant political organizations.

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Given historically high voter participation, a recent poll, and logical assumptions, we believe most Chileans favor a quick return to civilian rule. Indeed, the single unifying factor in the fractured movement has been the consensus in favor of shortening Pinochet's term, which formally ends in 1989.

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Some popular distrust of politicians persists from the chaotic Allende years, however, and hinders opposition efforts to rebuild popular support and channel antigovernment sentiment. Opposition quarreling and indecisiveness have especially complicated the effort to harness discontent among the middle class, the group with the greatest capacity to pressure the

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government and the military. Although the Christian Democrats and the Communists have been relatively more successful in capitalizing on links with labor and youth, no major opposition group has a well-developed base among the marginal groups—the poor, the chronically unemployed, and shanty dwellers—most active in the violent protests. 

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Because of these disagreements and organizational problems, we believe there is only a small chance opposition forces will form a unified movement during the next year. Even without significant progress toward formal unification, however, opposition groups could find themselves all marching in essentially the same direction—toward a confrontation—because of the force of events. The US Embassy reports that, with the dialogue stalled, democratic opposition leaders are pessimistic about the chances for further progress. Many of them believe that only by increasing pressure on Pinochet can he be stopped from delaying the transition. Concern over losing credibility among their supporters will also help move democratic leaders toward increased political action. 

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Since the 1973 coup, Chilean opposition groups—based primarily in Madrid, Mexico City, and Rome—have obtained limited financial, political, and diplomatic backing from foreign governments, international groups, and political parties:

- West European and Latin American countries have voted for the continuation of the UN special rapporteur on Chilean human rights, mounted some trade and arms sales boycotts during the 1970s, and sponsored anti-Pinochet resolutions in international forums.
- International labor confederations, the Christian Democratic International, and the Socialist International have occasionally provided funds to Chilean unions and political groups.
- Most of the Chilean left's international financial backing and training have come from the Soviet Union and Cuba, with incidental aid from Libya, some Eastern Bloc countries, and the Palestine Liberation Organization.


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Concrete assistance, such as funds for opposition parties or arms for terrorists, has not been sufficient to improve significantly the opposition's prospects for success. We believe, however, that such support is likely to increase if political agitation in Chile grows. In such an atmosphere, the popular appeal and influence of the radical left could increase, even though we believe it would remain too narrowly based to permit the left to seize control of the opposition movement. Moscow and Havana have pledged to increase assistance for the radical left if it shows greater unity and potential. At a minimum, we believe the radical left will continue to promote violence in order to undermine the democratic opening. 

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Persistent socioeconomic ills, the fading of the dialogue, the opposition's gravitation toward renewed protests, and Pinochet's hardline proclivities leave considerable leeway for dangerous miscalculation and overreaction. On the basis of the pattern of events of the past year, we expect that, after a lull during the traditional Chilean summer vacations, democratic leaders will mount protests beginning at a moderate level in March and intensifying during mid-1984. Because the economic crisis is in the process of being superseded and overshadowed by political events, we believe the modest economic improvement likely next year will not seriously undercut the protests and could even prompt them to focus more quickly and sharply on the question of Pinochet's tenure. 

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**Chile:
The Opposition Movement**

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Introduction

In the past year a diverse opposition movement has presented the Pinochet government with the most serious political challenge in its 10-year rule. While some antiregime elements initiated activities as early as the last quarter of 1982, the movement began to gain momentum only in May 1983. Protests steadily gained popular backing and increased in violence, reaching a peak on 11 August when 27 people were killed. Since then, government concessions, the initiation of a dialogue with the moderate opposition, and diminished public acceptance of continued turmoil have reduced the size of protests and moderated their tone. Nevertheless, the atmosphere remains tense as the government and the opposition plan for subsequent rounds in what is likely to be a continuing political contest. At stake are the length of President Pinochet's term of office—currently set to end in 1989, with the option of seeking another eight-year term—and the type of government that will follow.

control antigovernment sentiment. But the opposition movement cuts across political ideologies, class lines, and age groups, and thus remains an amorphous movement with multiple leadership and varied goals. This paper analyzes the opposition's composition and bases of support and explores the dynamics among opposition groups and between them and the government, with prospects, in our opinion, for the next year.

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Composition and Nature of the Opposition Movement

During the latter half of 1982 labor unions, small business groups, farmers, and other sectors of Chilean society which had previously supported Pinochet began to express their dissatisfaction with the government and its economic policies. Opposition political leaders, pleased to see cracks in the government's base of support, began to organize in late 1982 to exploit this discontent. Since then, a number of political and labor groups ranging from the moderate right to the far left have formed coalitions; at present, the composition of the multiparty fronts remains fluid. We believe that realignments in makeup and leadership are likely as the political dialogue between the government and the democratic opposition proceeds.

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The crippling recession that struck Chile in late 1981 was a major impetus for the political unrest. After a six-year boom (1976-81), Chile's economy suffered a serious reversal; GDP growth plummeted from 6.3 percent in 1981 to -14.1 percent in 1982, unemployment rose from 12.4 percent in 1981 to 23.7 percent in 1982, real wages dropped, and hundreds of businesses failed. The regime's refusal to adjust policies as the world economy declined and initial mismanagement of a liquidity crunch induced by the drying up of foreign credit aggravated the crisis.

The coalitions, like their member organizations, have been hampered by philosophical differences, leadership rivalries, weak internal discipline, inadequate financing, and the government ban on party activities. The major difficulty facing the opposition forces, however, has been their inability to harness and channel widespread antigovernment sentiment.

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The economic crisis that launched the opposition movement still contributes some weight to antigovernment attitudes, but it has been superseded in part by a political dynamic centering on the call for a democratic opening. Although there is currently no sense of impending popular rebellion, different segments of Chilean society, especially the hard-hit lower class, have been forced to make painful adjustments and have responded by participating in protest demonstrations. Various political groups—Communists, Socialists, democrats—have attempted to channel and

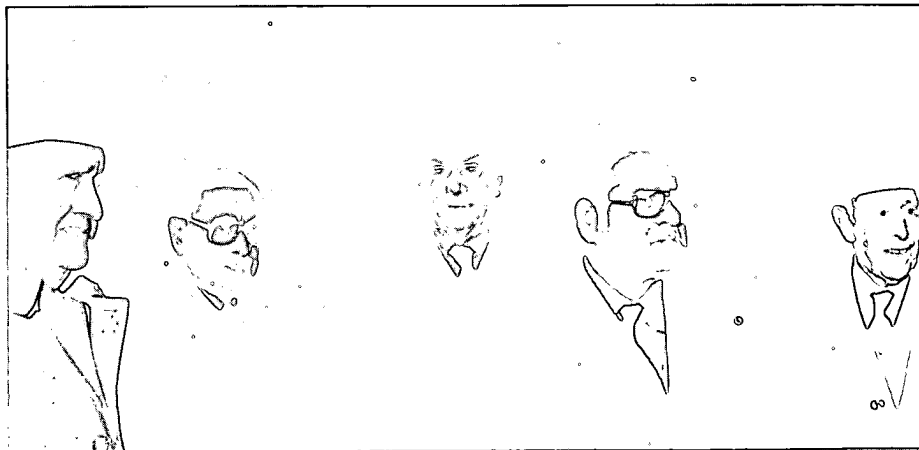
Components of the Opposition

The National Development Project (PRODEN) was founded in December 1982 by several aggressive Christian Democrats, conservatives, and trade unionists who believed their own organizations were too

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*Democratic Alliance Leaders
(left to right): Luis Bossay
Leiva, Ramon Silva Ulloa, Ga-
briel Valdes Subercaseaux, En-
rique Silva Cimma, and Hugo
Zepeda Barrios.* [redacted]



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reluctant to attack government economic policies. Led by Jorge Lavandero, an ambitious member of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), PRODEN issued a statement in February 1983 demanding congressional elections within six months and a complete transition to democracy within two years. The evolution of other more broad-based fronts, however—in particular the Democratic Alliance, which incorporates some of the same groups—has eroded PRODEN's influence in the opposition movement. Although Lavandero maintains a high public profile, the Christian Democrats have restricted their members' participation in PRODEN. As a result, PRODEN was incorporated in September into another protest coordinating group—the United Democratic Command—headed by Lavandero but influenced by leftist parties. [redacted]

Democratic Alliance. The most prominent and active opposition coalition, the Democratic Alliance (AD) was formed in March 1983 as the *Multipartidaria* (Multiparty). It represents the most successful attempt to date to assemble a broad base of support within one coalition, but it is far short of becoming a single opposition front. Led by Christian Democratic Party President Gabriel Valdes, it includes the conservative Republican Party, the center-left Christian Democratic and Social Democratic Parties, the

leftist Radical Party, and factions of the leftist Socialist Party. The front excludes the terrorist Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), the Communist Party of Chile (PCCh), and other radical leftist groups that advocate violence. [redacted]

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The primary reason for the AD's success thus far has been the active involvement of the PDC, Chile's most important opposition political force. The majority of the PDC supported Allende's ouster in 1973, but, in reaction to military repression and extensive political demobilization under Pinochet, quickly joined the opposition. Although placed "in recess" by government decree in 1977, the PDC has maintained a reasonably effective organizational structure. The death of former President Eduardo Frei in 1982, however, left the party without a figure of sufficient stature to mediate internal conflicts. [redacted]

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Under the PDC's leadership, the Democratic Alliance favors election of a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution, legalization of political party activities, more liberal economic policies, restoration of civil liberties, and the return of exiles. Although AD leader and Christian Democratic President Gabriel Valdes

initially called for Pinochet's resignation, the more moderate coalition members rescinded this demand to concentrate on more obtainable concessions. [redacted]

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By mobilizing monthly days of protest through the summer, the Alliance leadership pressured Pinochet into appointing a new Interior Minister, Sergio Jarpa, who initiated talks with the AD. This step, however, forced Alliance members to reach some consensus on controversial issues, reconcile dialogue with continuing protest demonstrations, avoid being victimized by Pinochet, and deflect charges of sellout from the left. These strains have led to the current suspension of the dialogue and may have ended it altogether. [redacted]

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Another source of strain within the AD has been the exclusion of the Communist Party, the MIR, and the pro-Soviet Almeyda faction of the Socialist Party. While some Alliance members believe that cooperation with the Communists would strengthen the protest movement, we doubt that the Christian Democrats will agree to any formal collaboration. Most PDC leaders recognize that Pinochet's most serious criticism of their party over the years has been the charge that they paved the way for Allende's election in 1970. [redacted]

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The Socialists. The dozen or so factions of the Socialist Party—which elected Salvador Allende in 1970—have been in a continuous state of flux. Some have joined the Democratic Alliance—though refusing to participate in its dialogue with the government—others have oscillated between the Alliance

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and the radical left, and at least one major group is allied with the violence-prone leftist coalition. The Socialists have suffered four major schisms since their founding in 1933, and the election of Allende at the head of a leftist coalition provided only short-lived unity. Moderates clashed repeatedly with radicals until the 1973 coup drove most Socialists into exile. Another major rupture in 1979 left Carlos Altamirano's Social Democratic-oriented wing at odds with Clodomiro Almeyda's militant wing, which aligned with the Communist Party. [redacted]

Over the past two years, Socialists inside and outside the country have attempted to unite the nonviolent left, but ideological differences and personal rivalries have led to repeated failure. The growing prominence of the Christian Democrats and other centrist opposition groups during 1983, however, forced the splintered nonviolent left to define its role and composition, according to the US Embassy. Thus, in April several groups formed the Socialist Convergence and its associated Committee for Political Unity (CPU), whose objective was to formulate a coordinated Socialist program and work toward permanent reunification of the party. [redacted]

[redacted] in early September seven Socialist factions and five Christian Socialist groups—including the Socialist Convergence—formed a "Socialist Bloc." Their objective also was to reunify the party as a moderate left opposition front, recognizing that the only solution to the current crisis was a political settlement. [redacted]

Despite such apparent agreement, however, the Socialist Bloc is a loose coalition at best. For example, the bloc is formally a participant in the Democratic Alliance, but several Socialist factions dispute Alliance positions and disclaim membership in AD. Another point of friction has been the unsuccessful attempts by some Socialist leaders to have the Communist Party included in the Alliance. [redacted]

Socialist efforts to reunify and work within the democratic opposition have been significant in establishing them at least temporarily as an independent political force and in strengthening democratic tendencies in

the Socialist movement. Continued progress could provide the Socialists with the foundation for a broadly based party in a post-Pinochet Chile. We and the US Embassy believe, however, that it is more likely the Socialists will fail to achieve effective unification, particularly since many differences are unresolved and one of the larger groups—the Almeyda faction—is loath to renounce its longstanding commitment to violence. [redacted]

Violence-Prone Leftist Groups. The exclusion of far left groups from the partly reunited Socialist Party and from the Democratic Alliance led radicals in September to form their own pro-Soviet front—the Popular Democratic Movement (MDP)—composed of the Chilean Communist Party (PCCh), the Almeyda faction of the Socialist Party, and other small leftist splinter groups. The terrorist Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) has not officially joined the MDP. [redacted]

The Communist Party, which was founded in 1922, is the best organized and most effective radical leftist group in the MDP. Although banned and severely repressed since 1973, the party has used its well-developed clandestine infrastructure to survive reasonably well. The party, which traditionally follows Moscow's line and which in 1982 claimed membership of 25,000, has generally eschewed armed struggle in favor of political activity and coalition building and played a leading role in forming the Allende Front in 1969. Under Allende, the Communists moderated some of their approaches and attempted to restrain the terrorist MIR organization. After the coup, however, most leaders went into exile, where they began to promote armed struggle and close links with the Soviets. Those leaders who remained in Chile, on the other hand, concentrated on attempts to forge political alliances with the PDC and the Socialists, construct clandestine political nets among students and labor, and pursue other nonviolent activities that would not provoke the government. [redacted]

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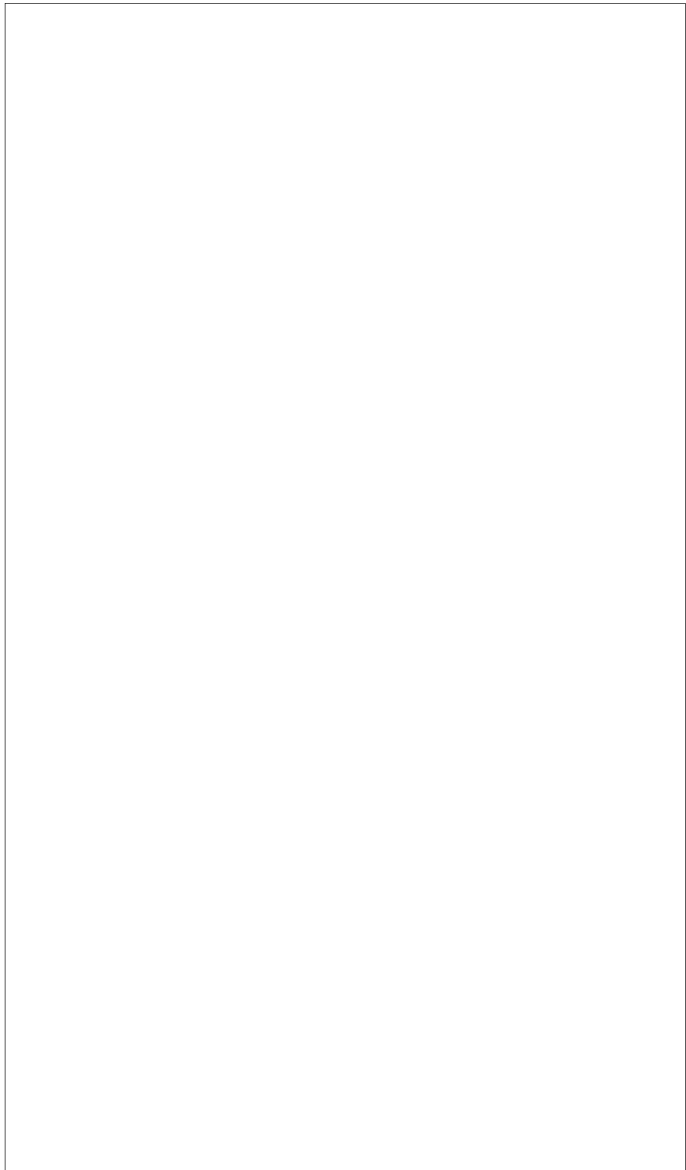
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The Movement of the Revolutionary Left is the most violent leftist group. Founded in 1965, the MIR has consistently followed a Castroite revolutionary line. During Allende's government, the MIR promoted armed struggle and attempted to radicalize Allende's reforms through violent actions. During and after the 1973 coup, the military concentrated on eliminating the MIR, reducing membership from 10,000 to a few hundred militants. Nevertheless, the group continues to carry out isolated terrorist activities aimed at preventing a political settlement. [redacted]

Although the MDP coalition has not formally announced its goals, we believe its members still favor violent opposition to the government. Until this policy is declared publicly, however, we agree with the US Embassy that the possibility of some cooperation with the Democratic Alliance remains open. This is still a goal of some MDP leaders and accounts for their public support of some AD demands and their emphasis that MDP's position is distinct from but not contradictory to that of the Alliance. [redacted]

[redacted]



Labor. Reflecting the significance of economic grievances in the genesis of the protest movement, two major labor coalitions were formed during the spring of 1983 to organize the first national days of protest and subsequent strikes. One of these, the National Workers Command (CNT), is a front of trade unionists from the five largest labor confederations organized by Copperworkers' Union Chief Rodolfo Seguel. The effectiveness of labor opposition was demonstrated when a transport strike in late June led the government to open a dialogue with labor leaders concerning the extension of debt relief and modifications to the 1979 labor plan. [redacted]

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The tendency of labor to focus on parochial interests, however, opened the way in midsummer for political party coalitions to take over leadership of the opposition movement. Nevertheless, labor groups continue to play a role, concentrating their efforts on economic, social, and labor issues. In mid-September, for example, the AFL-CIO-supported Union of Democratic Workers (UDT) presented Interior Minister Jarpa with an 11-point petition dealing mainly with labor issues. On the other hand, the Christian Democratic-led—but Communist-influenced—National Labor Coordinator (CNS) has rejected any dialogue with the government and is working to rebuild waning protest momentum.

Discontent on the Right. The economic crisis and the government's erratic response also caused considerable discontent among Pinochet's previously firm conservative backers, resulting in some movement toward formation of a conservative coalition. No single umbrella organization on the right emerged, but some elements began to move beyond criticism of the regime's economic program to press for an accelerated transition. In December 1982 various conservative business, labor, and farm groups organized demonstrations urging economic policy readjustments. When the government arrested several participants and temporarily expelled one prominent figure, the conservative parties and press intensified their criticism. Only a few conservatives have backed the monthly days of protests, but many have continued to voice disenchantment and push for measures to ameliorate economic and political tensions.

Since the initiation of the political opening in mid-August, many conservative and far-right elements have gravitated back toward the government. These groups have increasingly criticized the opposition for promoting violent protests and making unrealistic political demands. At the same time, groups ranging from the old center-right National Party to the far-right Nationalists have responded to the opening by organizing and formulating plans for transition. In September, for example, the Gremialistas—a group of rightwing but prodemocratic intellectuals and businessmen closely associated with the Pinochet regime—established a political party, the Independent Democratic Union. The US Embassy reports that

Interior Minister Jarpa is also organizing a center-right party designed to support the transition process.

Domestic Bases of Support

In view of historically high voter participation in Chile, a recent poll showing that 68 percent of those questioned want a return to civilian rule within two years, and logical assumptions, we believe most Chileans favor the opposition's call for an accelerated transition to democracy. However, opposition groups have faced significant obstacles in attempting to tap and organize this sentiment.

Traditionally, Chile's political parties and labor organizations have had strong popular roots, and, in the two decades prior to the 1973 coup, popular mobilization was increasing. Ten years of military rule and a ban on political party activity, however, have done much to undermine these bases.

A lingering unfavorable popular perception of politicians is one element hindering the opposition's rebuilding effort. For a decade Pinochet has successfully depicted politicians of all ideological stripes as indirectly or directly responsible for the chaos of the Allende years. US Embassy reports indicate that this popular distrust of politicians has diminished somewhat, but still remains a factor in Pinochet's favor.

The Christian Democratic Party has made the most progress in rebuilding its grassroots structures, according to most observers.

The remainder of the Alliance groups have been less successful in weathering the political moratorium.

The democratic forces' primary base of support is the middle class, even though Communists enjoy backing from intellectuals and professionals. Middle-class support for protests during the summer was a key factor in prompting Pinochet to grant concessions and undertake a dialogue. Conversely, middle-class concern

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over the prospects for violence coupled with a willingness to give Jarpa's dialogue a chance probably diluted popular backing for protests in October. The US Embassy notes that the democratic opposition's inability to channel the protests into attainable goals, in contrast to Jarpa's energetic postulation of a limited political plan, appears to have hurt the AD's image among the middle class. [redacted]

the democratic opposition leaders' indecisiveness, squabbling, and waffling on the question of cooperation with the far left, which the youth generally oppose. Nevertheless, PDC youth have been involved in Democratic Alliance activities and antigovernment protests. [redacted] 25X1

Historically, the political parties also have had strong ties to organized labor. The influence of the Socialist and Communist Parties in the labor movement—which exceeded that of the Christian Democrats and moderates—aided Allende's election in 1970. Since 1973 Pinochet has deliberately used the government's authority to manipulate labor regulations and control wages to try to break those links. The belief of union leaders that security officials murdered prominent labor leader Tucapel Jimenez in February 1982 undoubtedly also has had an intimidating effect. During this year of protests, the government has skillfully combined talks and limited concessions on collective bargaining and job reinstatement for strike organizers with tough measures against labor protests. [redacted]

The Communists, the MIR, and other far-left groups have made some gains in improving their longstanding influence among students. [redacted] the MIR is renewing efforts to bolster its military apparatus among two university groups. The Communist Party youth group began to organize protest rallies in late 1982. [redacted] 25X1

Despite these efforts, both moderate and leftist parties retain substantial ties to organized labor. Following resumption of union elections in 1978, a survey noted that 60 percent of newly elected union officials held ties to the Communists or various socialist groups, while 35 percent had Christian Democratic affiliation. In April 1983 before the opposition movement gathered steam, the US Embassy estimated that about 40 percent of organized labor was Christian Democrat oriented; 30 percent was linked to the Communist, Socialist, and other leftist parties; 20 percent was progovernment; and 10 percent was independent. [redacted]

US Embassy reporting indicates that none of the major opposition groups presently has a well-developed infrastructure among the marginal groups—the poor, chronically unemployed, and shanty dwellers. Hardest hit by the recession, these groups have been the most active participants in violent protests. Despite government claims of Communist orchestration, much of the violence in poor neighborhoods has been spontaneous action by idle, unemployed, frustrated youths. [redacted] 25X1

The main youth groups in Chile traditionally have been linked to the political parties. For some time, the progovernment Gremialistas have had a growing youth movement, but, among the present opposition forces, the Christian Democrats and the Communists have the only significant organized youth groups. According to the US Embassy, the PDC youth leadership has stepped up recruiting efforts and expanded its provincial infrastructure. This group has criticized

Foreign Links 25X1
General Foreign Support. Since the 1973 coup Chilean opposition groups—based primarily in Madrid, Mexico City, and Rome—have been able to gain some international support by playing on widespread distaste for Pinochet's authoritarian practices. This support has been limited principally to political and 25X1

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diplomatic backing from a number of foreign governments, international groups, and political parties. Concrete assistance, however, such as financial aid to opposition parties or arms for terrorists, has not been sufficient to improve significantly the opposition's prospects for success. [redacted]

In recent months, the European Community, Pope John Paul II, and numerous foreign political parties have publicly called for an end to Chile's domestic violence and a return to democratic rule. The Socialist International recently issued a declaration renewing its solidarity with the democratic forces in Chile. Protests in Madrid led by the Spanish Socialist Party and the peaceful occupation of the Chilean consulate in Antwerp are recent examples of European sentiment and support for Chilean opposition forces. Other specific cases include:

- The US Embassy in Madrid reported in August 1983 that Spanish media and public opinion were exerting pressure on the socialist government to take a more active role in the developments in Chile.

[redacted]

Italy is presently sponsoring a UN resolution calling for a return to political, economic, civil, and union rights in Chile.

[redacted]

- The EC ambassadors in Santiago boycotted the 10th anniversary celebrations of Pinochet's rule in September 1983. [redacted]

Within the Western Hemisphere, Mexico and Venezuela, both of which have large Chilean exile populations, have traditionally supported the Chilean opposition. In mid-October, for example, Gabriel Valdes traveled to Venezuela, where his well-publicized meetings with top government officials and opposition leaders demonstrated that country's political support for the Chilean PDC. [redacted]

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) has reacted sharply to recent developments in Chile by sending telegrams to Pinochet and issuing a resolution condemning antiunion measures. In late July a five-member ICFTU delegation visited Chile and met with labor and political opposition leaders. [redacted]

[redacted]

The Left's Foreign Connections. The Chilean left's international support has traditionally come from the Soviet Union and Cuba, with incidental aid from Libya, some Eastern Bloc countries, and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Moscow and Havana have a particular stake in the ouster of Pinochet because of his responsibility for Allende's fall. [redacted]

[redacted] the Soviets have vacillated on the issue of providing support for armed struggle. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] According to the US Consulate General in Leningrad, the Soviets are recruiting Chilean exiles living primarily in Europe and Mexico for training. The number of Chilean students at Patrice Lumumba University steadily declined, however, from 200 in 1972 to 45 in 1982. The US Embassy in Santiago, moreover, has identified no Soviet active measures and assesses the risk of such attempts as low. We concur in this judgment, primarily because Moscow has no representation—and thus little capability or opportunity to take such actions—inside Chile. [redacted]

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We believe that opposition leaders recognize, however, the existence of different factions in the government with varying views of democratization. Interior Minister Jarpa, as the chief architect of the political opening, is the most important figure, but democratic politicians are uncertain how to gauge him. Some centrists and conservatives probably view him as an old politician with whom they can negotiate. Most Socialists focus on his rightist antecedents, distrust him, and thus have refused to hold talks with him. Jarpa's practice of alternating between conciliatory remarks and public censure of the opposition movement—viewed against the backdrop of Pinochet's persistent hardline stance—has added to the uncertainty over whether the Interior Minister is serious about negotiating or attempting to keep antigovernment forces off balance and divided. [redacted]

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In general, democratic politicians also have serious doubts about Jarpa's authority and relationship to Pinochet. The US Embassy [redacted] report that opposition leaders are not sure that Jarpa has or can develop sufficient leverage to keep Pinochet from sabotaging any transition arrangement.

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The radical left, dominated primarily by the Communist Party, is more unified in its view of the government. It recognizes the existence of contending factions and philosophies in the government, but believes that the differences count for little. In contrast to elements of the democratic opposition, who are encouraged by the ameliorative influence of moderates in the administration, the radical left distrusts the moderates and considers their actions to be manipulative. To date the radical left probably credits Jarpa with at least temporarily sidetracking the mounting mass mobilization effort, which it believes is the only way to effect a return to civilian rule. [redacted]

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The Opposition Perspective: Assets and Obstacles

In our view, opposition forces, both democratic and nondemocratic, believe that present conditions in Chile provide them the best opportunity they have had to hasten President Pinochet's departure. At the same time they realize that his determination, political acumen, and remaining—though eroded—power base make him a formidable adversary. Few if any opposition leaders believe he will step down, except under intense opposition pressure and a complete loss of military backing. Even then, they have no doubts that he would attempt a comeback. Thus, in our view, the opposition groups do not believe Pinochet is offering a democratic opening in good faith, but is using dialogue as a delaying tactic. [redacted]

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Divisions and Dilemmas

The single unifying factor in what is a very diverse and fractured opposition movement has been the consensus in favor of shortening Pinochet's term in office. For most opposition groups, this goal calls for a strategy of mobilizing middle-class protest on such a scale that the armed forces feel compelled to remove Pinochet. Attempts to devise tactics toward this end, however, have run consistently afoul of differing views on the use of violence, parochial interests, and animosities, the schism between exiled and domestic factions, and government countermeasures. Opposition elements have cooperated intermittently, coordinated some activities, and coincidentally carried out parallel actions, but a broad opposition front has not developed. [redacted]

A related quandary for democratic opposition elements is the relationship between the dialogue and protests. The leaders realize that the concessions they have extracted so far from the government are a direct result of protest activity, which must be continued to maintain opposition leverage. Continuing protests, however, could jeopardize some moderate support by making the opposition appear unwilling to reciprocate government concessions, which could help Pinochet justify renewed repression. At the same time, if the democratic opposition cannot control the protests, it runs the risk of losing the initiative to violence-prone radicals. [redacted]

Reduced participation in the protests since September has only compounded the dilemma. Deeply divided over whether to participate in the largely leftist-organized demonstrations and apparently cognizant of declining public interest in antigovernment activities, the democratic forces opted out of national protests in October. This enabled the Democratic Alliance to avoid the embarrassment of the poor turnout and to disassociate itself from the violence, but it also bolstered Pinochet's confidence. [redacted]

The diverse ideological composition of the democratic elements contributes to their indecisiveness and tenuous unity. For example, old-line conservatives, only recently estranged from the Pinochet government, vie for influence in the democratic opposition with nonviolent Socialist and Radical Party members, who served in the Allende government. [redacted]

The most divisive issue among democratic elements concerns relations with the violent left. Leftist factions in the AD believe that the Communists and other radical left groups are too influential to be excluded from the opposition movement. Center-right organizations and parties, however, vigorously oppose the inclusion of the Communists. The dominant Christian Democratic Party has maintained that it will not undertake formal commitments with the Communists, but it will cooperate informally for specific purposes. [redacted]

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The existence of large exile communities causes other tensions, as exiles generally have taken more militant positions on strategy and tactics than their domestic counterparts. In addition, personal conflicts over control of parties and organizations have occurred. [redacted]

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The radical left suffers from many similar divisions: the conflict between exiled and domestic leadership, a generational problem, the issue of cooperating with the democratic opposition, and the strategy of armed revolution. Low turnout in recent protests and severe losses inflicted on the MIR by security forces have caused bitter arguments between and within radical left parties. [redacted]

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Factors Affecting Opposition Prospects

Pinochet's Role. Economic recession, popular alienation, and opposition activities have diluted Pinochet's power base, but he retains considerable capacity to manipulate the system to his advantage and thus affect the prospects for opposition forces. Dialogue and concessions have improved the government's, if not the President's, image and enabled the administration to regain some initiative and breathing space. Paradoxically, a continued conciliatory attitude on the President's part would present both advantages and potential pitfalls for moderate opposition forces.

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Substantial government concessions would permit the democratic opposition to bargain, strengthen its image as an effective representative of popular interests, and weaken the appeal of the far left. At the same time, hard bargaining would strain the unity of the democratic coalition by forcing it to articulate specific positions and reconcile its membership's disparate interests. On the other hand, by attempting to abort or slow liberalization, Pinochet would resuscitate political tensions, undercut the efforts of moderates, and strengthen the far left's argument in favor of armed struggle. [redacted]

The Military Factor. Given the traditional cohesion, discipline, and insularity of the armed forces, opposition forces cannot exert much direct influence on the military. The US Embassy and the defense attache indicate that the top military leadership—most importantly in the Army—still backs the Constitution of 1980 and Pinochet's continuation as President. Most officers still share Pinochet's distrust and dislike of politicians. [redacted]

Despite this, the high command has shown a willingness to moderate Pinochet's hardline instincts and has developed a budding commitment to liberalization. This change probably stemmed from concern over the magnitude of antigovernment sentiment demonstrated during the summer months and the fear that the armed forces might be called upon to quell civil disorders on a regular basis. The large turnout at the progovernment rally on 9 September does not seem to have significantly altered the belief in military circles that the transition should be accelerated. [redacted]

We believe that democratic opposition elements are attempting to devise a strategy of protests that will maintain pressure on the regime without provoking the military. They hope, in our view, to establish contacts in the military that can be used to reinforce sympathy for democratization, calm deep-seated military fears that civilian rule would open the door to leftist subversion, and allay concerns about possible future "witch hunts" for military human rights violators. To date the democratic opposition appears to have few such channels of communication. [redacted]

The Economy. Economic dislocation launched the political protest movement, but, since then, economic and political issues have developed a complex cyclical relationship. Economic deterioration fuels political turmoil, which adversely affects economic development by reducing productivity and investor and creditor confidence, and this in turn augments political discontent. [redacted]

We believe that Chile's economic prospects will improve in 1984. We expect the IMF to accede to Santiago's request for looser fiscal restrictions. Increased public spending and a slow recovery in copper prices should set the stage for a gradual economic rebound of 2 to 5 percent. Even with this growth rate, however, unemployment will decline only slowly toward 12 percent and inflation will most likely accelerate beyond 30 percent. Under these circumstances the opposition will still be able to draw on substantial, economically driven public dissatisfaction. [redacted]

Foreign Support. We believe that, if political agitation grows, foreign support for opposition forces will increase. In varying degrees, both West and East European countries are likely to step up their financial aid to opposition parties and increase pressure on the Pinochet regime in international forums. A crack-down by Pinochet would elicit a stronger reaction, in our view, perhaps in the form of economic or arms boycotts by some European Community nations. The recent return of exiles with international connections—for example, Andres Zaldivar, President of the Christian Democratic International—may also enhance the level of foreign backing. In addition, the trend in South America toward a return to democratic governments could increase regional support. [redacted]

We also expect that Moscow and Havana would be greatly tempted by a surge in protest activity and radicalization of the movement. We believe that Moscow may augment support for the radical left if it believes the Popular Democratic Movement is developing into a popular coalition. In our view, the

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Cubans probably are holding out more substantial assistance to the MIR and PCCh—arms and financial backing—as an incentive to the quarreling radical leftist groups to unify. [redacted]

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The Church. The Roman Catholic Church has the capacity to play an important role in the opposition's prospects for success. With its moral authority, extensive grassroots structure, and political party contacts—especially in the PDC—the Church can affect the level of protests, facilitate a consensus among the opposition, and mediate an agreement with the government on democratization. Moreover, as the US Embassy points out, the Church could be an especially significant actor in mobilizing broad support for an eventual transition plan that may fall short of popular expectations. [redacted]

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It is most likely, however, that the Church will maintain its fairly neutral stance. Archbishop of Santiago Juan Fresno, the key church official, is conservative and critical of church involvement in politics. Fresno has been instrumental in improving Church-state relations, while promoting the dialogue and serving as mediator. He has recently become discouraged over the prospects for dialogue, but we believe he will continue to give advice, direct criticism at both sides equally, and stand ready to mediate. [redacted]

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The potential impact of Fresno's predecessor, Cardinal Silva, and the lower clergy are unpredictable but potentially disruptive. Silva's longstanding reputation as an opponent of authoritarian rule and an implacable foe of Pinochet gives him some capacity to catalyze protest activity. He has been silent, however, since retiring in early 1983. The lower clergy also may not necessarily follow Fresno's moderation. As elsewhere in Latin America, Chile's lower clergy has occasionally promoted political and social action and sometimes confrontation, regardless of the wishes of the hierarchy. [redacted]

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Opposition Efforts for Unity. Any progress toward the formation of a broad opposition front drawn from the center right to the far left would improve prospects for the anti-Pinochet movement. Under present circumstances, this seems unlikely. The Pinochet regime has at least temporarily regained enough initiative to use transition issues to drive wedges between

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opposition groups. [redacted]

The unity of the far left would most likely be jeopardized by real progress toward a transition. We expect that the internal conflict over armed struggle would intensify, as more moderate Communist leaders became increasingly fearful of being excluded from any political arrangement and more radical members proposed violence to undermine the transition. [redacted]

Role of Individual Leaders. The emergence of one or two charismatic opposition figures around whom most opposition forces could rally would significantly enhance the opposition's prospects by centralizing tactical planning and improving chances for resolution of policy disputes. Most aspirants to such a role come from the ranks of the Christian Democratic Party. [redacted]

Gabriel Valdes, party president, is the most prominent opposition leader at present, but his arrogance has alienated many in his own party, and his leftist leanings have aroused the suspicions of centrist and conservative opposition groups. Andres Zaldivar, on the other hand, is a stronger possibility to play such a role because of his moderate political beliefs, his international reputation, and the military's favorable view of him. When Zaldivar returned from exile in October 1983, some observers expected him to challenge Valdes immediately for leadership of the PDC. Rather than risk splitting the party, however, we believe Zaldivar is waiting until the political picture clears and PDC moderates, other AD politicians, and the public at large become discouraged with Valdes. Jorge Lavandero, PDC maverick and PRODEN leader, has national recognition but is probably regarded by most moderate opposition figures as too impetuous. [redacted]

Most other major political leaders are either too far to the left, too far to the right, or too old to rally a broad front of opposition forces. One possible exception on

the right might be Sergio Fernandez, a charismatic Gremialista leader who was Interior Minister under Pinochet from 1978 to 1982. [redacted]

None of the most prominent labor leaders have sufficiently broad appeal to rally labor forces, much less a broad political following. Moreover, they prefer to maintain their independence from the political parties. Labor's emphasis on social, economic, and labor issues rather than on political concerns further removes them from serious consideration. [redacted]

Expansion of Domestic Support. As noted, in the long term, the opposition's hope for success depends on mobilizing the support of the middle class because middle-class sentiment has a greater impact on the military than that of any other group. Government concessions, middle-class fear of violence—particularly at the fringes of society—and probably simple weariness with the protest effort have reduced middle-class support for opposition activities. Failure to reverse this process will deal opposition prospects a serious blow. To some extent this depends on the democratic opposition's ability to pull itself together, but, even if this occurs, the government would retain some capability to fray the edges of the opposition's middle-class base through political concessions and spending measures to alleviate unemployment. [redacted]

The opposition movement's ability to control and expand its base among youth elements is problematic and may depend on the willingness of the present leadership to take a more aggressive stance or on the emergence of new leaders. As the US Embassy reports, the present democratic leadership inspires little confidence among youth activists, who may be tempted to splinter off and organize their own movement. Indeed, according to the Embassy, Christian Democratic youth leaders recently organized a youth alliance composed primarily of centrist and conservative elements dedicated to pushing forward with the transition. [redacted]

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The radical left's traditional activism, on the other hand, is likely to attract increasing youth support. According to the Embassy [redacted] the radical left has better contacts than other political sectors among youths in the poor urban areas and is working to improve them. The government retains some influence on the youth front as well. This is largely confined to university groups established by the rightwing Gremialistas, which are well-organized and aggressive. [redacted]

Labor remains another difficult area for the opposition, because, as noted earlier, the government probably retains more leverage over labor than over any other sector. Despite this, we expect tensions among workers to remain high, because we believe the rate of economic recovery will be modest at best over the next year. A serious economic setback or evidence of government responsibility in the murder of labor official Jimenez in 1982 could have a catalyzing effect on the labor movement. For the most part, however, we believe that labor leaders will continue to allow politicians to take the initiative. [redacted]

Outlook

Current circumstances militate against the formation of a unified opposition front in the short term. As is clear, however, the opposition does not completely control its own destiny. Past experience shows that political crises in developing countries often develop a momentum that overrides the inadequacies of antiregime forces. In Chile, government actions, the pace of economic recovery, public attitudes, and other factors outside the opposition's control will have a major impact on opposition prospects. Thus, even without significant progress toward unification, opposition groups could find themselves all marching in essentially the same direction because of the force of events. [redacted]

We believe that direction is likely to lead increasingly toward confrontation. The US Embassy reports that, with the dialogue stalled, democratic opposition leaders are pessimistic about the chances for further progress. Many of them believe that only by increasing pressure on Pinochet can he be stopped from

delaying the transition and undercutting Jarpa's position. Concern over losing credibility among their supporters will also help move democratic leaders toward increased political action. Some are already studying methods to increase such action at the municipal level. In addition, we believe the radical left will continue to promote violence in order to ensure that the dialogue does not succeed. Thus, once again—following the pattern of the past year—we expect that, after a lull during the traditional Chilean summer vacations after the New Year, the protests are likely to begin at a moderate level in March and intensify by mid-1984. [redacted]

Renewed political activity will probably find a favorable audience among Chileans. As reflected in the earlier mentioned poll, the opening, although limited to date, has awakened a desire in the general populace for steady progress toward restoration of civilian rule, an impulse that Pinochet almost certainly will try to retard. Nevertheless, we believe that, by utilizing a more confrontational approach, the opposition probably can capitalize on the public preference for democratization to force more concessions from Pinochet during the next year. Moreover, we expect that the democratic transition in Argentina will have a persistent impact in Chile. [redacted]

We expect the potential for radicalization and polarization to remain relatively high. Despite the expected modest economic upturn, socioeconomic ills will fuel political tensions, particularly in the poor neighborhoods. In addition, the fading of the dialogue, the opposition's likely gravitation toward renewed protests next year, and Pinochet's hardline proclivities leave considerable leeway for dangerous miscalculation and overreaction. In such an atmosphere, the popular appeal and influence of the radical left would grow, even though we doubt it would be able to seize control of the opposition movement. The radical left's relatively small size and its discredited performance during the Allende years still have a strong hold on public attitudes. [redacted]

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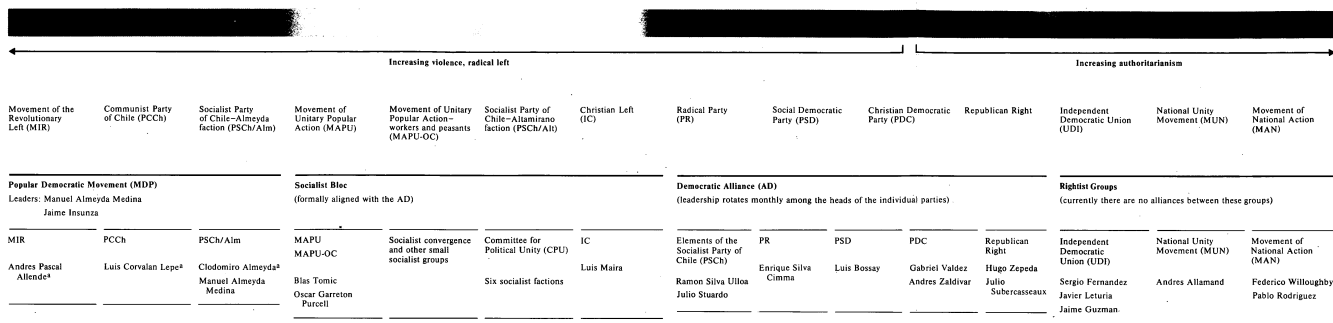
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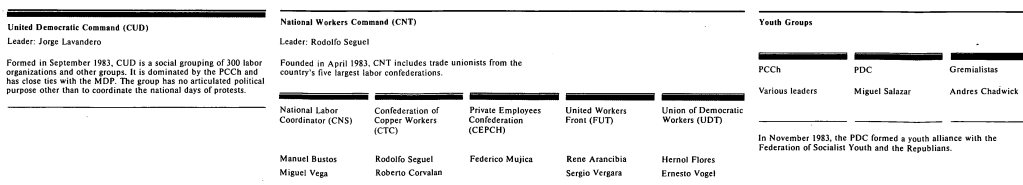
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Figure 1
Spectrum of Political Parties



*In exile.

Figure 2
Other Opposition Groups



Note: Colors in Figure 2 correspond with those used in the spectrum in Figure 1.

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