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Chile: Release of Prisoners

The military government's decision yesterday to release 323 persons imprisoned under the state of siege is a major gesture designed to diminish international criticism of Chile's violation of human rights.

In making the announcement, a junta spokesman said that the 18 other political prisoners "too dangerous to be freed in Chile" would be expelled if another country would accept them. The spokesman said two of the prisoners—Communist party chief Luis Corvalan and former Allende coalition senator Jorge Montes—would be released only if the

USSR and Cuba would reciprocate by freeing two prominent prisoners. The Chileans called on world opinion to pressure the USSR and Cuba to take such reciprocal action.

By nearly sweeping the jails clear at this time, the Pinochet government probably expects to lessen the impact of a critical report recently circulated by the UN human rights investigating group and hopes to improve its image with the new US administration. The government's action also is a tacit admission that internal security is no longer a problem.

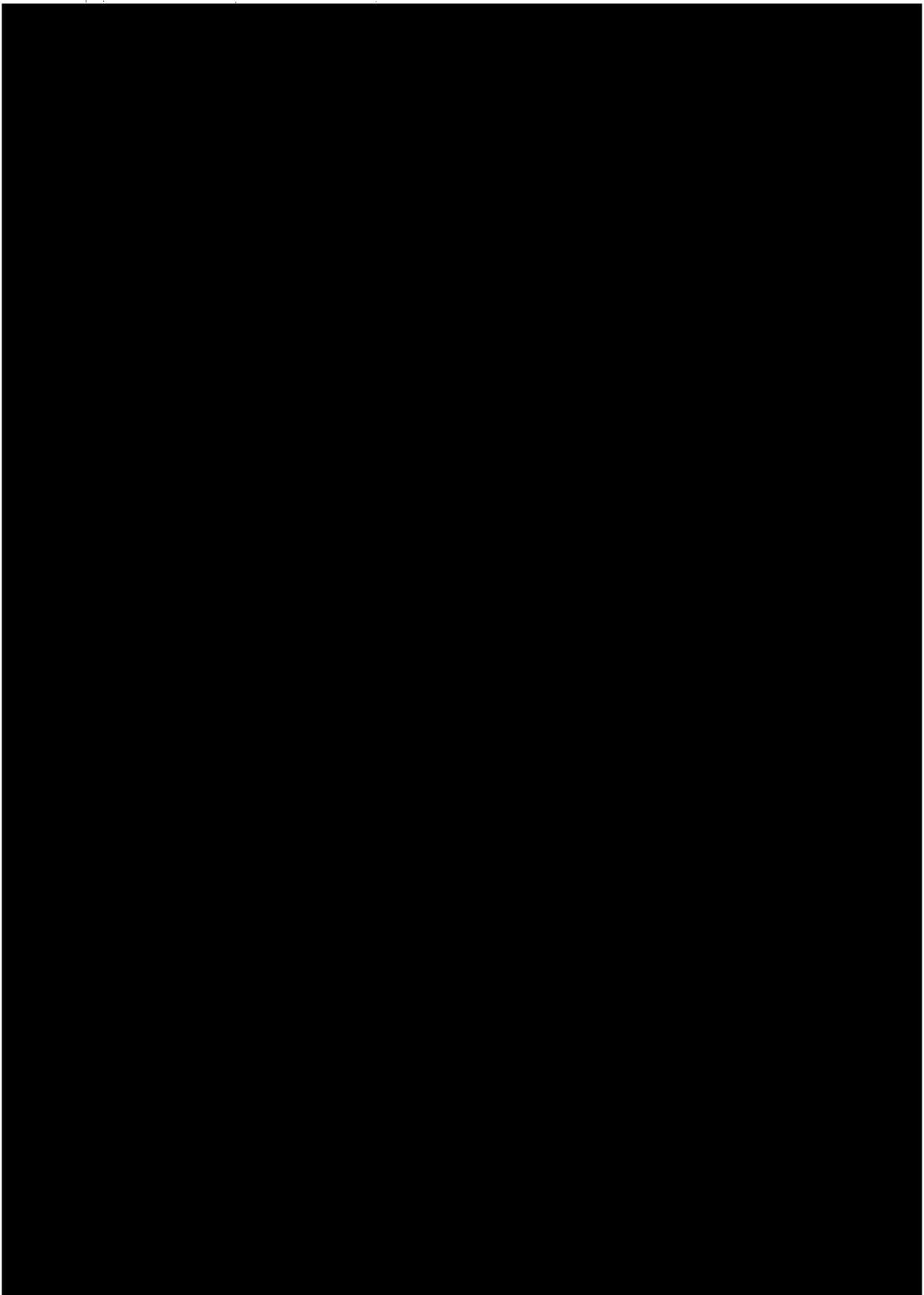
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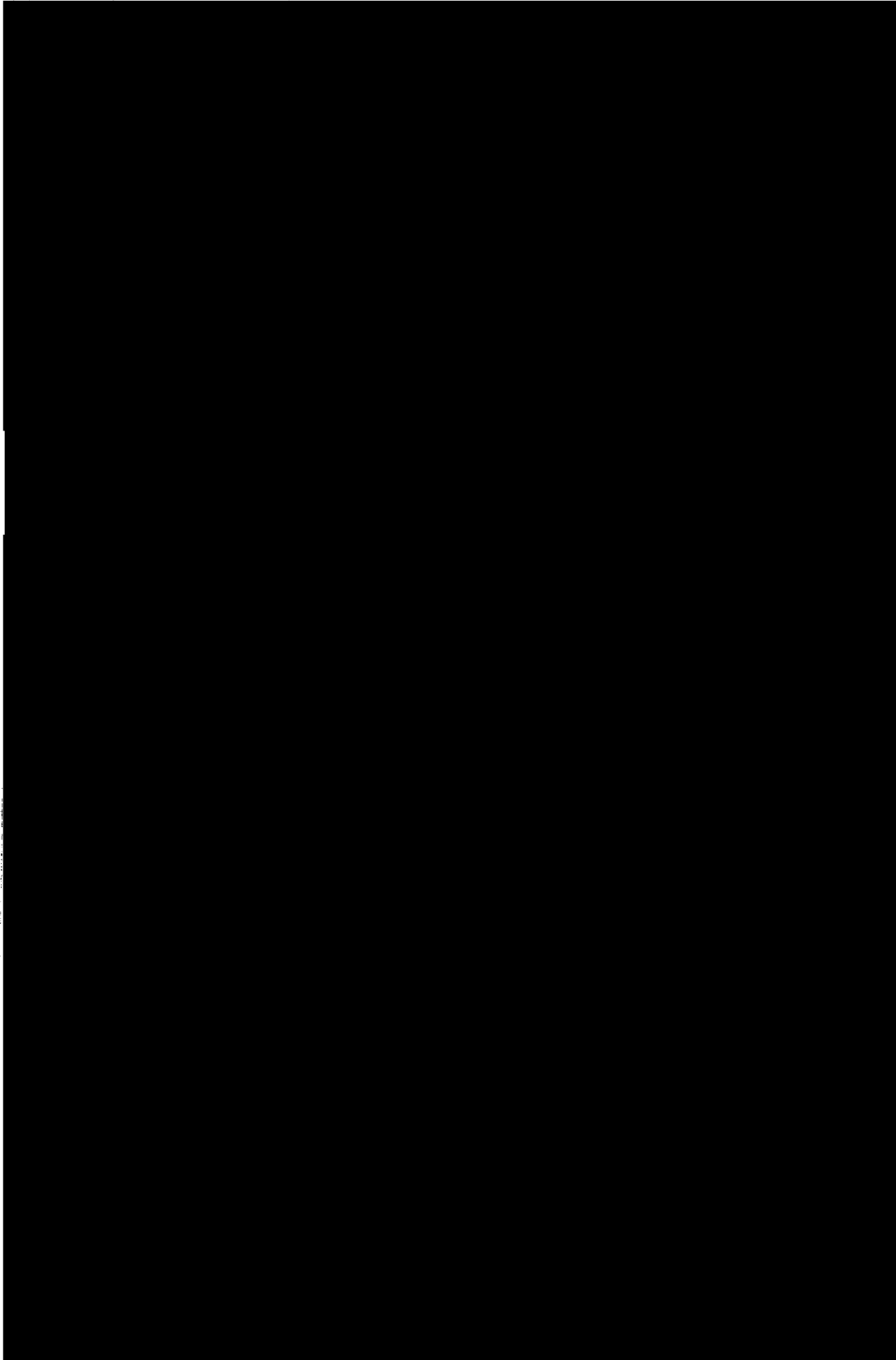
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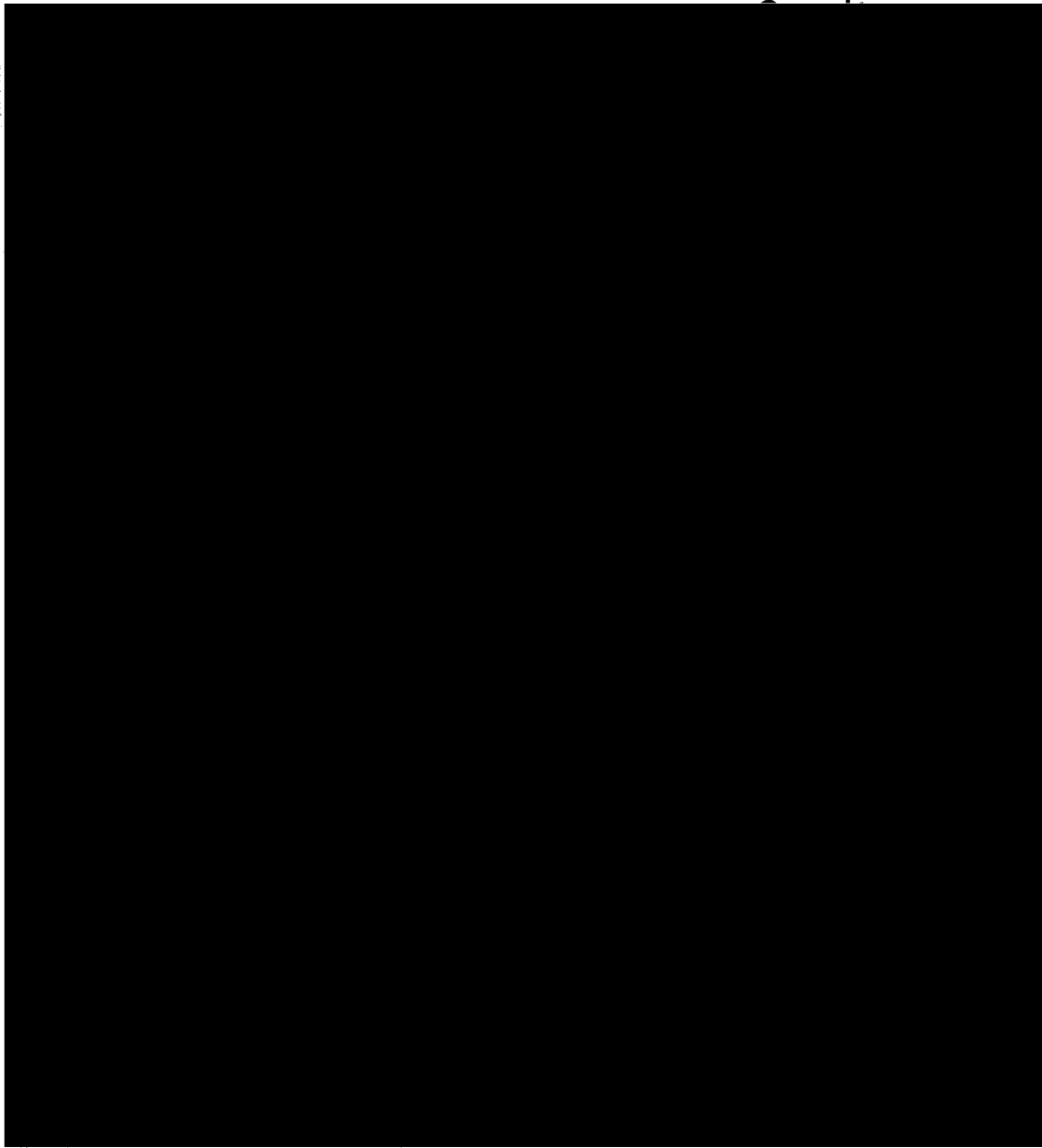
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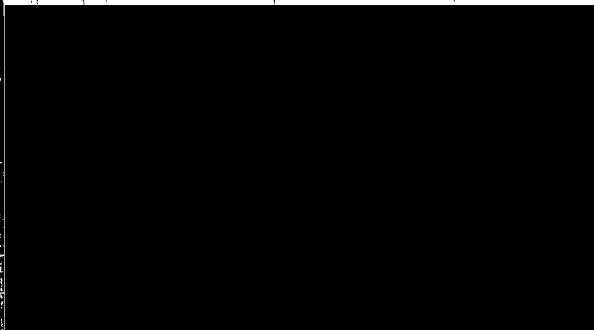
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