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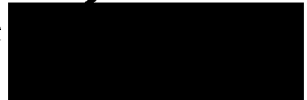
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Latin American Trends

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Chile: Reaching a Crossroad?

The Pinochet government is gratified with the outcome of the recent meeting of the OAS General Assembly in Santiago, from which the host derived a measure of badly needed respectability. The attention given the human rights situation in Chile did not make the government particularly uneasy and in fact may have brought a sense of relief to those officials who anticipated a sharper focus and a harsher reaction. 150

The Chileans made a good impression on most of the visitors, some of whom departed expressing skepticism about charges leveled at Chile for human rights violations. The picture of order and stability presented by the junta did much to convince Latin American delegates that allegations of continuing repression are exaggerated.

During the course of the meeting Chile also succeeded in forging an informal alliance with a phalanx of countries having similar ideological leanings. [redacted] in Santiago describe this as the "anti-Marxist bloc"--made up of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Nicaragua--and it can be counted on to come to Chile's defense on the human rights issue.

While international criticism of the Pinochet regime will continue to cause problems for Chile, there is now a better chance that opposition to the junta will begin to abate. Measures it has taken to ease up on the worst aspects of its detention procedures and to release prisoners are having a salutary effect. If the government continues to demonstrate progress in this area, it will probably win wider approbation--or at least grudging acceptance.

Critics in the US and Western Europe, meanwhile, can be expected to keep up pressure on Chile to reform its international security practices. Unless the

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momentum of recent changes is sustained, Chile will still be denied support from western democratic sources.

Judging by past performance, improvements in the treatment of political prisoners and dissidents will be slow and retrogression will remain a distinct possibility. [REDACTED]

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