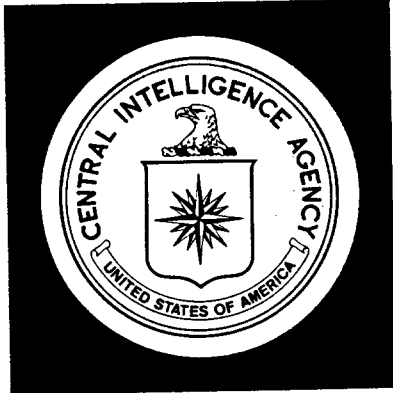


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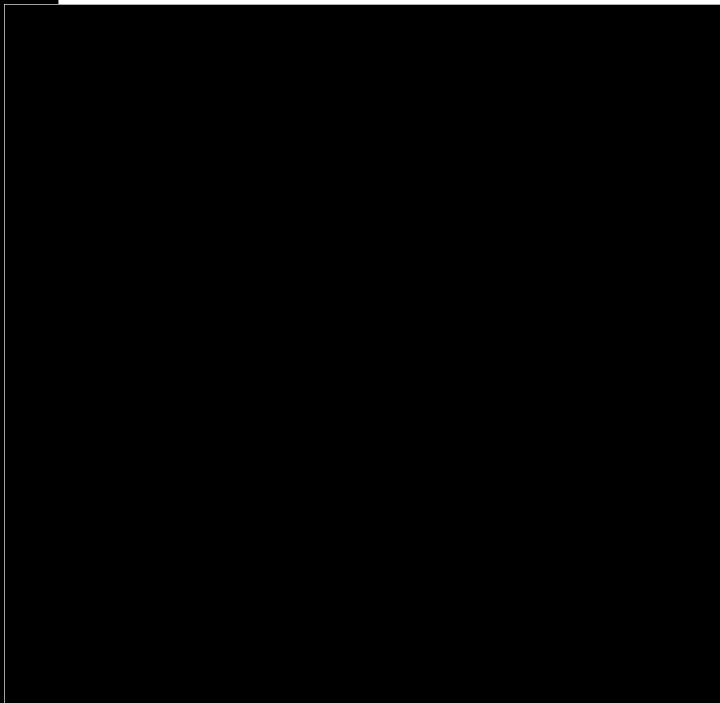
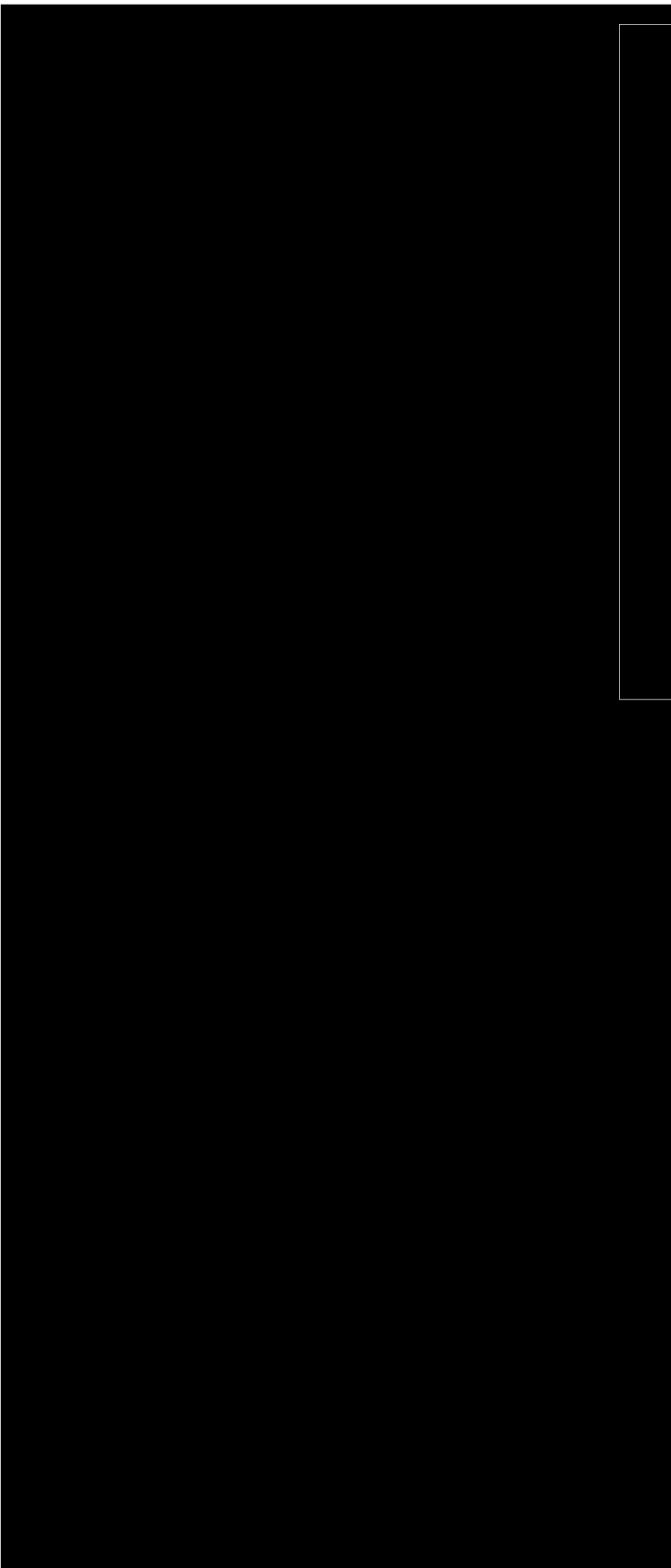
Weekly Review

~~Top Secret~~

~~December 5, 1975~~

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CHILE: CHURCH-STATE TENSION EASES

Relations between the Pinochet government and the Catholic Church in Chile, which appeared headed for a breakdown in recent weeks, are now slowly becoming better. The sharp deterioration was the result of a spate of arrests of church members charged with sheltering fugitives of the terrorist Movement of the Revolutionary Left. (MIR). **15C**

The church's recent decision to bow to President Pinochet's request that it dissolve the interdenominational Committee for Peace, which operated under its auspices, was probably an indirect admission that some of its personnel had acted irresponsibly in providing assistance to the terrorists. Only two weeks ago Cardinal Silva, the Chilean prelate, seemed on the verge of an open clash with the government when he publicly threatened to excommunicate an influential and ultraconservative adviser to Pinochet who had attacked the church for complicity in the MIR affair. The subsequent efforts by government officials to comply with legal obligations to expedite the



release or expulsion of church people under detention, as well as the church's acute embarrassment over the matter, probably impelled ecclesiastical authorities to back off from their tough stance.

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The relationship between the Catholic Church—a potent force in Chilean life—and the generals who now rule the country has frequently been stormy. On numerous occasions the clergy have spoken out against human rights violations and the harsh effects of economic austerity on the poor. But in every event the church's highest spokesmen have averted a breach that almost certainly would have prevented them from serving as a moderating voice when almost all other organized groups in Chile have been silenced.

Similarly, the government has been careful to keep church-state differences within manageable limits and to at least leave the door open for cooperation. The President has met privately with Cardinal Silva, presumably to work out an understanding, and both have appeared willing to take an even-handed approach in dealing with their quarrels. Pinochet's attitude can also be attributed to the fact that many of the arrested church people are American citizens, and he does not want further complications with the US.

The church will remain cautious in dealing with the military regime; further strife over sensitive issues is likely, but it is to the advantage of both sides to seek compromises. The junta would stand to lose the most if it used an iron hand against the church. At the same time, the church could lose the support of conservatives, who have already criticized its involvement with the terrorists, if it continues to confront the government. [REDACTED]

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