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CHILE: Political Developments

There are indications that talks between the government and the opposition may reopen early next month, but President Pinochet also may be considering more aggressive actions against some opponents.

Archbishop Fresno, a key intermediary in the talks, expects a new round of discussions in the next few weeks. He is anxious to see the process resume because he believes popular discontent has reached alarming proportions in the slums—the worst since the Allende era. Fresno believes the climate for talks may be improved when the presidency of the opposition Democratic Alliance passes next week from outspoken government critic Gabriel Valdes—the president of the Christian Democratic Party—to another party's representative.

The government's decision on Friday to drop the remaining charges against Rodolfo Seguel and other leaders of the copper confederation for organizing protests and strikes meets one of the opposition's conditions for resuming the talks. Moreover, Interior Minister Jarpa said publicly yesterday the government is ready to resume talks "soon."

Comment: Neither side wants to bear the onus for a breakdown in the talks, and their resumption is increasingly likely. If the government decides to use extreme tactics, however, it risks destroying the dialogue. A university strike, which is scheduled for 8 October, and other protests that are being planned could provoke clashes with security forces.