

Pinochet Rules With Eye to Image Abroad

By Bruce Handler

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SANTIAGO, Feb. 12 — Despite rumors of internal armed forces opposition, Chilean President Augusto Pinochet seems as firmly in power as ever.

But there are signs that the virulently anti-Communist army general is more concerned about Chile's image abroad. Recent government moves could indicate a slight letup in the violent persecution of real and imagined leftists which has characterized the government since a 1973 coup that overthrew President Salvador Allende, a Marxist.

There is debate, however, over whether these measures represent meaningful changes or are just window dressing to impress foreigners.

Stories came out a few weeks ago in the British press to the effect that a group of Chilean military leaders were upset about Pinochet's personal style in office and had given him an ultimatum either to tone down his rabid anti-Communism or leave office by March.

The junta, which Pinochet heads, consisting of the navy, the air force and the national police,

dismissed the "ultimatum" stories as lies and nonsense. In fact, foreign diplomats and resident foreign correspondents have been unable to come up with any evidence that such a document existed.

The junta members then convoked a military "act of loyalty," with 8,000 troops present. The purpose, they said, was to "show Chile and the world the iron-like unity which reigns in our ranks."

While all this was going on, however, the government took other measures that could indicate the junta wants to loosen up a bit on its hardline approach. For example:

— Pinochet earlier had ordered the disbanding of an organization called the Peace Committee, which was backed by several churches and denied the rights of political prisoners. After the Peace Committee folded, the Catholic Church here set up a new group to continue its work. This organization reached full operational strength this month, and so far the junta has left it alone.

— The government released several Peace Committee press and lawyers who had been in jail since last year.

— The junta finally gave safe-conduct passes out of the

country to more than a dozen leftists who had been holed up for months in various foreign embassies in Santiago. Among them was Andres Pascal Allende, nephew of the late president and a leader of the underground Revolutionary Leftist Movement.

— Military authorities allowed a 65-page declaration by former President Eduardo Frei, a highly popular Christian Democrat who preceded Allende, to appear in print. Frei was critical of the junta and its policies.

— The government stood by a military court ruling that returned to the air Radio Balmaceda, a Santiago radio station which belongs to Christian Democrats (the biggest party before politics was suspended by the junta). The military commander of the Santiago zone earlier had shut down the station because it broadcast stories about political prisoners and other sensitive issues.

— Pinochet signed a decree calling for medical examination of political prisoners, written search warrants for police raids and stricter record-keeping at jails. The new decree also

allows the justice minister and the chief justice of the supreme court to inspect jails where violations of the law are suspected.

— The government did not censor stories about the U.N. Human Rights Commission's current report on torture in Chile.

Foreign observers here say it makes sense for Pinochet to try to present an image of internal harmony and political moderation now. Chile, in economic crisis, needs World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank loans. It also needs a good name among countries it owes money, because it may have to reschedule its foreign debt again.

Chile's reputation in the United Nations, Europe and the United States is at an all-time low. The U.N. Human Rights Commission report, which was released this week in Geneva, concluded that torture of political prisoners has become institutionalized in Chile and that torture methods here are so brutal "they exceed the imagination."

The junta's severest critics, principally civil rights lawyers working with political

prisoners, are extremely skeptical about the recent seeming liberalization. They contend these measures are superficial and designed to mislead foreigners.

These lawyers claim that previous decrees guaranteeing certain basic rights to prisoners, which also looked good on paper, have been ignored in practice. They say torture has not dropped off. They say that people suspected of leftist sympathies still are "disappearing" with no legal record of arrest. They say that the 4,000 to 4,500 political prisoners are not getting adequate food and that their health conditions are appalling. But within Chile, even supporters of the junta are saying now that there should be real change in human rights policy, because this would be in Chile's long-term interests. A series of such recommendations appeared, surprisingly, this week in Que Pasa, a magazine backed by rightist business interests which had been pressing for the military coup against Allende long before it actually happened. "Chile is becoming isolated," the magazine said critically.

Frei Labels the Leaders of Chile 'Fascists'

By Joanne Omang

Washington Post Foreign Service

BUENOS AIRES — Former President Eduardo Frei, after withholding criticism of Chile's military leaders for more than two years, has published a sharp attack labeling them as fascists. In an uncharacteristic response, the junta at first let Chileans read the attack.

More recently, according to reports reaching Argentina from Santiago, the government has denounced Frei and banned public discussion of his book. But copies of the limited edition are circulating in both countries — raising the question of why the junta let it be published at all. Frei continues to live in Chile.

The government of Chile, he said in the book, is in the hands of "the most extreme groups, whose fascist character is displayed openly."

Frei, 65, who was president from 1964 to 1970, said he expected to be vilified for the book but could no longer keep silent in the face of continuing attacks on his Christian Democratic Party.

The mere existence of the Christian Democrats threatens the government, he continued, because it reminds Chileans "that there once existed a government . . . in which there was progress and liberty, there was economic development and justice, and that there exists the possibility of advancing without falling either into fascism or communism."

Frei was permitted to print only 1,000 copies of the 65-page book entitled, "The Mandate of History and the Demands of the Future." However, when it appeared in mid-January, the junta-tolerated Santiago newspaper La Tercera im-

mediately reprinted the entire work.

"The essay sends arms to the enemy," editorialized the official daily El Cronista. A columnist wrote that "the Marxist battle to retake power now moves by way of the Christian Democrats."

Political parties are "in recess" in Chile, where Frei's party lost the 1970 election to Marxist Socialist Salvador Allende — who was overthrown in 1973.

Explaining the decision to allow Frei to publish, the newspaper El Mercurio said it was "in deference to an ex-president."

Permission reportedly was given while the president, Gen. Augusto Pinochet, was in the southern town of Puerto Montt.

Pinochet's response was swift. "Some small politicians who have no sense of country," he said, "these Kerenkys who are preparing once again to take power, are wrong . . . We will not let them . . . If they think something can divide the armed forces, I say also from here that they are wrong."

The Chilean right used to attack Frei even as president by comparing him to Kerensky, who turned over power to the Communists in the Soviet Union.

Two weeks after Frei's book was published, Pinochet banned further discussion of it in the media.

Frei accused the leaders of trying "to make it seem as though a vote against the government is a vote against Chile . . ." They affirm that Chile is the victim of a gigantic plot of international communism.

Listing the range of universities, governments, newspapers, churches and organizations that have criticized both Chile and communism in the past, Frei said: "To suppose that all these are puppets of Communist propaganda is to think that they are irremediably stupid or ignorant. If the first were true, the only intelligent beings that remain in the world would be those who inspire this view in Chile.

"If it were the second, it would mean that communism has dominated everyone."

To say that Chile's critics themselves abuse human rights may be true but that does not excuse Chile, Frei went on.

"We must ask whether human rights are really respected in our country. Yes or no?" Citing those who say yes, he asked, "is everyone wrong but us?"

Frei, who has taken the role of a taciturn elder statesman since leaving the presidency, until now has remained silent on another subject — charges that the CIA lent support to his political campaigns.

In the book, he rejected charges that he has received CIA funds in his 1964 campaign for the presidency, which he won by a wide margin over Allende. Citing unnamed U.S. Senate documents as clearing him of such involvement, he reminded his readers of his government opposition to the 1965 U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, his start toward nationalization of the copper industry and other independent stands. He did not mention other evidence that has linked CIA money to efforts against Allende.

Opposition to Allende, he said, "was the struggle of a country that did not want to fall either into violence or into extremism."

The Chilean armed forces, Frei went on, have traditionally supported technical advance while guaranteeing Democratic processes, a function to which he would return them.

"Military interventions that have been transformed into dictatorships have ended with their prestige gravely undetermined," he said.

Frei reserved his most detailed critique for the government's economic policies, which he said depend on tricks and distortions for their apparent progress against inflation. Although the rate is down from 338 per cent in 1974 to 311 per cent in 1975, he said, the price has been an average loss per capita of \$70 in income.

"The economy is now incapable of absorbing production that until recently was insufficient," and so production continues to decline, he said.

"Every day there are fewer jobs, fewer opportunities for youth, fewer opportunities for employees and workers to earn a living . . . We must ask if the opportunity is being created to unite Chileans or if the fissures which divide us are deeper than ever."

Calling for elections and for a plebiscite on a new constitution, Frei urged his readers to have confidence that the country can find new solutions to its problems.

"The country wants to return to liberty, but not to anarchy. It wants to return to peace and normalcy but not to hate and vengeance. The country wants authority and not disorder," he said. "To postpone a solution is to aggravate the situation."