

Chilean Editor Welcomes Coup

By Lewis H. Diuguid

By a Washington Post Staff Writer

RANCAGUA, Chile, Sept. 30 — Hector Gonzalez, editor-owner of the local daily tabloid, El Rancaguino, is convinced that only the military, which is now censoring his paper, has saved freedom of the press in Chile.

"I have always opposed military governments," Gonzalez told a visitor, but he added that the leftist government of President Salvador Allende, deposed in a coup Sept. 11, posed a greater threat to the provincial press than the new military junta.

Gonzalez, who puts out the tabloid with the help of his family and a small staff, said he had written 250 editorials against the Allende government during the past year.

He and other provincial newspaper owners argued that Allende diminished press freedom, not by directly blocking the publication of news and opinion, but by economic strangulation of the provincial press.

For two years, imports of ink, photo plates and press replacement parts were denied or delayed. Gonzalez says it was deliberate.

Since recurrent crises and Chile's difficulties in obtaining credits delayed most imports, the Allende government did put the opposition-dominated provincial papers low on the priority list for scarce goods.

Allende's supporters denounced the Provincial papers as reactionary tools of the oligarchy. Up close, El Rancaguino does not fit easily into an ideological pigeonhole.

Gonzalez's father founded the paper in 1915, and the son took over in 1959. His sister is second in command, his wife helps with the books, and his two sons work as writer and photographer while completing their university work. There are three others on the editorial staff.

The planet consists of a couple of one-story houses joined around an antique-German flatbed press. The family home is a couple doors down the street and equally modest.

In 1967, El Rancaguino won the Inter-American Press Association's Press Freedom Award for its independence in a local issue of the time.

Gonzalez cites other incidents besides the impossibility of replacing equipment to back up his contention that Allende sought to destroy the provincial papers.

In the town of Talca, to the south, pro-Allende employees took over the local paper. Although a succession of judges ordered the property returned to its owners, the government refused to act. Finally, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the owners after months of occupation by the workers.

Then there was an assault on El Rancaguino itself. Gonzalez had given extensive coverage and editorial support to a 76-day copper miners' strike here that was a factor in Allende's eventual downfall. On two occasions, when strikers and their opponents battled in the streets near the offices of El Rancaguino, the national police lobbed teargas grenades into the plant.

Government advertising, which can make or break a daily in Chile, had long since been cut off from El Rancaguino.

On Aug. 29, by Gonzalez's account, a group of Allende supporters gathered on the steps of the provincial government house and headed off in two lines of 60 each toward the newspaper office. Gonzalez's photographer soon took up a position on the roof, while the rest of the family and staff barricaded the doors and began uninterrupted calls to the police on the four available phone lines.

The son's photos clearly show faces of the mob leaders, and Gonzalez said that many of them are among the 300 persons arrested in Bancagua after

the coup on suspicion of having been involved in terrorist activities.

For 40 minutes, just at deadline, Stones rained into the plant's ratio. Gonzalez says that three of the six doors to the buildings were broken in. The backstop of stacked desks held, the police finally came to break up the crowd with teargas, and the edition came out—a bit late.

Other opposition papers around the nation covered the incident extensively and sent messages of support.

Chilean Junta Cancels Scheduled Pay Raises

SANTIAGO, Sept. 30 (UPI) — Chile's military junta today canceled nationwide wage hikes scheduled to take effect

Monday because of "economic prostration" the junta blamed on President Allende.

Treasury Minister Adm. Lorenzo Gotuzzo said a system of temporary bonuses and subsidies would be implemented to help get the production of essential products started again.

These other developments were announced today:

- The arrest of 76 persons for "spreading false rumors" in the capital.

- The arrest of five men the government said were organizing armed groups to raid police and military posts.

- Establishment of a system of neighborhood telephones to allow citizens to turn in to military authorities persons they believed to be "extremists."