

Chile Speeds Prisoners' Exile

By Joseph Novitski

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SANTIAGO, Jan. 31—The Chilean military government today announced progress in a program to release some of its political prisoners and spelled out arrangements that could mean freedom in exile soon for 200 people now detained.

Gen. Cesar R. Benavides told a news conference that 26 men and women, including the late President Salvador Allende's press secretary, Allende's last minister of agriculture before the 1973 coup, two former senators and a former congressman, had been authorized to leave for Venezuela. Another 17, he said, had been offered homes in exile by other countries.

The remaining 157 authorized to leave were from a list of 200 the government recently assigned to exile in Mexico. Forty-three of the 200 refused to leave, Gen. Benavides said. It was not clear whether Laura Allende, the Socialist president's sister who had been on the list of 200, was among those who would leave. Diplomatic sources said Laura Allende is suffering from cancer and preferred to stay.

The announcement by the army general, now serving as minister of interior and titular head of Chile's police force and prisons, came two days before the United Nations Commission on Human Rights is due to begin a review of reports of torture, illegal detentions and other alleged violations in Chile.

Diplomats and other sources directly involved in negotiations to get political prisoners out of Chile said that the U.N. commission meeting in Geneva was one of two coming events pressing hard on the military junta to speed up its prisoner release program. The other is a meeting of Western European creditor nations in March, called to consider renegotiation of Chile's foreign debt.

The formal release program for supporters of Allende's Marxist government, many of whom have been detained without charges since the Sept. 11, 1973 coup, was announced last September. It got off the ground in November, but did not pick up speed until this month.

Government figures show 74 people have been released under the program. They include former Foreign Minister Clodomiro Almeyda. The latest government estimate of the number of Chileans detained or serving sentences for political reasons is 3,600.

However, people considered politically undesirable by the junta often are expelled without fanfare. Some have spent time under detention.

Mrs. Angela Bachelet, widow of air force Gen. Alberto Bachelet who died of a heart attack in prison last year, was deported to Australia yesterday. She had been detained earlier this month, reliable sources said, along with her daughter Michelle. The two women were expelled together.

There had been no international pressure for Mrs. Bachelet's release. But three of the politicians authorized today to leave for Venezuela have been the subject of months of negotiation by envoys from the West German Social Democratic Party and the Argentine Radical Party.

They are Hugo Miranda, a senator and Allende advisor, Anselmo Sule, a senator, and

Carlos Morales, a member of the Chamber of Deputies. All were members of the wing of Chile's Radical Party that joined Allende's coalition government.

The other figures well-known locally on the list read today were Allende's press secretary, Carlos Jorquera, and Jaime Toha, younger brother of Jose Toha. Both brothers were members of Al-

lende cabinets. Jose Toha died last year in a military hospital, an apparent suicide, after months of detention at hard labor.

The interior minister also announced that the next phase of the release program had begun. He said he had given orders for a list of all prisoners eligible for release to be delivered to the international agencies handling release details.