

## U.S. Role Hinted in Chile's Decision to Release Political Prisoners

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 17—A Chilean Government decision to release most of its political prisoners was welcomed today by the State Department, which indicated that the United States had played a behind-the-scenes role to bring it about.

Chile announced yesterday that it was releasing all but 20 prisoners held without charges under state of siege provisions. Of those 20, 18 would be released if foreign governments would accept them as exiles.

The two exceptions were Luis Corvalán, secretary general of the banned Communist Party, and Jorge Montes, another Communist. Chile said Mr. Corvalán would be freed if the Soviet Union released Vladimir Bukovsky, a dissident, and Mr. Montes would be released in exchange for the freedom of Hubert Matos, a former Cuban official "jailed by the Castro regime for for more than 15 years."

The 300 or so other prisoners—Chile did not give a figure—would be permitted to remain in Chile.

### State Department Not Surprised

The State Department spokesman, Robert L. Funseth, called the Chilean decision a "positive development."

"But we've not been surprised," he added, "since we've had discussions with the Chileans for three weeks on the release."

Other State Department officials said that Washington had for many months been stressing to Chile the harmful impact the continued detention of political prisoners was having on relations with the United States and other countries.

Congress has barred military aid to Chile and set a limit of less than \$30 million on economic aid yearly. Chile responded last month by announcing that it no longer wanted American aid because of the political pressure.

Officials here said they had no way of knowing what specifically motivated the Chilean action yesterday but cited as probable factors American pressure

and criticism of Chile voiced in the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

### Chile Frees 129 Prisoners

SANTIAGO, Chile, Nov. 17 (Reuters)—Chile's military Government today freed

129 political prisoners and said it would release 175 more by tomorrow.

Before being set free the prisoners—111 men and 18 women—were examined medically and asked to sign a document stating they had not been tortured during their detention.