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Chile: On Presidential Candidates

by John Neagle

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Patricio Aylwin, a Christian Democrat, will represent Chile's opposition parties in the December presidential elections. He is supported by a 17-party coalition known as the "Rally for Democracy." Observers of all political persuasions believe Aylwin will be hard to beat. Recent polls show that at least 50% of Chilean voters have made up their minds in his favor, and are not likely to change. As of late July, pro-government parties had not yet chosen a candidate. They are expected to name either Sergio Onofre Jarpa, a former interior minister, and president of the National Renovation Party, or Hernan Buchi, a former finance minister. Jarpa has said that he has not ruled out the possibility of a third candidate, perhaps Interior Minister Carlos Caceres, who has been credited with authoring the constitutional reform. In April, Buchi resigned from his government position to decide whether to run in the December presidential race. In May, he announced he would not enter the competition. Later, Buchi indicated he was reconsidering. On July 10, he implied that he would formally reenter the race, "if the public asks it." Andres Allamand, secretary general of the National Renovation Party, described Buchi as "a phenomenon that can't be ignored." He noted that many Chileans see Aylwin, Gen. Augusto Pinochet and Jarpa as "old boys," connected to the political battles that preceded the 1973 coup and many people now want to forget. On July 26, Interior Minister Caceres said Pinochet would definitely not run for the presidency. He also dismissed the possibility of a military coup prior to or after the election. (Basic data from New York Times, 07/11/89; AFP, 07/23/89; Xinhua, 07/27/89)

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