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## Chile: Notes On Sudden Escalation Of Violence

by John Neagle

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In the last month, common crime and violent assaults have escalated. Several armed robberies have taken place in Santiago, resulting in the death of a shopkeeper, and injuries to employees. The homes of two Catholic television station employees have been robbed, and journalists assaulted on the streets. Nov. 8: Two masked well-dressed persons carrying firearms attempted to rob the home of Enrique Silva Cimma, a spokesperson for the opposition coalition, Rally for Democracy. Silva Cimma was traveling in southern Chile at the time, accompanying presidential candidate Patricio Aylwin. Elena Varas, Silva Cimma's 70-year-old wife, suffered threats and a beating. The assailants made off with a box of documents. Nov. 9: Aylwin decried the escalation of violence saying that "it comes from those that know they are going to lose the election." Enrique Krauss, vice president of the Aylwin election campaign said: "We emphatically repudiate this recent wave of (violent) acts that seemed aimed at creating unrest and raising doubts about the successful completion of the election process. Just as occurred in the October 1988 plebiscite, when desperate sectors of the regime tried as is now known publicly to create instability to break the will and unity of the Chilean people, and were thwarted..., we call on citizens not to be intimidated by the same unknown persons, to actively repudiate the wave of violence and to work unceasingly for the election effort...[We will] thus bring to an end this regime that has been responsible for the violence of the past 16 years." Leaders of the Radical Party attributed the recent events to "groups linked to the CNI," while government spokespersons attributed the violence to the opposition. Full-page newspaper advertisements underlining pro-government presidential candidate Hernan Buchi's commitment to peace and questioning Aylwin's alliance to the "violent" left have appeared in major daily newspapers. Nov. 14: At dawn, unidentified assailants attacked with rocket launchers an army physical education school, located east of Santiago. Damages of \$20,000 were reported. Military spokespersons said the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR) was responsible. Notimex pointed out that in a recent statement, the FPMR said that it had no plans for "operations" during the pre-election period since such actions "would serve as a pretext" for continuity of the military regime. Unidentified persons attacked a juvenile detention center in Santiago. Officials said 44 minors considered "dangerous" escaped. Police later recaptured several of the delinquents. Nov. 22: Interior Ministry official Col. Cristian Labbe said the Communist Party was responsible for a "strategy of social mobilization" before and after the Dec. 14 elections. The party's plans, he added, were broadcast by Radio Moscow on Nov. 15, 17 and 18. According to government officials, the Communist Party's "mobilization" consists of releasing political prisoners, and using the media to achieve a "permanent popular assembly." Such plans are to be implemented by the FPMR. Government spokespersons and candidate Buchi have demanded that Aylwin publicly reject support by the Communist Party (PC). Recently, PC secretary general Volodia Teitelboim said he rejected violence as a means to power, and that he supported representative democracy and elections as the means to "alternate" persons and parties in positions of power. Nov. 25: On Saturday evening, a string of bombings destroyed electricity pylons, caused serious damage to Radio Minería facilities, and killed a teenager in Cajon del Maipo, 50 km. east of Santiago. Blackouts affected Santiago and other cities. According to Radio Minería station manager Hernani Banda, an anonymous telephone caller contacted the radio studios and said the FPMR claimed responsibility

for the attack. Police said they suspected the FPMR was responsible for the other bombings as well. On Saturday night commandos fired submachineguns at the studios of the state-run National Television of Chile. No one was injured, officials said. Hundreds had gathered Saturday at Gen. Augusto Pinochet's residence to celebrate his 74th birthday when the capital was plunged into darkness. Nov. 26: Interior Minister Carlos Caceres accused the Communist Party and the FPMR of trying to derail the Dec. 14 presidential elections. Nov. 27: Chile's paramilitary police (Carabineros) reported that they had arrested 5,186 people over the past four months during the run-up to the Dec. 14 presidential elections. Police spokespersons said arrested persons were charged with offenses such as disturbing the peace or engaging in illegal political propaganda. Last week alone, 599 people were arrested, 123 of them in Santiago. Of those arrested, the police said, 288 were supporters of opposition candidate Patricio Aylwin, 69 backed pro-government candidate Hernan Buchi, 86 were partisans of businessperson Francisco Javier Errazuriz and 156 said they were independent. Aylwin told reporters that terrorist actions seek to "destabilize the process of transition to democracy." He added, "If there is anyone who believes that in this way the electoral process which culminates on Dec. 14 can be interrupted, they are mistaken." PC secretary general Teitelboim said his party was not responsible for the bombings and other violence perpetrated in Santiago and environs on Saturday and Sunday. He pointed out that in 1986 the party split into political and military branches, and that the FPMR declared itself an autonomous organization. [Basic data from Radio Cooperativa (Chile), 11/08/89; La Epoca, El Mercurio (Chile), 11/09/89; Notimex, 11/14/89, 11/22/89, 11/27/89; AFP, 11/26/89, 11/27/89]

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