

No organized
political
expression
accepted

far as to produce a repetition of the "destabilization" operation that hastened the fall of the Allende Government. The internal cohesiveness of the current Santiago regime rules out such an operation in the immediate future, not to mention the fact that the new American President does not seem to support that approach.

Second, there is social isolation. Whereas in 1973 the armed forces had been able to count on the support of the majority of the population, this majority has progressively become silent and apathetic. The wearing-away of the junta's popularity has resulted less from the excessive physical repression than from excessive deflationary policies and jungle capitalism, which have affected both the entire working class and the main section of the population supporting the junta, the middle class. Even the upper social strata, which have profited from the laissez-faire economic policies, are frustrated by their exclusion from political power. Though the military rulers have handed the key economic posts to civilians and have organized a corporatist dialogue with the public, they accept no organized political expression, even on the part of their civilian supporters.

Third, there is isolation within the army itself. Whereas the *coup d'état* affirmed the unity of action of the armed forces and the collegial nature of its decision-making, General Pinochet has since been becoming a *caudillo*, arrogating to himself most of the power at the expense of the other members of the junta. Also, the fact that the junta members have perpetuated their stay in power by their own decree has annoyed their peers and subordinates, whose advancement is being held back by the blocking of the top positions in the hierarchy. Finally, the exercise of power by the junta has opened up many sinecures for the military, but has brought them hardly any of the modern equipment that their Peruvian and Argentinian counterparts have obtained in large quantities.

Questioning

In view of this partial isolation of the junta, various non-Marxist groups and institutions have dared to start systematic questioning of the monopolizing of power by the military. For example, experts working for the Chilean episcopate have been stigmatizing a regime that runs counter to the republican, democratic and pluralistic traditions of the country. In the meantime, ex-President Frei, after being received at the White House, made a sharp, concise statement calling for the

return of a democratic regime "as the only possible solution". Even the mouthpiece of the institutional right, the newspaper *El Mercurio*, has called for the return of democracy, a democracy purified of its "demagogic and subversive elements", and has condemned the ultraconservatism of the junta. Finally, a member of the junta itself, the head of the navy, has criticized the incongruity of lumping together civilian and military responsibilities, indicating that power may soon be put back in civilian hands.

It is important, however, not to overestimate the significance of pronouncements that create exaggerated interest among a public deprived of political news for four years. Nevertheless, the rumblings within the country's non-military establishment clearly indicate the unrest of the civilian population in the face of Pinochet's desire to remain in power. With the same political skill that enabled him first to become army chief and then successor to Allende, General Pinochet has been counterattacking on all fronts since March 1977.

Political front

On the political front, the junta has extended its internal war against opposition from the centre and left by banning non-Marxist parties, which previously had simply been under suspension. Other measures have included further prolonging the state of siege and increasing censorship. Elections have been promised in ten years.

On the social front, the junta has let up a little on its orthodox approach to finance and even indulged in a new, slightly-populist wage policy benefiting technical, scientific and university management. The economic repression in general has been toned down.

On the military front, Pinochet has been making an intensive tour of the canteens to regain personal contact with his military bases. At the same time the junta has been increasing the number of general-officer positions in order to satisfy the impatient colonels. Geopolitically, in an effort to hold off Washington's human-rights offensive, the most glaring kinds of physical repression have apparently been shelved for the time being, while a number of political prisoners are being released, often into exile.

The immediate future of Chile is reasonably clear. Taking advantage of the fragmented Chilean society they wrested from the Popular Unity, Pinochet and his partners have succeeded in cementing a state network relatively independent of