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ANALYSIS BRANCH

DATE: December 23, 1971

SUBJECT : Patria y Libertad

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

REF :

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SUMMARY. Pablo RODRIGUEZ, a young Santiago lawyer, founded Patria y Libertad immediately after the 1970 presidential election. Publicly merely anti-Marxist and dedicated to mobilizing opinion in defense of Chilean democratic values, PL in fact seeks to enhance its capabilities as a paramilitary shock force and, ultimately, to provoke a sympathetic military intervention. PL has identified itself with General Viaux and has sought a vaguely authoritarian, nationalistic image, presumably in order more easily to cultivate the armed forces. Appealing to youth and increasingly activist in recent months, PL has moved from the periphery to become a factor in opposition politics. It appears to be successfully tapping the frustrations of a growing number of middle and, especially, upper income Chileans. Despite certain psychologically exhilarating exploits, PL is an embarrassment to the democratic opposition in that its basic character facilitates government efforts to label all opposition "fascist" and "golpista." END SUMMARY.

The Frente Nacionalista "Patria y Libertad" (PL--Fatherland and Freedom Nationalist Front) has emerged from relative obscurity to become the Allende Government's "fascist" whipping boy and a propaganda and shock force of some significance and considerable appeal to conservatives.

Group 1
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Background. PL was born a matter of days after Allende's September 4, 1970 electoral victory. According to its founder and leader, Pablo RODRIGUEZ Grez, the early nucleus was a group of some 200 lawyers. PL ran newspaper ads and organized rallies designed to alert Chileans to the dangers for traditional Chilean values should the Congress respect Allende's first majority and elect a Marxist president. PL (which then styled itself rather less militantly as a Movimiento Civico) tried to rally public and military opinion behind the formula whereby the Congress would elect runner-up Jorge ALESSANDRI, whose subsequent resignation would trigger new elections. Rodriguez' most innovative device in those early days was the series of nightly "vigils" by placard-bearing women. They paraded silently past the Moneda mourning the imminent "death of Chilean democracy."

PL was also active clandestinely. The Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR), which infiltrated the group, publicized PL's responsibilities for several acts of minor terrorism. [redacted] reports of the period substantially corroborated MIR's charges. Although the lines were never drawn clearly, these PL activities evidently related to the plotting which led to the kidnap-assassination of General Rene SCHNEIDER in late October 1970. Then as now, PL hoped to help provoke or provide pretexts for military intervention. Although Rodriguez was called in for questioning, neither he nor any other known PL member was ever booked or prosecuted for complicity in the Schneider plot.

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PL and Viaux. If PL's links to General (R) Roberto VIAUX were fuzzy during the Schneider plotting and in the months of investigation which followed, PL's identification with Viaux and the "Tacna Group" since then has been quite public. Soon after Viaux's conviction PL began redirecting its propaganda at the military. It went so far as to sponsor a "Homage to Viaux" night during a moment when Viaux partisans were rumored to be planning their leader's escape from prison. (Speakers at the April 1 rally were Rodriguez and Democratic Radical (PDR) Senator Raul MORALES Adriasola, a prominent Schneider plot suspect.) While PL adopted a more nationalistic vocabulary, Rodriguez became Viaux's attorney. A Rodriguez lieutenant, one Erwin ROBERTSON, is currently assistant editor of the Viauxist periodical "Tacna."

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Ideology and Objectives. Rodriguez declares that his movement is perfectly above-board, dedicated to the struggle against the imposition of a Marxist state, but committed to employing constitutional and legal means. He naturally rejects the epithet "fascist." Allende supporters and even many middle-road oppositionists nevertheless consider it an apt description. The inflation of Chilean political rhetoric is only partially responsible for this.

Rodriguez set out to give his organization an unsettling image. PL chose as its symbol (that is, after its "Movimiento Civico" period) a black, spider-like device (see enclosure) which brings the swastika to mind. Easily stenciled, this rather sinister insignia adorns countless walls in Santiago's middle and upper class residential sections, PL's home ground. The symbol is often accompanied by such catchwords as "Integration," "Authority," and "Functional Democracy." Rodriguez uses these suggestive terms in his speeches. But beyond general notions that Chilean democracy needs reform and that capitalism is outmoded, Rodriguez does little to spell out his vision of Chile's future. Currently PL challenges Allende to put his job on the line by convoking a plebiscite to determine whether Chileans really want a Marxist state.

It takes little reading between the lines to find PL's primary target: the military. The vaguely authoritarian rhetoric, the "nationalist" posture, the adoption of Viaux, the appeal to the concept of "super-mission" in the invocation of the armed forces responsibilities for safeguarding "democracy," are public siren calls. PL's incitement of street violence-- (it is difficult to tell where the real PL ends and the government-promoted myth begins)--is clearly calculated to bestir the military to intervene for the sake of restoring order. On another level PL appears to be working to create a paramilitary capability as an opposition shock force, and to intimidate the Left. Tactical parallels with MIR are instructive. Both groups seek to stimulate violent confrontation--PL to induce the desired military takeover, MIR to conclude once and for all with "bourgeois impediments" to the achievement of a revolutionary society.

The Leader. Before his recent foray into politics, Pablo Rodriguez was considered one of Santiago's ablest young lawyers--intelligent, articulate, level-headed, and well connected in the business community. He won a prize in 1960 as the University of Chile's most distinguished graduate.

Kindred Spirits. PL's exploits apparently inspired the recently organized Unión Cívica Democrática (UCD--Democratic Civic Union). (A full-page El Mercurio ad on December 12 announced UCD's birth.) Its guiding spirit, until his death several days ago of a heart attack, was Jorge PRAT Echaurren, an inveterate plotter whose association with ultra-right movements dated back many years. There is evidence of some loose coordination between PL and UCD. However, we understand from a source connected to the new movement that UCD was established because of a feeling that PL had insufficient appeal to the military and because of a general distrust among rightists of Rodriguez's "caudillo" pretensions.

Implications. Although PL activities may have contributed to the upsurge of anti-government morale in recent weeks, the movement is essentially an embarrassment to the democratic opposition. Its fascist aura, deserved or not, plays into the hands of the government. It helps the UP justify its own goon-squads; allows the government to equate "right-wing armed groups" with the far more serious extreme left counterparts which the GOC tolerates and uses; and lends a surface verisimilitude to charges that opposition, in general, is "seditious" and "golpista." PL impresses us as amateurish and naive. Rather than provoking the military intervention it seeks, PL activities seem thus far to make it more awkward for the military to move away from the government in its vaunted role as defender of constitutional order.

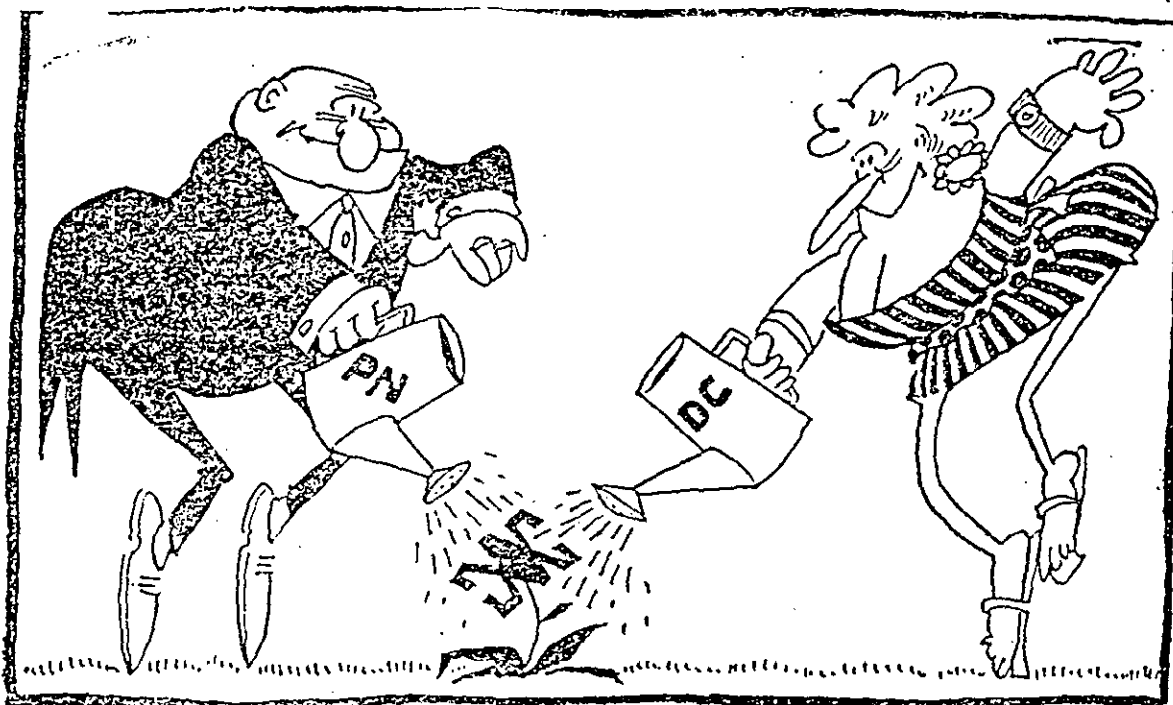
Enclosure:
Cartoon

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Enclosure to
Santiago A-386

From "El Siglo," December 12, 1971



*Los fascistas son agentes de
una conspiración antichilena*

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