

Billionaire Piñera to be next Chilean president

By Becca Heller
STAFF WRITER

In a Jan. 17 election, Chileans selected billionaire Sebastian Piñera as the country's next president. Having narrowly beaten the liberal candidate Eduardo Frei, 52 percent to 48 percent, Piñera will take office on March 11 as the country's first right-wing leader since dictator Augusto Pinochet left power in 1990.

At age 60, Piñera amassed a large portion of his \$1.2 billion fortune by setting up Chile's first credit card network. He now owns one of Chile's four television stations, a popular football club, and a big stake in Latin America's biggest airline, LAN.

Piñera spent over \$13.6 million on the campaign, Business Week reported. According to the Wall Street Journal, he plans to apply his entrepreneurial skills to Chile's already-stable economy. He has already declared that Chile will experience an average annual growth rate of 6 percent during his term. Many experts, including Harvard University economist Ricardo Hausmann are doubtful as to the plausibility of this goal.

While Piñera has garnered much

support with his talk of economic prosperity in Chile, many people still express ambivalence regarding his election. Current Chilean president Michelle Bachelet has questioned the probable conflict of interests of Piñera's many investments.

Other concerns have arisen regarding Piñera's treatment of human rights. Piñera found the majority of his support coming from the same parties that stood behind dictator Augusto Pinochet, whose regime tortured over 28,000 people and murdered over 3,000.

Bachelet's term and the term before hers saw much improvement on human rights, and Piñera seeks to assure voters that there will be no departure from this progress.

"I have condemned human rights violations all my life, with no hesitation," Piñera said in a Business Week article. "Human rights are sacred. Our government will be a government of the future."

During his campaign, he assured that he would hire no former Pinochet cabinet members, but he later retracted the statement due to backlash from angry supporters.

"Having collaborated loyally and honestly with a government is not a sin or a crime," he said, according to USA Today.

According to Business Week, two of Piñera's top campaign advisers held posts during Pinochet's dictatorship, while a third was a former minister to Pinochet.

"The fact that the candidate who represents the parties that supported Pinochet has won shows how much Chile has changed," said Patricio Navia, a Chilean political scientist at New York University in Manhattan.

Some are saying that this shift of power in Chile could reflect a more general shift of power in Latin America away from the left.

In an e-mail interview, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology Maria Amado pointed out that Panama also recently elected conservative Ricardo Martinelli, while in Honduras the democratically elected leader was deposed in a military coup by a group representing right-wing agendas.

"While these events, along with the election of Piñera in Chile, may not be sufficient evidence to predict a significant shift to the right, they are certainly indicators of a



Sebastian Piñera, accompanied by his wife Cecilia Morel, after the first round of general elections in Santiago, Chile, on April 13, 2009. Piñera went on to win the second and final round on Jan. 17

possible change in that direction," said Amado.

Assistant Professor of History Alvis Dunn speculates that the election was more a result of the specific conditions of Chile's current political system.

"I think Piñera's victory was more a function of the fraying forces that have held the left-wing parties together in the past," he said. "The coalition on the left seems to have lost cohesion and this permitted a more unified non-left."

According to Dunn, Piñera has a difficult task ahead of him. In

the midst of keeping promises of economic growth, Piñera will also need to focus on coalition-building and maintaining popularity among his own constituency.

"Bachelet's economic policies were really quite successful," Dunn points out. "I don't think Piñera will really change the economic policy all that much. I don't think he can afford to. There will probably be a lot of talk that sounds different to please his constituency, but I think if he changes the economy too much, it will suffer."

Cyber-attacks prompt Google to question its future service to China

By Sharp Hall
STAFF WRITER

Google has announced it will no longer censor search results in China following cyber attacks from the Chinese government on its Chinese subsidiary, Google.cn.

Launched by Google in 2006, Google.cn drew criticism from supporters who believed its partnership with the Chinese government conflicted with Google's "don't be evil" mantra, listed online in Google's Code of Conduct.

In addition to the attacks, e-mail accounts may have also been monitored.

"We have discovered that the accounts of dozens of U.S., China- and Europe-based Gmail users who are advocates of human rights in China appear to have been routinely accessed by third parties," said David Drummond, Google's SVP of Corporate Development and Chief Legal Officer, in the company's official blog.

"We look to the Chinese government for an explanation," said Hillary Clinton in a statement on Google's operations in China. "The ability to operate with confidence in cyberspace is critical in a modern society and economy."

Meanwhile, Google's president Dave Girouard has reassured American users that their data was not affected by the cyber attacks.

Teresa Sanford, director of user services at IT&S, agrees. "Google Apps for

Education, where we live, is not part of their consumer side — the Gmail side — which is where everybody tries to hack," said Sanford. "I feel that it's safer out there."

Some, such as the Cult of the Dead Cow computer-hacking collective's Oxblood Ruffin, feel that Google has been straying further and further from its "don't be evil" mantra and that this action is an attempt for Google to put themselves in a good light.

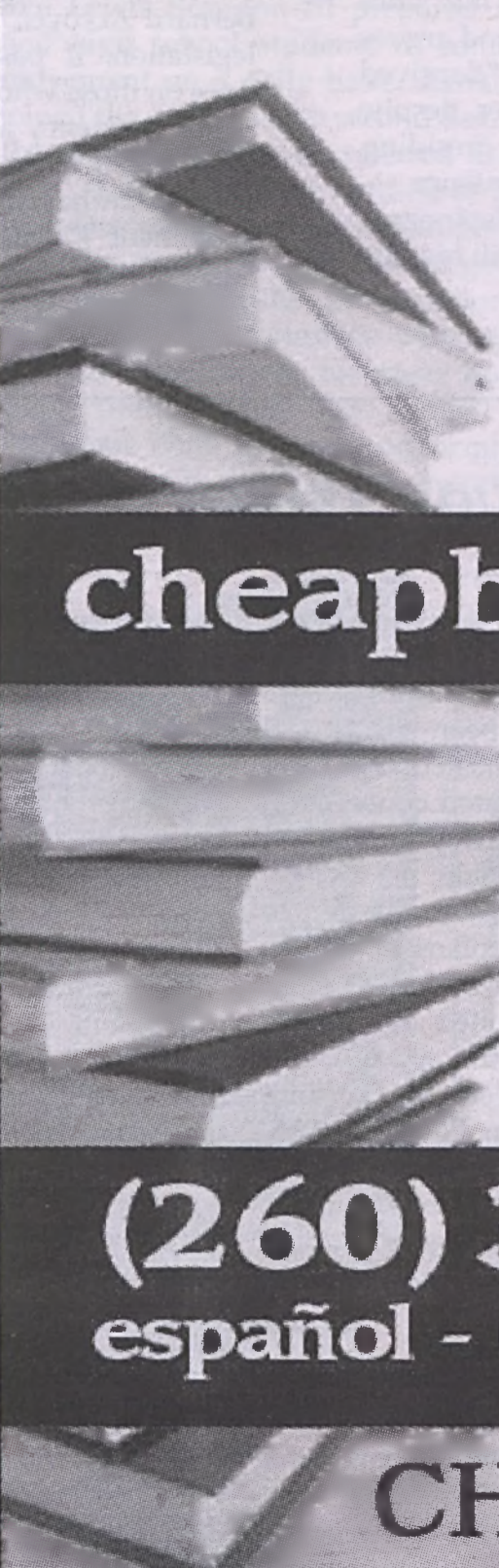
"When you're being chased out of town, it can be face-saving to grab a flag and say that you're leading a parade," said Ruffin on cDc's blog. Another reason for Google leaving China, according to the Wall Street Journal, is that it would have proven too technically difficult to continue complying with China's censorship mandates.

"It looks like an incredibly smart business decision," said Associate Professor and Chair of Political Science Ken Gilmore.

"We have a view of large technology corporations as being bad," he said. "So, what's a really good thing to do? To say this is the Internet, and we're going to protect what the Internet stands for."

Nevertheless, Gilmore feels better about using Google knowing that they are standing, not participating in Chinese censorship.

"I am absolutely on the side of Google on this," said Gilmore. "I think it's really admirable what they did."



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