



CHILE: IN SEARCH OF LOST DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

The question of the restoration or construction of democracy in Chile is approached in this paper from a triple perspective. The author analyzes the conditions that made Chilean democracy possible in this century; he discusses the qualities of that democracy, focusing particularly on the relationship between the state and civil society. He then examines the causes of the fall of democracy in Chile. The next section of the paper discusses sociopolitical transformations generated under the military regime and outlines a possible scenario for a transition. The conclusion sums up the principle arguments and indicates the perspectives for a future democracy.

Resumen

La problemática de la recuperación o construcción democrática en Chile se aborda en este trabajo desde una triple perspectiva. Por un lado, se analiza qué condiciones hicieron posible la democracia chilena en este siglo y qué rasgos la tipificaron, haciendo referencia especialmente al tipo de articulación que se estableció entre Estado y sociedad civil. Por otro lado, se exponen las causas de su derrumbe. Finalmente, se consideran las transformaciones sociopolíticas suscitadas bajo el régimen militar y el posible escenario de una transición. Las tres primeras partes se consagran a cada uno de estos aspectos respectivamente y la última, a modo de conclusión, resume las principales argumentaciones e indica las perspectivas de una democracia futura.

To the memory of Rene Zavaleta

In recent years we have witnessed the decline of authoritarian or military regimes in the Southern Cone of Latin America.¹ This phenomenon has been accompanied by a total failure of these regimes to solve the fundamental problems of these societies as well as to resolve the prolonged crisis of hegemony that has characterized these nations since the collapse of the oligarchic state.²

In this context of democratic renewal, the Chilean case stands out as having been historically one of the more stable democracies on the continent which is now experiencing a relatively significant delay in terms of ending its military dictatorship and reestablishing democracy. A cruel paradox appears to be operating in which conditions that helped make democracy possible in Chile are now factors which make an exit from dictatorship more problematic.

An analysis of the recovery or rebuilding of democracy in Chile, to avoid the temptation of the "crystal ball" or of wishful thinking, should be undertaken from three perspectives. First, what conditions or features were characteristic of Chilean democracy in this century? Second, what caused the collapse of that democracy? Third, what socio-political transformations have occurred under the military regime, and what would be the possible scenario of a transition? We shall try to answer these three questions in broad and schematic terms.

I. The Chilean political system

In broad strokes, the political system in effect until 1973 could be described as possessing the following general characteristics.

1. There was a democratic regime accompanied by a process of capitalist modernization and industrialization, known as the development

model of growth via the "internal market," in which the state played a central role. There was also a process of "substantive democratization," which led to a continuous incorporation of different social groups into the economic life of the country, political participation, and sociocultural advantages. Nevertheless, both political democracy and "substantive democratization" were restricted. Peasant and marginal urban sectors were excluded until the 1960s and the Communist Party was politically excluded between 1947 and 1958. Also, until the 1960s only a third of the population effectively participated in the political-electoral life of the country, and the organized urban popular sectors maintained a clearly subordinated position. Despite these limitations, the political system offered "visibility" for the expectations of the different social groups, thereby reducing "anti-system" tendencies.³

2. The important presence of the state as the principal focus of social demands and claims and as a vehicle to satisfy popular expectations favored a particular type of relationship between the state and society, characterized by the relevance of the party system. The party system served as the main arena for the integration of social groups, and for the mediation of the demands of organized social groups. On one hand, the political parties were essentially structured at the national level (right, center, and left) before the masses were incorporated into the political and social arena. As a result, the newly incorporated groups found clearly established channels for participation. New participants could thus be brought in without causing serious institutional disruptions, providing further stability to the party system. On the other hand, to the extent that opportunities

to influence the state depended on the degree of organization and social weight of each sector, the type of organization most likely to succeed was the one that linked partisan political leadership to the representation of a "social base." The student movement, the labor movement, and the peasant and mass organizations of the 1960s are all examples of this particular overlapping of party and social bases. Thus, for the party system effectively to articulate and channel, mediate and represent a social group before the state, required a highly politicized, party-linked citizenry. The counterpart to this was a weak and dependent role for the other organizations of civil society. This kind of articulation between a social base and a party system, which favors a particular kind of social integration, constituted the essence of the Chilean political system, the "back bone" of Chilean society.

3. In this type of society, characterized by dependent capitalist industrialization compatible up to a point with an unequal and conflictive process of democratization and where the state plays a central role in the development process, the political system becomes the arena or principal battlefield of the class struggle. The social classes thus appear principally as political forces with only a weak structure at the level of civil society. This "state of compromise" was characterized by the fact that, in spite of its predominantly capitalist character, no particular social class was capable of imposing its hegemony over the others; and the system succeeded, although in an asymmetrical fashion, in integrating the interests of the dominant classes, the middle classes, and, in a subordinate role, of the organized working class. The exclusion of other sectors such as the peasantry

until the 1960s can be explained by the fact that this "compromise" rested on the intangibility of the agrarian system and the immutability of the social structure of the hacienda or latifundio--in other words, on the absence of a modernizing agrarian reform. This fact combined with the foreign ownership of the country's basic resource, copper, characterized what has been called the "incomplete reformism" that prevailed until the 1960s (see Moulian, 1982).

The dominant classes were a fusion of industrial, financial, commercial, and agrarian interests, without sharp distinctions between the modern and traditional sectors on the political or ideological levels. Given the unchanged system of land ownership, these classes never generated an effective hegemonic modernizing program. Instead, they devoted their energies to defending their privileges and to obtaining benefits from the state. All projects for modernization within the capitalist framework came from groups in the political center representing the middle classes, never from the dominant capitalist sectors. The hegemonic weakness of the latter sectors was reflected by their political representation on the right consisting of the historic Liberal and Conservative parties. Since 1938, the right governed the country only in 1958-64, resigning itself during most of this period to defensive policies in congress and to wielding its influence on the political center, the Radical Party.

The so-called middle classes were composed of heterogeneous groups united by a common link to the state and to the educational system. During the long period from the 1930s to the 1960s, they were identified with the process of state expansion and the democratization of the system, viewing these changes as the guarantor of their continued growth.

and mobility. They played a progressive role in the 1930s, but the fact that they became the major beneficiaries of the system made them increasingly more conservative and defensive of a social order that appeared threatened by the emergence of the popular sectors.

Representation of the middle classes was undertaken by the political center, principally the Radical Party. This organization was a pragmatic and somewhat pendular political force, providing the political spectrum with great flexibility in dealing with crises. The Radicals played a crucial role until the 1960s.

The urban popular classes--industrial and mining--were included ambiguously in the political system. Their participation was of a fragmented and subordinated character, allowing them to gain only minimal conditions of subsistence. They achieved political expression mainly through two parties. One was the Socialist Party, more a popular than a working class party and not very homogeneous, hampered by a lack of organizational unity but characterized by a rich and diversified ideological base. The other was the Communist Party, fundamentally a workers' party, socially and ideologically homogeneous, affiliated with the international communist movement and Marxist orthodoxy. These two parties had an ambivalent relationship to the political system: they were participants in it and were not "anti-system" forces, but at the same time they supported and developed a project for radical change of the social system.

4. The interaction between the state and society with an especially prominent role for the political parties within an all-inclusive political spectrum, along with other factors we cannot discuss here, favored the strengthening of a relatively large and ideologically diverse

political class that guaranteed the normal operation of the political and social institutions at a national level. Furthermore, the evolving institutional system required a continuous process of negotiation and the adoption of strategies for gradual change to avoid threatening the prevailing balance of interests. All of these characteristics permitted the utilization of agreed-upon formulas to resolve conflicts at an institutional level, avoiding any appeals for the intervention of external elements such as the armed forces. With respect to the armed forces, the politicians maintained an attitude of distance and distrust in the absence of a clear policy. This led to a "cloistering" of the armed forces, who had little interaction with the civil sector, and to the development of a military ideology resting on "professionalism" and "constitutionalism" which, in turn, generated within the armed forces a high level of internal cohesion and hierarchical legitimacy. Finally, these developments led to a process of military modernization and ideological socialization dependent on U.S. hegemony in Latin America after World War II (on the armed forces, see Varas, 1980).

II. The crisis of the political system

1. The political system described above underwent a series of changes in the 1960s. In certain respects these transformations would become more pronounced in the period 1970-73.

According to the perception of the principal political participants, the compatibility between the capitalist system of development and the process of "substantive democratization" appeared to be coming to an end. The massive incorporation of new sectors into the political

arena between 1958 and 1964 suggested the transition to a more inclusionary democracy with increasing legitimization of views calling for social change. The political right seemed to have lost legitimacy following its first direct government after several decades (the presidential term of Jorge Alessandri, 1958-64), and in the political center a new political force replaced the Radical Party. This was the Christian Democratic Party, which defined itself in highly ideological terms by a program which sought profound changes in the capitalist system. It distanced itself as much from the political right, which it characterized as reactionary, as from the left, which it accused of being classist and supportive of a socialist program lacking in originality as an alternative to the "Soviet model." The inability of the political right to offer its own alternative to meet the threat of a leftist victory in the presidential elections of 1964 led it to support the successful Christian Democratic candidate, Eduardo Frei (1964-70).⁴

The Christian Democrats' plan was to complete modernization in two critical areas: transformation of agrarian relationships by destroying the latifundio system (agrarian reform) and recovery of the country's basic wealth by "Chileanizing" the copper industry, as the process of semi-nationalization was called. This modernization project also portended a forward leap in industrialization through an important flow of foreign capital, with which a "modern bourgeoisie" was supposed to be associated, and through expansion of internal and external markets. But this wasn't simply a modernization project, for it also aspired to be consistent with a broadening and deepening of the process of "substantive democratization," especially with

reference to the peasant and marginal urban groups. In other words, it was an attempt to end the exclusions that had characterized the "state of compromise" until that time and to complete the process of modernization the state had not yet accomplished. These goals required changing the key participants of the "compromise," sacrificing the interests of the landowning classes, and developing as a counterbalance the interests of a modern national bourgeoisie associated with the state and of the middle sectors. It also meant incorporating the interests of the peasants and the marginal urban groups and neutralizing the sectors of the organized working class that expressed themselves via the left.⁵

It is now clear that the Christian Democrats introduced a relative rigidification into the political party spectrum and contributed to its polarization. On one hand, their organizational style and political discourse with its messianic content and inflexible tone would prevent their playing the classical pendular role of a political center which establishes alliances with either side of the political spectrum to obtain the majority necessary to prevent accelerating crises. In this sense, the Christian Democratic Party would be a "center" that acted very differently from the Radical Party, and their single party government during the Frei period was an illustration of this tendency towards inflexibility. On the other hand, the fact that one of the basic pillars of its political plan was agrarian reform meant that for the first time the intricate web that had maintained the "state of compromise" was being threatened. This could not be done without alienating the entire capitalist class, which saw in such action the destruction of the principle of private property in the hands of an

all-powerful and arbitrary state. The fluid bonds joining different sectors of the capitalist class coalesced into a unified reaction against the government.

With agrarian reform and peasant unionization, an entire economic, social, cultural and political world was perceived as collapsing. This stimulated the reorganization of the right, which came together in the National Party, developing a rhetoric and program that were now more nationalistic, more authoritarian, and less democratic, and that incorporated into its ruling elite elements that came from nationalistic groups, to the detriment of the liberal-conservative leadership.

The Christian Democrats also became isolated from the left, with which they were unable to make agreements necessary to bring about great changes. Furthermore, they did not succeed in "stealing the left's show," as they had originally aspired; for the left radicalized its positions, denouncing the capitalist and limited character of what it called, "Christian Democratic reformism," and maintained its influence on the urban industrial proletariat not co-opted by the Christian Democrats' project. This radicalization of the left occurred in an ideological climate very conducive to such developments. This included the impact of the Cuban Revolution and the wave of reformism unleashed by the U.S. government (Alliance for Progress) to neutralize that impact, as well as the Christian Democratic rhetoric of transformation and the bogging down of their program halfway through the presidential term. There were two principal changes on the left in the decade of the 1960s: the introduction into its traditional components, the Socialist and Communist Parties, of radicalized groups that originated

from the center, the Radical Party, MAPU (Movement for Unitary Popular Action comprised of dissident Christian Democrats), and later the Christian Left; and the unification of all these components behind a classic Marxist-Leninist vision (although accepting a "peaceful road" for Chile), including a plan for the transition to socialism as the only way to overcome capitalist underdevelopment in the framework of "bourgeois democracy."

Thus, to return to our initial scheme, the "back bone"--i.e., the articulation of relationships between the state and civil society provided by the overlapping of the party system and social organizations--underwent significant changes in the 1960s. On one hand, the country's "social base" was modified and extended by the inclusion of the peasantry and of marginal urban sectors and with the attainment of a mass democracy. On the other hand, the state significantly enlarged its role as an agent of development and change and of social redistribution of resources. Finally, between the "social base" and the state, the party system underwent a process of "tripolarization," with a reunified right swinging toward undemocratic, more authoritarian positions to preserve capitalism in crisis; a rigid political center unable to form alliances and as isolated from the right as from the left; and a left that, while maintaining its participation in the democratic process, politically and ideologically radicalized its project of replacement of capitalism.

Two fundamental elements which had maintained the political system for decades were altered during this period. First, the change in the agrarian social structure radicalized authoritarian positions on the right, pushing the latter toward encouraging the breakdown of the

democratic system. Second, there was a growing tendency toward the separation of the middle and popular classes, the two sectors which together had made politically feasible the compatibility between political democracy and a process of more general democratization. This separation was expressed at the party level in exclusive platforms for change from the center and the left and in the loss of flexibility in the system to handle crises as the "tripolarization" developed.

2. We have said that the period 1970-1973 signifies, in some ways, the intensification of certain features of the political system that appeared in the 1960s.

At the beginning of the 1970s, Chilean society seemed to be facing a historical choice between a deepening of capitalism which would require paralyzing or reversing democratic tendencies that pressed on the state and on capital accumulation, and the intensification of democratization which would require altering the existing pattern of capitalist development. This choice appeared in the context of a crisis of legitimacy of the capitalist model and of a relative disintegration of the "state of compromise," but in which the legitimacy of the democratic regime as a consensual space for the resolution of conflicts remained unchallenged. In this framework, the triumph of the leftist coalition (the Popular Unity) and of Salvador Allende in the presidential election of 1970 signified the beginning of a process reflecting the second option.⁶

The core of Popular Unity's program was the expropriation of the monopolistic sector of the economy by the state in order to redirect the surplus toward another model of development, the completion of agrarian reform and the nationalization of resources accompanied by

a vast program of redistribution. The project could be defined as one of "noncapitalist democratization," inasmuch as the theoretical and ideological tradition of the left designated it as a "transition to socialism." From its inception, elements of the private sector and the public sector in the United States and groups on the Chilean political right, considering their interests affected, attempted the overthrow of Allende by both legal means and insurrectional tactics. Initially, these attempts did not find support in the middle sectors, the political center, or the armed forces. The legitimacy of the democratic regime led the first two groups to seek to neutralize the Allende government's program, forcing it to moderate the pace and content of the intended transformations in order to capitalize on its weakening in the middle-term. With respect to the armed forces, this regime legitimacy led them to accept their role as "guarantors" of the Constitution. Thus, the de-legitimation of the political regime was critical if the strategy of overthrow was to take precedence over that of neutralization. To that end it was necessary to generate in the middle sectors a perception of catastrophic crisis that seemed to pose a threat to their existence. The right devoted all its efforts to achieve this, using a variety of tactics.

As far as the Popular Unity coalition was concerned, its revolutionary rhetoric, directed almost exclusively to the working class, and its strategy of expropriations, which was perfectly legal though threatening to the traditional principles of negotiation and gradualism in that it did not pass through Parliament, had the effect of alienating the middle classes. These sectors, along with the political center, were drawn into a strategy of regime overthrow.

Ideological radicalization, polarization in all aspects of political and social life, use of boycott and terrorism by the right, and the intransigent pursuit of its program of change by the Popular Unity government were eroding the legitimacy of the consensual mechanisms of conflict resolution. The armed forces, which in October 1972 had taken the political position of supporting the constitutional government, increasingly found in this climate conditions favorable for their autonomous intervention, which implied not only the overthrow of Allende but also the destruction of the entire political system which had developed during several decades. For lack of any clear political "project," beyond a consensus that the existing situation had to end, and a self-defined role as "saviors of the nation in crisis," the military regime that followed the overthrow of democracy in September 1973, came to be defined primarily by the brutality of its intervention, its hierarchical cohesion, and the activation of a latent ideology of "national security."

In terms of the principal features of the political system that we described at the beginning of this paper, the period between 1970 and 1973 witnessed, on the one hand, an overflowing of traditional party channels by the "social base" (producer associations with respect to the right, middle sector associations and organizations with respect to the Christian Democrats, and new popular associations in relation to the left). On the other hand, a clear break emerged between the middle and lower sectors, a division expressed by the alignment of the political center with the strategy of regime overthrow of a right that had abandoned all democratic pretense and was relying on the breakdown of the system to rescue its dominant class position. Finally,

there was a considerable extension of state activity and at the same time, a growing fragmentation and autonomy of its components, especially the armed forces.

In summary, the following factors provided a framework for the tasks the military regime would assume: a process of disintegration of the capitalist system; state fragmentation; loss of legitimacy of the political mechanism of conflict resolution; and extreme polarization of society characterized by the active organization and mobilization of the masses as well as of the middle and ruling classes. These tasks would be therefore nothing less than the restructuring and reorientation of the capitalist system and the disarticulation of the existing mechanisms of social and political organization which were to be replaced by a national military-state system of control and repression.

III. The military political system and the problems of transition to democracy

1. The military regime that came to power after Allende's overthrow in 1973 and which resolved the political crisis in favor of the capitalist bloc did more than put an end to the democratic system and to processes of "substantive democratization"; that is to say, it not only reacted against the preceding order but also tried to reconstruct a new social and political order based on a development scheme that was profoundly contradictory to that which had characterized the country until 1973. The military government was from the beginning marked by a growing personalization which unified the political leadership with the head of the institutional hierarchy of the armed forces (General Augusto Pinochet). It was also characterized by the elimination of all forms of mediation and representation which had been instituted

during the democratic period. This was accomplished by means of numerous forms of repression that have been continuously in effect during the life of the regime.

The first phase of the military regime (until 1976/77) was characterized by unrestricted repression, the consolidation of personal power by General Pinochet, and the formation of a ruling government nucleus comprised of the personalized military leadership and a team of technocrats (the "Chicago Boys"). Along with some intellectual groups, these technocrats had the responsibility of providing the regime with an ideological and programmatic content, which the armed forces were unable to do since they had no "project" other than to put an end to the preceding political developments.

In a second phase (1976/77-1981/82), the military regime was to lay out its plan of social transformation without abandoning the repressive dimension. This consisted of an attempt to restructure capitalism, although the leadership was not to be provided by the capitalist class as such, owing to its traditional hegemonic weakness. This time, the project of capitalist transformation came from the previously mentioned technocratic sector which relied upon all the coercive resources of the state. It was a model of "outward" development characterized by unrestricted opening of the economy, a reduction in the role of the state, a replacement of the latter by the private sector of the economy, and the expansion of market mechanisms (see Moulian and Vergara, 1980). The apparent initial "success" of this economic model measured by its own parameters was due to the flow of foreign capital devoted to speculation and luxury consumption, with no contribution to productive investment. At the level of societal

organization, this project sought to end the redistributive role of the state, to extend the logic of the market to all spheres of civil society, and to atomize social demand. This was the "modernizations" phase, according to official terminology, and it was expressed in reforms of territorial organization, health and public welfare, education and professional and interest associations.

The culmination of this phase was the political institutionalization expressed in the new Constitution imposed during the plebiscite of 1980. Here, two political "models" are consecrated: the first involves the extension of the military regime for nine years and the possibility of prolonging it for another eight years. The military regime, having established the position of authority defined for it in the coup of 1973, would then insure that a second political model came into play. This second final phase as established by the Constitution of 1980, would conform to the special characteristics of an authoritarian but not necessarily military regime: a political arena with restricted representation, exclusion of certain social and political groups, and power of guardianship or veto of the armed forces, among others.

Beginning in 1981/82, the military regime entered a third phase that can be described as one of recurrent crises initiated by a total failure of the economic model (see Vega, 1984). As a result, the socio-political plan and the effort to create a new social order to replace the previous societal "back bone" was left without an economic base. The prominent features of this period have been the disintegration of the ruling group in the government, the isolation of Pinochet, the splintering of support from civil society, the adoption of erratic and contradictory emergency policies under the prevailing model, a

renewed wave of repression, and reactivation of the opposition. Having failed in its project of restructuring capitalism and creating a new articulation between the state and civil society, the rationale of the regime became one of mere survival in terms of the time periods and mechanisms imposed by the Constitution. In this effort, the regime can rely upon the institutional cohesion of the armed forces, the internal legitimacy provided by the Constitutional framework, the ambiguity of a political right still reorganizing itself regarding its loyalty to democracy, and Pinochet's stubborn will to remain in power regardless of the means.

The economic crisis affected the middle sectors to such an extent that they distanced themselves from the regime. This provided an opportunity for the popular sectors and their political associations to express their discontent with the regime during the national protests that erupted in the middle of 1983. For the first time in many years the two social groups joined forces under the same political banner. This situation forced Pinochet to make the political choice of rebuilding his fragmented support bloc and of encapsulating or channeling the opposition. Both objectives, which gave rise to the so-called "political opening," failed at the end of 1984, resulting in the government's declaring a state of siege and canceling the "opening." From the point of view of the military regime a combination of such "openings" and "closings" is probable in the future, depending on its assessment of its survival needs in the context of the 1980 Constitution.

2. In the first phase of the regime (1973 to 1976/77), opposition consisted almost solely of the sector overthrown in the coup, viz., the left. Most of the repression was directed against the left, whose

principal goal as opposition was mainly to protect the lives of its members and to maintain its organizational apparatus.⁷ During this phase a space was established within the Church filling the existing political vacuum. Here, the defense of the persecuted was organized. Increasingly, it was within this space that socio-political organization was rebuilt; at the same time, the Church became until 1983 the principal actor opposing the power of the military state.⁸

By the second phase, the Christian Democrats had already aligned themselves with the opposition. The predominant themes were unity of opposition and social opposition to the sectorial changes of the regime, especially in the labor and union areas. In the plebiscite of 1980, an opposition bloc was active although there were disagreements regarding which tactics should be employed. Beginning in 1980 until mid-1983, a process of organic reconstitution of the political parties and of a precarious rearticulation between them and social and professional organizations developed.

In this period, also, the theme emerges of the end of the military regime, or more specifically of its overthrow, with the Communist Party leaning towards a more insurrectional (violent) line. The National Protests, which were initially headed by the labor organizations (although to some extent with the participation of political leaders), forced the government into an erratic and reversible "opening," as we have indicated, and led to the eruption of political opposition in the public spaces with the formation of large protest groups. This organic and partisan activity produced the first dissociation from the "social world" of the protests that had been concentrated among the youth in the marginal urban classes. On the other hand, the

perception of an imminent fall of the regime relieved the opposition of the task of formulating a precise consensual formula for a transition to democracy. This was replaced by implicit schemes (social mobilization that would impel the armed forces to depose Pinochet and to negotiate with the civilians, or social mobilization that would provoke a collapse of the military regime and its replacement by a provisional opposition government), or by formulas that took for granted the departure of Pinochet, or by a kind of mythologizing of "social mobilization"--attributing to it the role of panacea for all problems and assigning to it the power to overthrow the regime, which it could not possibly have. Instead, what occurred is that as the mobilization called for a maximalist goal (end of the dictatorship) for which it did not have the capabilities, and lacking intermediate political objectives related to that goal, it weakened itself becoming reduced to its militant base. The broad social spectrum of the opposition did not succeed in becoming an equivalent political force.

3. From the perspective of the articulation between the state and civil society, the regime project to create a new "back bone" failed. However, this does not mean important transformations did not occur. The first of these was the disappearance of channels for processing societal demands as the relationship between the political party structure and the state was broken. The second was the partial disruption and precarious reconstruction of the relationship between this party-based political structure and the "social base." As for the state, its role as agent for development and redistribution was significantly reduced and its power to coerce and repress was greatly increased (see Vergara, 1983).

Regarding the "social base," two significant changes took place. First, there was a reduction and atomization of the structural bases of many social actors (industry, state apparatus, agrarian structure, educational system, etc.). The significant increase in the number of "independent" workers (see Martinez & Tironi, 1983) reinforced the atomized quality of society. The result of this was the weakening of the role of previous social actors with no new ones to take their place. Second, this organic weakening of the social structure was reinforced by military repression against political parties, organizations, and their leaders, thus creating tremendous problems in the relationship between the political party structure and the social base, all of which aggravated the crisis of representation.

With respect to the party system, it was neither eliminated nor replaced by a new one, as was intended. The old system continued with a few changes in composition. The political right, which had dissolved itself in 1973 to identify with the military regime, remained greatly fragmented until 1983. In that year two tendencies appeared on the right. One was closely identified with the program of the new regime and considered itself the natural heir to it. The other, although somewhat ambiguously, avoided identification with the regime and leaned toward a democratic orientation. Thus, the organizational future of the political right remains an open question. The Christian Democratic Party remains in the political center, more amenable now to forming alliances with the left, although with the exception of the Communist Party. There is also in the political center a group with social democratic leanings who have yet to crystallize organizationally. On the left, two major tendencies are in a process of consolidation.

One is socialist, renewed but still fragmented; the other is classically orthodox, represented principally by the Communist Party. The consolidation of a party spectrum with four points (the democratic right, Christian Democrat center and social democrats with leftist inclinations, unified socialist left and Communist Party) might be a fundamental element in the establishment of a future democracy, a theme to which we shall return at the end of our analysis.

Although it is not possible to draw definite conclusions, the structural transformations that have taken place as well as the adjustments of the political leadership to the new realities of the social organizations suggest that a new model of interaction between political and social entities may be emerging. These relationships do not merely replace those of 1973; rather, they reveal a tendency toward greater mutual autonomy. The evidence, however, is insufficient and different for each social sector.

4. The crisis of the military regime and its failures in all areas reopens the question of an alternative to it and the means by which this alternative can be reached. It seems obvious that this change cannot come about only with regard to the nature of the political regime, since the crisis brought about by the dictatorship comprises all the spheres of society and society as a whole. Thus, the establishment of political democracy by itself will be insufficient as a means to reconstruct the nation. The existing disruptions and inequalities demand structural transformations and global democratization, processes that were interrupted and set back by the dictatorship. Despite these conditions, there are others that make a scenario of military overthrow or breakdown or of military

fragmentation highly improbable. These include the hierarchical structure and the cohesion of the armed forces, their intense solidarity due to shared responsibility in repression, for which they have invested enormously to transform it into a modern instrument, and the existence of a large and diversified middle class. Thus it is not possible to associate the end of the dictatorship with the triumph of a revolution capable of producing a "great social change." That change will have to be the task of majorities emerging within the context of a future democratic system.

Democratic restoration appears as the goal that attracts greatest support and urgency. On the other hand, in the absence of defeat or collapse, the end of the dictatorship will require a deliberate decision of the armed forces to abandon the government. The general problem of democratic transition for the opposition is how it can provoke the armed forces into making such a decision. To accomplish this, the opposition must transform its capacity to mobilize the citizenry into a solid political force. From this perspective, the conditions and problems of a period of transition, as well as of its social actors, are different from those of a process of democratic consolidation.

These general points can be applied to the Chilean case, where the problem of transition is even more complex because the armed forces have already decided upon the deadlines and mechanisms to be employed (for more details, see Garretón, 1985). These are the only unifying element of the bloc in power, while there is no internal alternative program to that of the Constitution imposed in 1980. And, this "transition" prescribed by the Constitution to which the military dictatorship refers is not to a democratic regime but to an authoritarian

regime, as we have mentioned before. Therefore, in Chile the problem of a transition to democracy is not only of forcing the armed forces to withdraw from power but the more difficult one of forcing them to change a decision they have already made. In this profound crisis of legitimacy, there are no mediating institutions nor arenas for conflict resolution. Thus in the confrontation between the dictatorship and the opposition, the former is favored given the power resources it controls. The principal aim of the opposition currently is to create an arena or space in which the conflict of legitimacy can be resolved in its favor. In other words, the transition to democracy in Chile is determined by the institutional framework imposed by the Constitution dictated by the military regime and submitted to a vote that deceptively claimed to recognize the principle of popular sovereignty. To progress in a transition, the opposition must put its mobilizational capacity behind an agreed-upon transitional formula capable of avoiding an institutional vacuum and which can obtain support from the broadest social and political spectrum possible. The fact that this has not yet occurred is partially a result of the diversity of concepts about the transition process held by the opposition forces.

V. Summary and Conclusion: Prospects for democracy.

We can now undertake a review and schematic reformulation of the preceding ideas.

Our point of departure was that the prospects for democracy in Chile should be analyzed in connection with the conditions and circumstances that made democracy historically possible, the causes of its collapse, the transformations that have taken place under the

military regime, and the scenario of its transition. We can summarize and extend our arguments as follows:

1. With respect to the conditions and traits of Chilean democracy until 1973, we could say that it was based on the compatibility between capitalist industrialization with strong participation of the state and the incomplete process of "substantive democratization," and on the creation of a "back bone" of a particular mode of constituting social forces characterized by the articulation between the political party system and social organizations. This led to the establishment of a large political class that was capable of representing, coordinating and reflecting the hegemony of the middle sectors of society, as well as the subordinated but autonomous presence of the popular sectors, and the defensive action of the capitalist bloc. This political class was also able to maintain the military under control by "cloistering" it.

2. With respect to the crisis of Chilean democracy,⁹ key components are the increasing incapacity of the socio-economic system to sustain a process of "substantive democratization" and the inability of the political class to reach an agreement that would provide a political basis for the transformations necessary for such democratization. This is manifested in the fragmentation and hostility of the sectors that together had been building democracy since the 1930s and had brought about progressive social changes: the middle sectors and popular classes, and, at the political level, the center and the left. This antagonistic situation permitted the emergence of the armed forces as an autonomous force and the creation of the conditions that allowed them, with the support of the capitalist bloc which feared a terminal

crisis, to end political democracy and reverse the process of global democratization.

3. The military regime attempted to undo the preceding political order in order to construct an authoritarian social and political organization by means of a long period of military rule and economic transformation. The fact that elements of the preceding political system remained--particularly the political parties--and the emergence of the Church as a substitute for the lost political space made it difficult for the regime to realize its utopian designs. These then completely disintegrated with the collapse of its economic model in 1981-82. This failure left the personalized military regime with no program other than to fight for its own survival within the framework imposed by the Constitution of 1980, to which all its short-term actions are linked. These factors notwithstanding, there has been a certain disarticulation in the relations between the state and civil society and a weakening of the historic social actors. The crucial problem is the relationship between the "political world" of representation and coordination and the "social world" of protest and mobilization.

4. The problems associated with the transition to political democracy in Chile do not conform to the classical model (defeat of the military, provisional government, new socio-political order), that is, the revolutionary model in which the end of a military regime and the creation of a new society coincide. A military collapse seems unlikely. Thus, the problem is how to provoke a military decision that would alter its previous decisions. These decisions consist of the deadlines and procedures incorporated into the Constitution of 1980, which guarantees the continuation of the military regime until

1989 and an authoritarian conservative one after that date. This being the problem, the task of the opposition is to struggle for an arena or political space that will permit a resolution of the conflict of legitimacy that afflicts the country and will extend the crisis into the institution of the armed forces. From an operational viewpoint, this will require linking a consensual formula for transition with social mobilization, elements that until now have not been combined, leaving the opposition without a strategy.

5. Whichever scenario for the transition to political democracy is eventually enacted--in all probability it will not differ from other such contemporary processes, especially those of the Southern Cone--the prospect for attaining democratic stability will depend on the ability to overcome some extremely difficult initial conditions. On one hand a deep economic crisis will be inherited that will require democratic consolidation to coincide with economic reconstruction, a problem which allows little room to maneuver in a context in which all conventional models for development seem to be unsuitable. On the other hand, a generalized support for democracy could be precarious inasmuch as this support from middle sector groups is primarily the result of the failure of the earlier regime's economic policy, and from the urban masses stems from cautious acceptance, for they remain suspicious of institutional procedures for negotiating and reaching consent. In the third place, we have the armed forces--undefeated, uncommitted to democratic values, isolated from the rest of civil society but with enormous power to pressure the state. Finally, unlike the decade of the 1930s, numerous challenges must be confronted with the masses already having won their right of incorporation into the country's political

life and with the simultaneous presence of old, unresolved problems and of new ones generated by the effects of modernization and social differentiation.

6. Beyond the initial conditions leading to a future political democracy described in this analysis, the prospects for a democratic consolidation in Chile depend on the resolution of four basic problems:

In the first place, the formulation of a developmental model that could play a role similar to the one played by the process of industrialization and state participation which served as a basis for the constitution of social actors, thus facilitating a global democratization.

In the second place, the reconstruction of a "back bone" that will permit the redefinition of the relationship between political parties and social movements. Its fundamental principles should be autonomy and mutual tension on one hand and democratic control on the other. This will require a renovation of the political class to replace the prior model of subordination of the social movements to the parties.

In the third place, the subordination of the armed forces to political power, which presupposes a greater penetration of the military by society, thus altering the "cloistered military" model followed until 1973.

In the fourth place, once a transition that requires other types of political agreements or pacts is completed, the outcome should be the creation of a political framework with a democratic right, a center favorable to social change and therefore progressive, and two political lefts: a renovated socialism and a classical communist type. Within this arrangement, the stability of democracy will rest on the creation

of a socio-political majority similar to that of the Popular Fronts of the 1930s but with a composition and a content compatible with the new historical conditions. This socio-political majority can only be obtained on the basis of a new relationship among the sectors that historically made possible the survival of political democracy and to a lesser extent a democratization of society and whose earlier break initiated the collapse of the democratic regime: the popular classes and the middle sectors. On the political level we are referring to the center and the left, with various possible coalitions. The reluctance of the Christian Democrats to understand the necessary presence of the Communist Party as a member of this bloc, the fragmentation of the socialist left, and the ambiguity of the Communist Party regarding the revolutionary or reformist character of the transition are factors that currently conspire against the creation of that sociopolitical majority. But it seems clear that without such a majority linking political democracy and social change, any future democracy will be defeated by conservative forces, as occurred in 1973.

NOTES

¹The author thanks the collaboration of Paulo Hidalgo, Research Assistant at FLACSO. The Spanish version circulated as a Working Paper of the Centro Estudios del Desarrollo (CED). This paper has been translated by Doris da Rosa and edited by Jonathan Hartlyn. For the U.S. reader, the editor has added a few suggested references in English--these are appropriately identified below.

²An analysis of these authoritarian regimes and of their relationship to the problem of hegemony appears in the second part of Garretón (1983) and in Chapter One of Garretón (1984). A relatively complete discussion can be found in Collier (1979). A more extended analysis of some of the topics discussed in this article can be found in my two books listed above.

³On political developments of this period, see, among others, Pinto (1971) and Moulian (1982). For a complementary bibliography on particular issues discussed here see Garretón (1983: 37, 38).

⁴On the period 1964-70, in addition to sources already mentioned, see Molina (1972) and de Riz (1979).

⁵Ed. note: For some additional sources in English on the Christian Democratic party, see Fleet (1985); on economic policy, see Stallings (1978); on the agrarian structure and land reform, see Kaufman (1973) and Loveman (1976); and on the copper industry, see Moran (1974).

⁶For the period of the UP (Popular Unity) see Garretón and Moulian (1983); Bitar (1979); and Valenzuela (1978). Ed. note: Additional sources in English from varying perspectives include Gil, Lagos & Lansberger (1979); Roxborough, O'Brien & Raddick (1977); and Sigmund (1977).

⁷On the evolution of repression and the defense against it, see Fruhling (1981).

⁸Ed. note: For a general view of the Catholic Church in Chile, see Smith (1982).

⁹A synthesis of the current controversy over the causes of the crisis of the democratic system can be found in Tironi (1984).

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