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THE UNITED STATES, LATIN AMERICA, DEMOCRACY:

Variations on a Very Old Theme

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THE UNITED STATES, LATIN AMERICA: DEMOCRACY. VARIATIONS OF AN OLD THEME

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Introduccion

This essay revolves around a simple argument: despite the world economic crisis and its particularly severe repercussions in Latin America, and despite the Reagan administration's regrettable way of viewing Latin America, other trends have recently emerged in the region which encourage the creation and--perhaps eventually--the consolidation of democratic regimes. This possibility, and the opportunities which are appearing for conscious pro-democratic actions, is mainly the outcome of a costly learning process which Latin American countries experienced either first-hand or in neighboring states during the last two decades of particularly repressive and socially regressive authoritarian regimes. A wide range of political, social, and cultural forces in Latin America has criticized this authoritarianism and its innumerable societal repercussions. This critique has created nothing less than the renewed valuation of constitutional democracy per se, as an important goal in and of itself.[1]

These factors may become decisive. But they are subtle and must be recognized as such. It is impossible to determine a priori how much they "weigh" in the balance against economic crisis and numerous other authoritarian threats. For this reason--with the partial exceptions of Central America and the Caribbean--domestic political and social forces hold principal responsibility for success or failure in achieving democratic goals. However, both the United States government (or more precisely, the various government agencies which shape United States' policy toward Latin America) and the United States' private sector can make important contributions--through positive actions, and by ending other policies and practices--to this process. It is not merely a question of the United States "exporting" democracy to Latin America. One need not believe that past or future United States' policies toward the region are motivated primarily by a concern with promoting democratic values, or that democratic political arrangements in Latin America should be patterned on United States' organizations and procedures. Rather the United States must recognize that it has a medium- and long-term interest in the creation of politically open and socially progressive institutions throughout the hemisphere.

The current situation in most Central American countries and in the Caribbean must be carefully differentiated from that in South America. Nonetheless, both areas appear to be moving along an arduous path toward (probably varied) democratic forms of political organization --although this movement occurs in very different ways in these distinct contexts. One important prerequisite for successful democratic transitions is ending a United States' tradition of jealous paternalism toward Latin America, as well as the reactions which this attitude usually unleashes. Finally, this essay suggests some practical criteria (including the creation of a new institution which would embody and monitor the effective use of certain democratic values) for promoting democratic regimes throughout the hemisphere.

On a Logic which is Perverse for Almost Everyone

The question of democracy in United States-Latin American relations oscillates between melancholy pessimism and the simplistic expression of utopian hopes. This essay seeks to avoid both these extremes. No formulas or condemnations are offered here, although I have not attempted to disguise my own values and hopes.

Almost no one in Latin America today holds the illusions possible twenty years ago: there are no entirely autonomous rational paths to development, and dependence on the Soviet Union on balance proves to be strongly negative. With the exception (not so certain in many cases) of communist parties (which are in any event weak outside Cuba), there is no movement or party in Latin America--even among revolutionaries--that would <u>not</u> prefer an autonomous relationship vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. This situation must be taken seriously. Yet in the United States, numerous decisions continue to be made with the espoused purpose of preventing what a decisive majority of political forces in Latin American countries do not want. The fact that the Soviet Union wishes to increase its influence in the region, and that Latin American governments generally view the establishment of <u>friendly</u> relations with the Soviet Union as a positive step, are both normal and inevitable in contemporary international relations.

The paranoia of some groups in the United States, the often explicit and always implicit United States' inclination to believe that Latin America is riddled with powerful outside "infiltrators" (there are some, but not only from the Soviet Union), and the belief that the region is governed by leaders so foolish as to wish to make their countries satellites of the Soviet Union, are all factors which work well to bring about precisely that situation which the United States wants to avoid. This is so obvious that one blushes to repeat it: given the asymmetry of power between the United States and Latin America, and given the eagerness of each government, party, or movement in Latin America to maintain its power and influence, the more aggressive United States' policy toward the region is, the closer they will be forced toward the Soviet Union. The stronger this political dynamic and the more indispensable Soviet support

is, the higher the price the Soviet Union will demand. In what quickly becomes a perverse logic, this makes major concessions to the Soviet Union more likely; such concessions, in turn, further aggravate the United States. This process is almost always violently aborted by combined action by the United States and the most reactionary local classes, which the United States cannot fail to aid. Similar cycles have occurred again and again. Nothing appears to have been learned from them.

Old rancors and mistrusts thus feed on each other. Such developments "prove" to the United States what its own paranoia initially invented, and Latin American governments are reconfirmed in their belief that there can be no space for coexistence and cooperation with the United States. The "victory" of local sectors and classes under these circumstanoes often unleashes the most repressive and socially destructive aspects of their domination. Thus the fact that the United States appears to be (and frequently is) the ally of governments which are detested by their own citizens is not due principally to a Latin American government's error. But what is more significant is how the United States interprets what will occur time and again: the emergence in Latin America of parties and movements with significant popular support which postulate major changes in an unsustainable status quo.

The United States' claim to hegemony over all of Latin America, made during its years of triumphal post-World War II expansionism, reflects a similarly perverse logic. The hegemonic claim included a paternalistic wish to monopolize or jealously control any relationship between the United States' wards and third countries. Even if such a hegemonic claim and its accompanying paternalism at one time has some basis in the United States' overwhelming power vis-a-vis both Latin America and the rest of the world, such a relationship is no longer realistic.

The inflexibly authoritarian Soviet regime has succeeded in keeping its geo-political periphery under harsh military control. But all evidence suggests that this has involved immense costs. The United States may be sufficiently strong to extend its domination by military means. However, the aggressive assertion of its hegemonic claims abroad must inevitably lead to severe authoritarian measures at home (which is improbable), or to what has been repeated practice: alliance with and military support for Latin American groups, parties, and governments which are--rhetorical claims notwithstanding--the antithesis of democracy and social progress.

The more irrational an authoritarian regime is as a system of government, the more likely it is to be closed and repressive.[2] Because the population is terror-stricken, rulers hear only the echo of their own voice, which they confuse with the popular debate they have suppressed. Somoza's blindness to accumulated political and social pressures, and the gangster-style madness of Galtieri and his fellows are merely extreme examples of the constitutional incapacities of such regimes. Despite their (brutal and temporary) ability to

impose "order" and their (eventual) "efficiency" in managing certain economic problems in the short-run, these regimes are unable to resolve two major political challenges. First, in the long-run they are unable to achieve legitimation or some active consensus regarding the government in power and its policies.[3] Second, and closely linked to the issue of legitimacy, these regimes are usually unable to resolve the problem of succession. They have enormous difficulties in addressing crisis situations facing either the country or the regime itself, problems which are aggravated by the "feudalization" of the state bureaucracy provoked by rivalries among the different military services and/or the cliques which generally compose such regimes. Thus quite apart from the idiosyncracies of countries and rulers, these regimes usually end abruptly and convulsively, leaving behind them a legacy of suffering and ill-will."*

At times it seems that different United States' government agencies would prefer that their support for authoritarian regimes be unpublicized. However, these regimes usually seek to publicize such support as widely as possible, often adding embarassing (for their protectors) declarations of support for "the Western Cause". This, too, is part of the logic of power described here: the more repressive and socially exclusionary a regime is, the more its survival depends on its ability to exhibit internationally (often in exaggerated form) its "excellent relations" with, and "fraternal support" from, the United States. Thus it is not surprising that domestic opponents who resist repressive governments associate them closely with the United States.

The logic of these different relationships has over time reduced the range of action open to either the United States or Latin America. It has also initiated another act in this drama without grandeur: either the vain search for "decent" elements within an authoritarian regime as a basis from which to create the democratic center that had earlier been erased, or (worse still) increased emphasis on military assistance to these regimes. The latter response may yield the desired results in the short- and medium-term, but it closes off one channel in order to increase the pressure in others. People in the United States may not sufficiently appreciate how viscerally the vast majority of the politically-informed population in Latin America reacts to invasions and sabotage led by "patriots" who are sustained by the Central Intelligence Agency, United States' "advisers" to armies which assassinate their own citizens, and less obvious but no less sinister United States' interventions such as that revealed in Chile...

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* The exception to this statement is present-day Brazil. However, the economic progress achieved by the Brazilian regime has not been--and will not be--repeated in other cases. In addition, the Brazilian regime wisely did not suppress the basic institutions of representative democracy. For some years the regime was extremely repressive, but it never engaged in the systematic barbarity of its homologues in the Southern Cone, Bolivia, and Central America.

What should we do? How and what must we learn in order to avoid repeating processes which, in addition to producing great tragedies, clearly do not favor anyone's long-term interest? Any discussion of these questions involves complex sets of actors in each Latin American country, in the United States, and perhaps elsewhere. But some tentative answers to these questions might be formulated by taking into account both political actors, intentions and the very real new opportunities found in the scars of the last several decades.

On Actors, Both New and Old

As already noted, few on the political left in Latin America (not to mention other sectors) favor dependence on the Soviet Union--much less military dependence. But almost all sectors, not only on the left, want normal, friendly relations with the Soviet Union. This is true despite the cold war crusades which have again proliferated in both North and South America in recent years. This point is worth emphasizing because it is linked to a subject which deserves close consideration.

Almost all South American countries have achieved a degree of social complexity (including the emergence of businessmen, workers, and middle classes linked to modern industries and services, and armed forces which have a clear control over the domestic means of violence) which makes the success of an insurrectional-revolutionary movement highly unlikely. Especially after the failure of this strategy little more than a decade ago, this lesson is clear to practically all political sectors.[4]

Furthermore, the Soviet model has been discredited, and there is more generally an ideological crisis of Marxism-Leninism among various groups previously identified with these positions. These conclusions reflect the character of discussions now prevailing within the Latin American left, although a more detailed discussion of these trends is beyond the scope of this essay. This perspective results in part from the increasingly obvious obstacles to the functioning of Soviet society and its oppressive authoritarianism, as well as the strict dependency which the Soviet Union imposes on its satellites. Soviet political pressures and military intervention in client states have done much to produce this loss of prestige.* For

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* Large numbers of Latin Americans--not only those on the left--admire Cuba's resistance to United States' harassment, as well as the great progress toward social equality it has achieved under highly adverse conditions. Although the Reagan administration's aggressive policies toward Cuba and Nicaragua arouse feelings of solidarity throughout the region, such support does not lead Latin Americans to ignore those considerations which discourage them from imitating Cuba. These especially include Cuba's severe dependence on the Soviet Union and the costs which this dependence imposes, in terms of both accentuated authoritarian tendencies at home and Cuba's international policies.

those who admire China as a more authentic model which more closely parallels Latin American realities, evidence of the phenomenal costs incurred during the stages of most rapid and most admired change has produced a similar effect. Finally, the criticism which emerged in Europe of the Leninist organizational model of revolutionary parties, the seizure of power through insurrection, and the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised by the revolutionary party had a major influence in Latin America precisely because of the failure in the region of armed and/or insurrectional strategies which had espoused similar ideas and goals.

These considerations, combined with the presence of a long-standing democratic tradition in Latin America (this tradition does exist, despite some attempts to describe the region's political experience in terms of such undifferentiated categories as "the Iberic tradition" and "corporatism"),[5] generate a new situation pregnant with potential. Much of the political left, and some groups on the right disillusioned with different authoritarian adventures, attach new importance to democracy. Democracy in the strict sense of the word--linked to the liberal-constitutional model, with its guarantees of individual rights and the right of association, competitive elections which periodically determine who shall occupy top government positions, and the right of those elected to take office and exercise their functions--is no longer disdained as being purely "formal". What some people already appreciated, others learned during the extremely harsh experiences which a number of Latin American countries have endured in the last several decades, in which authoritarian regimes denied the validity of any such rights. Given widespread skepticism regarding Leninism and the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transition period to "true" democracy, many in Latin America have learned that constitutional democracy is a goal which is worthwhile achieving and defending per se without prejudicing current or future aspirations for social change. In the region today, constitutional democracy is a fundamental goal for what are by far the most important political forces, across the entire ideological spectrum.

For both the left and for other progressive, democratic currents, the recent past has produced terrible defeats in a number of Latin American countries. A major consequence of those defeats is extensive self-criticism. Those groups which in their time denied the importance of constitutional democracy, or saw it merely as an instrumental goal, have frequently come to reconsider this position at the same time that they have criticized the Leninist model and/or insurrectional strategies. This attitude is clearly reflected in the explicit positions taken on these questions by different leftist and populist parties, and in the profusion of discussions, publications, and declarations initiated in this same spirit. This effort is often associated with attempts to identify democratic-electoral means of winning political power on the basis of mixed private-public forms of property relations, with considerable attention to the disadvantages of state ownership. Advances toward such hybrid economic patterns, if achieved in opposition to groups (democratic or not) which are opposed to significant change in this area, would at least modify--

though not eliminate -- the opportunities currently open to other states' actions in Latin America. However, this prospect appears unlikely in the short- or medium-term future.[6]

Of course, this does not mean that authoritarian tendencies have disappeared in Latin America. It is unrealistic and profoundly ahistorical to assume that social conditions and political forces in a country which is in the process of political transition and/or democratization uniformly favor democratic political arrangements. The development of democratic institutions is invariably the result of a long process of learning and adaptation; no country is "democratic" from the outset. In the United States, it took nothing less than a civil war to suppress partially an institution--slavery--that was hardly compatible with political democracy. Although some (not all) Latin American constitutions contain undemocratic provisions, the struggles for democracy now taking place throughout the region often have as one of their most important goals the elimination or modification of such clauses. One cannot assume that conditions present at any given time will forever remain unchanged. The choice is either to accept despotism, or to mobilize progressive forces and explore opportunities to more positive outcomes.

It is particularly regrettable that, while changes such as these are taking place in Latin America, the United States' government tends to fall back into an aggressive anti-communist ideology when confronted with potential or real conflicts and tensions. This set of beliefs causes the United States' government to suspect nearly everyone, and (because of the inexorable logic discussed above) it leads the United States to seek alliances wiih anti-democratic elements in other countries.

In this context it is useful to comment on a policy which, despite its ambiguities and the Unites States' declining inclination to implement it while still in force, has been evaluated unjustly: the Carter administration's human rights policy. This policy irritated (as it was intended to) those regimes which consistently and repeatedly violated basic human rights on a scale not previously known in Latin America, which in some cases reached levels similar to major atrocities committed in other parts of the world.[7] Critics of this policy argued that it only managed to alienate loyal and tested friends of the United States.

But criticisms such as this ignore at least two important considerations. First, the great difficulty with assessing the Carter human rights policy is that its main impact was negative. It is well known in the social sciences that it is practically impossible to measure non-events. In other words, anyone who lived in Latin America during those years can testify that there was much which the United States' activist human rights stance <u>prevented</u> from occurring. The atrocities committed would doubtless have been more severe and greater in number but for the partial disuasion implied in informing repressive governments that they would suffer international condemnation for such actions.

Second, if there is today in Latin America a stock of good will toward the United States, and if there is a belief that the United States may pursue policies which are not necessarily hostile to the elementary interests of Latin American countries, these feelings are principally due to the Carter human rights policy. The policy addressed itself not only to governments, but also to societies. Critics of this policy, in emphasizing the extent to which it irritated offending governments, forget what their own distinction between "totalitarian" and "authoritarian" regimes implies: the precariousness of supposed "friends" in those regimes in opposition to numerous and important popular sectors. Of course, these sectors include the principal democratic forces in the region. To confuse criticism of repressive governments and authoritarian regimes' human rights violations with the lasting alienation of Latin American nations is to misinterpret the dynamics of political change in the region and greatly underestimate the liveliness of Latin America's aspirations toward democracy and social justice. What, then, is more realistic--the Carter administration's "utopian" human rights policy, or the "realism" of the Reagan administration?

Re-initiating and broadening the democratizing content of United States' human rights policy would now encounter a favorable conjuncture: the vigor with which democratic parties and movements are emerging across the ideological spectrum in a number of Latin American countries, including those which must do so under still harsh authoritarian conditions. The opportunities which can be developed by using a minimum of imagination and by forsaking mutual prejudices arise from the learning process by which many people in Latin America have experienced the real meaning of constitutional democracy. These opportunities should not be wasted. In order to take full advantage of them, the United States must appreciate (in a somewhat less parochial fashion) the profound long-term repercussions of policies which directly and openly support efforts made in Latin America, by Latin Americans, to re-establish constitutional democracy and safeguard elementary human rights. Despite the difficult economic situation that the region faces, a firm commitment in favor of democracy across the political spectrum in Latin America, and supportive policies by the United States, would together create a convergence of forces which has not previously existed. That such an effort is worthwhile was amply demonstrated by the negative experiences shared by Latin Americans under the brutal regimes which dominated the region in recent years.

Distinguishing Between Different Cases and Different Regions

These comments have focused principally on recent developments in South America. The situation in Central America and the Caribbean merits separate attention. Almost all of these countries lack the structural conditions favorable to constitutional democracy which are present in contemporary South America. In addition, they have a history of particularly traumatic relations with the United States. It is no accident that this long, bitter history revealed the limita-

tions of the Carter administration's policy toward Latin America, or that it now leads the Reagan administration to return to traditional interventionism.

In Central America and the Caribbean there will continue to be popular insurrections against armed forces which are not professionalized and whose relationship with the population is frequently one of pillage, not just the corruption which characterizes a good many of their colleagues in the Southern Cone. Although popular insurrection is encouraged by the nature of these countries' armed forces, the permanent denial of any realistic electoral alternative makes it practically inevitable. Moreover, these insurrections occur in a context of extreme social polarization in which the national oligarchy sustains its position through direct repression of the labor force. Opponents find that this dominant class and its allies can only be displaced through revolution. This is often facilitated by the history of these countries' relations with the United States. For Central American and Caribbean countries, the search for national identity involves the definition of their relationship vis-a-vis the United States. Given the heavy hand of the United States in shaping the history of these countries, this requires more than good will.

Nonetheless, there may still be room in these countries for an enlightened policy which acknowledges differences in interests and is alert to the nuances and flexibilities of an evolving situation. No unavoidable and unvarying historical "necessity" drives these popular revolutionary movements to become satellites, nor forces the United States to ally itself with the most reactionary and repressive elements in these societies.

What room for choice remains? Although some have argued to the contrary, it is highly unlikely that the United States would tolerate any Central American or Caribbean state becoming a base for Soviet offensive weapons directed against its territory. But except for aggressive United States' actions which make external support from any quarter necessary, there are no political forces of any significance in the region which are unwilling to recognize the United States' non-negotiable strategic interests in this regard. For their part, political movements and governments in Central America and the Caribbean ask only that the United States does not threaten their own fundamental interests, especially the possibility of effecting a radical transformation of <u>their</u> armed forces and local oligarchy.

But when the perverse logic outlined at the beginning of this essay takes effect, mutually agreeable compromises are no longer possible. The only outcomes are tragedy, defeat, and the eventual retreat of a temporarily demoralized hegemonic power. Avoiding this situation depends on the actors' capacity to distinguish between long-term issues which are negotiable in the medium-term, and those on which neither party can compromise. On the one hand, the United States must distinguish between its strategic/territorial interests, and its support for particularly murderous and predatory militaries and local ruling classes which have no basis of support other than

that offered by the United States and its own armed forces. On the other hand, the leaders of popular insurrection movements must not conclude that their countries are necessarily and permanently locked in conflict with the United States.

This problem is especially complicated in practice because the most powerful actor must be the first to demonstrate that such distinctions can in fact be made. This reflects the dynamics of power: the party with the greatest potential control in a conflict situation must be the first to offer a clear indication of its willingness to negotiate. Otherwise, the opposing party's only options are to either cede completely, or to continue to offer as serious a threat as possible. If such distinctions between different parties' conflicting interests can be made in Central America and the Caribbean, it is possible that these countries could establish forms of government which more or less approximate constitutional democracy, although they would necessarily reflect their revolutionary origins.

New Paths Toward Different Types of Democracy

The previous section alerted us to a question which must be considered in any discussion of democracy in Latin America: the variety of forms of democratic regime and government which are possible, given differences in historical tradition, social structures, and conjunctural factors throughout the region. In contrast to Central America (for the reasons already noted), it seems highly improbable that those South American countries now emerging from prolonged periods of authoritarian rule will follow an insurrectional-revolutionary course. In a number of these countries, authoritarian options have been deeply discredited. Many of those who originally supported these approaches have carefully distanced themselves from such regimes, and the armed forces are often politically weak and divided.

It may be possible, as a good many observers have already warned, that the present period of redemocratization is simply yet another phase in the cycle of authoritarianism and democracy which much of the continent has long experienced. There are indeed powerful factors which constrain this transition process. First, the present international economic crisis has had particularly severe repercussions in Latin America, especially in those regimes which shaped their economic policies according to the postulates of a dogmatic economic neo-conservatism. Second, current United States' foreign policy toward Latin America has hardly created a climate propitious to the development and consolidation of pro-democratic political forces in the region.[8] Finally, the armed forces' withdrawal from political power in different countries is undertaken (with the partial exception of Brazil) in conditions of undeniable failure, which leaves behind an enormous burden of rancor and unsatisfied demands. These defeats for military rule open up space for democratic transitions. However, these same armed forces and their civilian backers might also recover, take political advantage of the real or supposed errors made by newly-installed civilian governments, and once again prepare the conditions for their return to power.

All this is obvious, and these considerations may produce a sense of pessimism which could actually help realize these possibilities. However, past defeats do not mean that future effects are also doomed to fail. What is less obvious--because to a considerable extent it depends on a learning process which in some cases has not clearly emerged due to the repressive conditions still in force--is that an awareness of such cycles, a realistic appreciation of those factors conducive to authoritarian regressions --and above all-- the selfcriticism in which many political actors have engaged concerning their own contribution to previous defeats for democratic forces, all open up new possibilities for political action. The principal political, intellectual, and ethical challenge facing democratic forces in Latin America and the United States is how to realize these possibilities.*

The actors involved in the transition process are aware of the fragility of existing democracies and those which are yet to be established. They recognize that the redemocratization process must be carefully nourished, and that considerable time will be required for new democracies to set down roots. This transition process will be difficult, uncertain, subject to numerous advances and reverses, and opposed by powerful obstacles. Having rejected the revolutionary path, and being very conscious of the extremely serious economic difficulties which future governments must face, democratic leaders of the left and center (as well as some "democratized" elements which previously held positions in authoritarian regimes, but which now realize the costs of their support for corrupt, repressive governments) know that they have no alternatives other than negotiation and compromise if the authoritarian stage of the cycle is not to be repeated.

Here the specific situations prevailing in different South American countries preclude generalizations. Brazil stands at one extreme. The relative success of the authoritarian regime, the not-insignificant electoral support which the government enjoys as a result of that success, and a low overall level of political mobilization have laid the basis for a comparatively gradual and continuous process of political transition--even though the Brazilian transition, like all others, is vulnerable to setbacks. At the other extreme, democratic leaders in other South American countries face much more volatile situations. This is already apparent in Bolivia and Argentina and Chile--with certain differences resulting from a more structured party system--will present similar challenges. The abysmal failure of authoritarian regimes in these countries permits a rapid "leap"

" Here my position differs significantly from that taken by Howard Wiarda in his contribution to this volume. Identifying obstacles is the necessary basis for posing a problem. Acknowledging such difficulties is not the solution to the problem, nor is it reasonable grounds for failing to consider what may possibly be achieved in this regard in both North and South America.

to constitutional democracy. But the abrupt collapse of the authoritarian regime may leave both the armed forces and powerful social actors which previously supported them without means of political representation. These actors must be taken into account, even though it is difficult to incorporate them through normal channels in a constitutional system.

The problem, therefore, is not so much the intransigence of democratic political leaders--who have in fact demonstrated considerable flexibility in these transition processes. Rather, the dilemma is posed by the fact that different actors' political representation in a democratic regime is largely determined by their capacity to win votes. In countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile, after the collapse of regimes with which they were so closely associated, conservative political forces have few possibilities of building political parties with significant weight in the electoral arena. (In this regard, they differ from the recent experiences of Spain and Brazil.) Nonetheless, the presence of conservative forces should not be cause for despair regarding the possiblity of constructing democratic political arrangements in Latin America. On the contrary, it should be the focus of a conscious effort to develop mechanisms which incorporate these actors into new democratic institutions as loyal players. There are convincing reasons for believing that a significant role for conservative forces facilitates the implantation and --above all-- the consolidation of demooracy.[9] Compounding this challenge, the clearer the failure of the preceding authoritarian regime, the more urgent and numerous are the demands made by the working class and the middle class. This phenomenon has been especially important in Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Uruguay, and (although in a different way) Peru, where levels of working class organization and mobilization are significantly higher than in Brazil (as well as in the earlier cases of political transition by "democratic pact" in Colombia and Venezuela).

Thus there is a strong possibility that a civilian government may take office in the midst of a major crisis brought about largely by the preceding authoritarian regime, when inherited constraints on economic and social policies collide with an explosion of popular demands which the new government necessarily recognizes as both urgent and legitimate. This dilemma has already surfaced in Bolivia. It constitutes the problematic and highly uncertain situation which present and future constitutional governments will have to confront. The political parties which comprise these governments can hardly ignore their social bases among workers and middle-class groups. To do so would surely lead to yet another military take-over. But at the same time, at least in the short- and medium-term, these governments can only "disenchant" (a term coined in Spain to describe a phenomenon which will almost certainly be repeated in Latin America with equal intensity) some of their most active supporters. Unless there are major, unexpected changes in the international environment, this situation will necessarily result from the "objective needs" posed by the balance-of-payments situation, investment rates, and the need to avoid run-away inflation. It will also reflect these government's

realistic concern with preventing "disorder", which would threaten their own survival by tempting the armed forces and conservative actors to once again pursue an authoritarian alternative.

This is the hard reality which newly-established democratic regimes face. The possibility of unexpected setbacks are fewer in relatively consolidated political democracies such as Venezuela and Colombia and in Brazil's gradual transition. But the Mexican case shows that when any authoritarian regime is confronted with unexpected changes or a crisis situation--even though it may have achieved a relatively high degree of institutionalization, including a legacy of popular support factors which are not present in the other cases considered here)--decisions are usually taken sporadically and without popular participation. This tendency is inherent in authoritarian regimes regardless of their origin and social bases. It is especially clear in more inflexible and repressive authoritarian systems; witness, for example, the abrupt shifts in public policy in Pinochet's Chile and, at the extreme, the international adventurism of Argentina under Galtieri.

In comparison, the complex systems of consultation, the overlapping decision levels, and even the delays and indecision often typical of constitutional democracy (characteristics which are even more pronounced in democracies which can only be created on the basis of complex alliances among different social and political actors) have significant advantages which more than compensate for their lack of glamour. In contrast to what one might conclude unless one considers the reality of authoritarian regimes, these advantages are heightened rather than diminished by the conditions of acute crisis which Latin American countries now face.

Within this general context, the Latin American countries now emerging from periods of authoritarian rule are likely to experiment with such a varied range of public policies that it would be futile to try to predict them in any detail. But because of the nature of accumulated dissatifactions and the social bases of those parties which have every probability of coming to power in future elections, it is possible to identify the broad outlines of such policies. Among these are: selective nationalization and an expansion of state ownership, especially in sectors dominated by the national oligarchy which are considered to be particularly parasitic or politically hostile; administrative controls of foreign exchange; expanded representation for trade unions and other working-class organizations in the economic decisionmaking process; and tax reforms. With varying degrees of success, these policies will all attempt to redress the extreme inequalities in income distribution which these new governments will face.

Measures such as these are likely to be undertaken in a political context which, at least for some time, is characterized by a high degree of middle-class and working-class mobilization. These sectors will tend to articulate demands that exceed the limits which

new civilian rulers have imposed on themselves in order to preserve the fledgling democratic regime. Yet except in extreme cases, a democratic government will not want to suppress long-delayed societal demands which were frequently severely punished by its authoritarian predecessor. Thus it is not difficult to envision that these newly-established democracies will experienee some degree of disorder (as occurred in Spain and Portugal), which some people will contrast nostalgically with the sepulchral "order" previously imposed by authoritarian regimes.

This "disorder", together with governmental policies such as those described above, may re-awaken domestic fears and the tendency of different groups in the United States to conclude that "communism" is once again on the verge of devouring one Latin American country or another. That this situation is likely to occur, and that it will constitute an important factor in the transition process, must be carefully taken into account. The problem is identifying which actors will not fall into this old pattern, and determining the kinds of relationships they will establish among themselves based on a more intelligent interpretation of on-going events.

For this more positive reaction to be possible, observers must focus on the following elements: (1) None of the political leaders who are likely to come to power in new Latin American democracies seek to make their countries dependent upon the Soviet Union; (2) in contrast to the recent past, it is extremely unlikely that these political leaders will encourage military coup d'etats, even when they are in opposition; (3) some of the public policies initiated by new democratic governments may, of course, affect adversely the economic interests of United States' firms in certain sectors. But these measures may favor other United States' firms, especially given the fact that Latin American countries have learned that it is a mistake to treat foreign capital as if it were a monolith. Thus governments will tailor their actions to fit conditions prevailing in different sectors, rather than threatening across-the-board expropriations simply because certain firms are large and/or foreign-owned; and finally, (4) as occurred in southern Europe, the ambiguous relationship which Latin American popular or socialist parties maintained with political movements dedicated to violent social change has now been replaced by a clear rejection of that kind of transformation.

None of these developments will automatically dissolve the irrascible opposition of those socially reactionary and profoundly authoritarian elements which exist in Latin American societies. Nor will they quickly eliminate paranoid tendencies in some United States' government foreign policy-making agencies, or easily calm the concerns expressed by these agencies and members of Congress linked to economic interests affected by Latin American governmental policy initiatives. But changes in these areas are possible as part of the new opportunities now open in United States-Latin American relations. From the Latin American perspective, a gradual learning process in recent years has inclined many political actors to believe that it is essential to avoid general confrontation with the United States. Rather,

it is desirable to establish a more positive relationship which is less dogmatic in both its conflicts with, and its allegiances to, the United States. Such a relationship would make it possible to differentiate more pragmatically among situations and interests in different issue areas, as is normal in international relations which are not conditioned by extreme dependence or generalized conflict. This perception is now widely shared by political actors throughout the region.

It should be possible to work toward such a relationship in all of the political contexts examined here. In the case of democracies or democratization processes tightly controlled by the interplay among elites, with comparatively few popular pressures and/or strong leftist forces (including Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico, and, to a certain extent, Ecuador), there is considerable room for flexibility in reshaping relations with the United States. In other cases (Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and perhaps Uruguay), governments must act in the context of numerous demands presented by interlocutors which are less open to compromise. The chances for zigzagging public policies, conflicts with foreign interests, and concerns regarding the direction of political processes which include significant popular mobilization, are obviously greater in these latter cases. But even here, it is clear--and it is especially important to make it clear--that the medium- and long-term interests of domestic and foreign actors committed to positive inter-American relations lie in the consolidation of governments which rule with some degree of (and one hopes, increasing) institutional continuity. In practice this means democratic-constitutional governments, whose first goal must be to survive in very difficult circumstances.

If this can be achieved, then we may encounter a paradox which is not unknown in mankind's historical experience: following a particularly traumatic and destructive period, in the midst of an unprecedented crisis, and in large measure due to an interpretation of these events which appeals to what is most healthy and rational, a community discovers conditions for constructive coexistence which had previously been impossible.

This is the hope. Although it cannot be supported by rigorous data, and although it is impossible to determine its "weight" in the balance against numerous negative influences, this hope clearly emerges from the learning process which Latin American countries have experienced in recent years. This space for positive change must be widened through political actions undertaken by the relevant actors. Of course, this includes the United States--insofar as it is willing to stop declaring (whether explicitly or obliquely) that Latin American countries share a congenital affinity for authoritarianism.

This argument applies to everyone. To extend it to its most polemical pole, the argument is no less valid for the popular insurrectionary parties, movements, and governments which exist (and which will continue to emerge) in Central America and the Caribbean.

If the logic outlined at the beginning of this essay does not push Central American countries into the Soviet orbit, these political forces should be able eventually to identify grounds for political and economic accommodation with those United States' public and private actors with interests in the region. Domestic political and social change in these countries which redefines the role of the armed forces and displaces particularly archaic and predatory ruling classes will certainly affect United States' interests. But it is not necessarily true, as extremists on both sides maintain, that the United States' principal political and economic interests are limited to, or completely identified with, such classes.

Normalizing Relations Between Latin America and the United States

This discussion leads to a central issue in contemporary United States-Latin American relations: the most certain means by which the United States' government could facilitate the emergence and consolidation of democratic regimes south of its borders and secure its influence at acceptable costs, would simply be to establish, once and for all, normal relations with Latin American countries. This would require the United States to renounce its hegemonic claims. Latin American governments would at the same time need to avoid paranoic charges of intervention, in the context of what would be--under the first assumption, --normal relations. This would require some restraint because, given differences in resources and power, the United States would continue to exercise greater influence in some issue areas. A corrollary contribution would be for Latin American countries to forsake a mendicant attitude which presupposes and strengthens United States' paternalism. Given a power relationship as unequal as that which characterizes United States-Latin American relations, any demand for "special treatment" merely endorses a semi-colonial status. This situation may serve the interests of some parties, but it must be combatted democratically. Almost all actors share a medium- and long-term interest in paying the short-term costs necessary to establish a more mature and constructive hemispheric relationship.

Without these more or less similtaneous steps by the United States and at least the most influential Latin American countries, other initiatives--however commendable in and of themselves--will fail to cut the Gordian knot implied by the type of relationship which has so long reproduced itself between the United States and Latin America. A discussion of specific governmental policies raises two further difficulties. First, these new criteria for the conduct of hemispheric foreign policy must be transmitted to different governmental agencies through decisions which have been coordinated, implemented, and monitored at decision-making levels with sufficient authority to insure compliance. For example, little is gained if positive orientations in the United States' Department of State and/or some congressional committees fail to shape the actual conduct of military security and economic agencies. The goal is not to achieve perfect policy coordination (which, in the case of the United

States, is difficult in a highly pluralistic and decentralized political system). Rather, the purpose is to impose sufficient discipline on specific government agencies so as to prevent continuous, serious sabotage of overall policy orientations.[10] Similar efforts must be undertaken by Latin American governments as well.

Second, leading government authorities in both the United States and Latin American must respond to the demands of domestic interest groups in the context of these new goals and premises. This problem involves more than the demands made by key economic actors. It also refers to the wildly zealous exponents of "anti-communism" throughout the region who oppose a constructive redefinition of United States-Latin American relations.

These points underline the enormous difficulties present in subtle but radical efforts to establish normal relations between Latin America and the United States. If it is possible to discuss these problems openly, and if this discussion can be framed in terms of different parties' real medium- and long-term interests, then it may be possible to incorporate key actors into the debate and create a public awareness of the issues involved in ways which are impossible unless different alternatives are clearly formulated. This conclusion is not based on the simplistic belief that the United States' interests consist only of the promotion of democracy and basic human rights in Latin America. In terms of military security as well, the United States' interests will best be served in the long run by maintaining normal relations with countries which have established domestic political institutions that reject violence as a means of gaining access to power, cataclismic social transformations, and closed systems of governmental decision-making.

It is perhaps worth reiterating in this context that Latin American countries are willing to accept the costs and risks involved in the creation of constitutional government. This implies a readiness to renounce the short-term advantages which some sectors find in authoritarian rule. Whatever their apparent attractions, the inflexibility of these regimes in the face of democratic demands and rising social and political mobilization can only jeopardize the United States' military security interests in the medium- and long-term future. Experience shows that regimes which suppress the feedback information necessary to govern effectively, generate explosive social and political conditions. Their inability to resolve the problem of succession (and thus insure their capacity to retain power) leaves open the possibility of unexpected political crisis. Moreover, authoritarian regimes always face the risk of encountering unforeseen consequences when major decisions are taken in political isolation under crisis conditions. For all these reasons, one must seriously question whether these regimes are really satisfactory guarantees--except perhaps in the very short-term--of United States' military security interests.

A similar conclusion would apply even if United States' policy toward Latin America were motivated by a desire to exercise hegemonic power, rather than by anti-communist attitudes and military security

considerations. The United States derives important benefits from power disparities in inter-American relations, and from its control of key resources in different areas.[11] But under prevailing hemispheric and international conditions, the United States is incurring increasingly heavy costs in its efforts to sustain a paternalistic and exclusive relationship which until very recently could be imposed with relative ease and low costs. For a variety of reasons discussed in different sections of this volume, continued disparities in the distribution of resources between the United States and Latin America are no longer sufficient to maintain that kind of relationship. Thus the normalization of hemispheric relations is a necessary response to changing realities. Although some specific sectors in both the United States and Latin America might lose, such a change would surely be to both sides' overall benefit. Once again, the challenge will be to initiate political actions which take advantage of present opportunities.

This discussion does not automatically translate into specific recommendations, but it does suggest two themes which might serve as general policy guidelines. First, the United States' government should not declare itself in favor of "democracy" which is merely a disguise for crude anti-communism while at the same time continuing to encourage the most delirious paranoia in Latin American armed forces--which are the most direct and necessary actors in authoritarian regressions. The question is not how many weapons Latin American armies have or have not purchased from the United States in recent years. Rather, the problem concerns the intensive training courses and professional ties which the United States offers to Latin American militaries, including an ideological framework such as national security doctrine which provides a justification for the overthrow of civilian government.[12] Continual intense exchanges between the United States' and Latin American military establishments --a veritable parallel diplomacy--assures that conservative Latin American officers can identify allies in the United States' government who share their extremist social views. Civilian authorities thus encounter significant problems in maintaining control over policies effectively made by the military.

Second, efforts must be made to end some Latin American governmental agencies' effective colonization by foreign lobbies. These agencies exert pressure on their own government (and in some cases on other governments as well) in an effort to shape overall policy. This is a fact of political life; it would be utopian to wish to change this situation. But this does not necessarily mean that governmental authorities with significant decision-making power and access to public forums cannot deal effectively with such pressures so as to impose some coherence in national policy. This relatively commonplace response to the problem reflects a simple but crucial fact: except when the perverse logic of the "anti-communist" struggle has advanced too far, the interplay of different interests usually produces a complex vector of influences which is not wholly predetermined by the kind of political regime holding power. In contrast, the (very self-serving) paranoia of Latin American armed forces

points their weapons in only one direction: toward the coups d'etat which have so long plagued the region.

These considerations once again underline the importance of a most appropriate (though hardly novel) idea: the need to establish relations among states between the United States and Latin America. This would involve relations among units in the international arena of varying influence and power, which respect each other on precisely those criteria which define them as states. To achieve this kind of relationship, the different governments involved must generate sufficient domestic political support to sustain a new foreign policy toward other countries in the hemisphere. Such a process can only occur in a democratic context. At this very specific level, international or regional organizations can make only a marginal contribution on many of the issues involved. Indeed, in some areas their influence may be negative.

Without firm decisions by national governments, the contributions made by international organizations or the private sector can do little to achieve or sustain a new pattern of United States-Latin American relations. These contributions are not insignificant, but they are insufficient to effect the required degree of change. Different organizations, agencies, and sectors can contribute much more by articulating values such as democracy and human rights when governments are inclined to respect them vis-a-vis their own population and in their foreign relations.

An Alternative Proposal for Promoting Democracy in Latin America

This essay has argued that any democracy and its supporters (though certainly not all elements in a given society) have a real medium- and long-term interest in the creation and consolidation of democratic regimes. Moreover, political actions can make this interest appear real. Such an interest exists regardless of the prospects for, or processes leading to, a democratic transition. Although its specific characteristics may vary from case to case, "democracy" in this context refers to constitional democracy; it is not a term to be used as a cynical equivalent to "the struggle against communism". An interest in democracy obviously implies a willingness to respect the right of association and those individual rights guaranteed in classical constitutionalism.

The promotion of democracy and the protection of basic human rights require supporting actions by both the United States and by Latin American governments. This, in turn, presupposes a sufficiently clear and explicit definition of democracy so that its meaning is not easily adulterated, as has frequently been the case in the "inter-American system" and in various Soviet-style "people's democracies". Such a definition can only be elaborated through broad public discussion and debate. However, it should certainly be broad enough to encompass diverse systems of government and different regime forms.

Concern for promoting democratic values throughout the hemisphere would then become a guiding orientation for all the countries' regional foreign policies. This concern might be given some specific institutional form. A simple declaration of intentions--however sincere it might be when first made--is unlikely to have much practical impact. Yet excessive bureaucratization would reproduce the same limitations faced by many existing inter-American institutions. An intermediate position of still considerable significance would be the creation of an ombudsman for analyzing and, if necessary, denouncing violations of democratic values. The organization might also propose sanctions against violators when appropriate. These would for the most part be moral sanctions, which could in fact be quite effective.

These functions could be accomplished by a small, flexible institution created with this explicit mandate. It would require action by a significant number of governments in the hemisphere, and it would need an endowment (perhaps an "Endowment for Democracy") which would guarantee its economic indepencence for a period of no less than ten years. At that time its operations, achievements, and limitations would be carefully reviewed. This ombudsman institution would regularly produce studies and reports on the state of democracy in the hemisphere, obstacles to democratization, and their impact on human rights. This institution might work closely with the recently-created Inter-American Human Rights Institute in those areas where their interests and concerns converge.

Such an institution would need to acknowledge the intrinsically polemic character of its opinions and recommendations, since debate on these questions in itself helps promote democracy. The institution's principal capital would-and should--be its prestige as a serious, independent custodian of democratic values. Furthermore, membership in this organization should be open to any government, in the Americas or elsewhere, which in the judgment of its founding members clearly respects democratic values in domestic politics.

Activities undertaken by this institution would signal any government which violated, or attempted to violate, democratic values that its actions occurred in an international context which would not tolerate them. Significantly, this international context would not mean just the United States, or perhaps some Latin American country invoking the Betancourt doctrine. The fact that certain Latin American governments have been able to commit atrocious human rights violations with impunity--and even be rewarded for their ostensible defense of the West--is precisely one of the most regrettable characteristics of the present inter-American system. The costs which such governments would incur include the diffuse but not insignificant impact of the studies and recommendations produced by the ombudsman institution and, over the longer term, the climate of domestic and inter-governmental opinion which this institution would sustain.

Finally, given the prevailing climate of opinion in Latin America today and the attitudes of like-minded sectors in the United States which seek a healthy redefinition of hemispheric relations,

the very process of creating such an ombudsman institution would open up additional possibilities which are still only dimly visible. This movement is already underway as part of contemporary democratization efforts. The creation of this institution is not an adequate substitute for these domestic processes of political change. However, it would help create both a hemispheric context favorable to such developments and a basis for more rational and constructive inter-American relations.

Conclusions

The suggestions made in the course of this essay will certainly be difficult to realize. At best, advances will occur through complex national and international processes which will require time and patience. However, it should now be clear throughout the Americas that traditional policies only recreate a logic which undermines rational, constructive United States-Latin American relations. The changes proposed here seek, first, the normalization of hemispheric relations. This would not eliminate asymmetries in power, but it would create a more positive environment for all countries. Second, these changes would recognize the common interest which the vast majority of American nations have in consolidating and preserving democracy and basic human rights.

These changes, and the momentum they may acquire if pursued with sufficient firmness and continuity by a significant number of governments, will require governmental policies which are far from passive. The "intervention vs. non-intervention" dicotomy no longer makes sense in relations between nation-states. The challenge will be to define in the context of still asymmetrical power relationships and a partioular state of political and ethical opinion on the part of the actors involved, those areas open to acceptable and legitimate influence and the limits to such actions. Many forms of United States' intervention in Latin America must be halted. But this is not to endorse inertia. On the contrary, what is required are initiatives from both public agencies and private groups throughout Americas to promote and protect commonly valued basic rights.

This kind and orientation of "intervention" would be a legitimate and welcome substitute for the persistent authoritarianism and/or provincial nationalism which has prevailed in this area. It would be a regretable paradox if democratic forces throughout the hemisphere (including the increasingly active west European political presence) fail to recognize their common interests and act together to promote them, while powerful pro-authoritarian forces do so without any urging whatsoever. Even a policy advocating "no action" fails to stop undesirable ideological, military, and economic developments. Democratic forces must demonstrate that they are capable of overcoming inclinations toward either hegemonic paternalism or vassalage--or what is ultimately the same as the latter, the nihilistic temptation to create a world in which asymmetries of power and influence are magically erased.

For those familiar with the graveyard of lost and discredited ideas in Latin America, these suggestions are not very original. That they have been reformulated here signals the persistance of a type of relationship between Latin America and the United States which years ago cried out for subtle but substantial redefinition. What may be original is the present conjuncture? Conditions now offer a challenge and an opportunity which may be uniquely suited for bringing about long-sought changes in United States-Latin American relations.

If what has been argued in this essay is meaningful, then democratic governments throughout the hemisphere and parties, movements, and diverse groups and agencies which share values such as democracy and respect for human rights, all have an obligation to support with any available means those forces which are now struggling (at times under very adverse conditions) for these same values. These forces need support and solidarity if they are to emerge eventually as established democratic regimes. Incipient or future democratic governments must control their mistrust toward the content and goals of United States' policy. The United States, in turn, must renounce any inclination to play a hegemonic role in the region. Support for democracy is never so decisive as when the struggle is still going on to end authoritarian rule, or when fragile democracies seek to consolidate their position. Because these governments face threats from different sources, there is some probability that they will take measures which encourage the unchanging authoritarian tendencies of powerful sectors in both South and North America. Solidarity in support of democracy is no less decisive when it involves combatting in each country those domestic and foreign influences which are arrayed against democracy.

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[1]To argue for the worth and sense of what is possible, as an area of human action oriented toward the future and inspired by values, is to give tribute to the person who has written most insistently and fruitfully on this subject and on closely-related issues, Albert Hirschman. See especially his collections of essays, A Bias for Hope: Essays on Development and Latin America, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, and Essays on Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

[2]For a brilliant examination of this phenomenon, see Wanderley Guilherme Dos Santos, "Autoritarismo: e Apos: Convergencias e Divergencias entre Brasil y Chile", Dados, vol. 25 Nº 2, 1982, pp. 151-163.

[3]I have discussed this subject in "The Bureaucratic-Authoritarian State and the Question of Democracy", in David Collier, ed., The New Authoritarianism in Latin America, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, pp. 285-318.

[4]This does not prevent the sporadic appearance of guerrilla movements which disturb the functioning of a civilian government and provoke an extension of the armed forces' sphere of responsibility, as in contemporary Peru. But it is unlikely that such movements will be successful over the long run. Nor are they likely to "heighten contradictions" in the way in which they desire.

[5]In the preceeding essay in this volume, Howard Wiarda repeatedly refers to the obstacles to the creation and consolidation of "United States'-style democracy" in Latin America. There is no doubt that some of the particular institutional characteristics of present and future Latin American democracies will differ from those of the United States. However, this does not mean that these political arrangements are any less democratic. To assume that all democracies must be alike is to deny the vitality and importance of groups and organizations which reflect national and regional particularities.

[6] For an informed and illustrative discussion of these themes, see Angel Flisfish, "Una nueva ideología democrática en el sur de America Latina", mimeograph, FLACSO-CHILE, Santiago de Chile, December 1982.

[7]Despite the risk of reaching a point at which the "banality of evil" makes it meaningless to quantify and compare horrors, this was true of a number of Latin American countries in the 1970s--and still applies in some cases. Whether these regimes are "authoritarian" or "totalitarian" is essentially irrelevant to this point. The well-known argument on this question in the United States and Latin America often seems to be a way of avoiding a discussion not to pursue an activist human rights policy. Would one have preferred to be a

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"totalitarian" Italy? Is the possibility of being assassinated for political dissent (or even without cause) lesser or greater in Guatemala than in Poland? Questions of this kind disguise the fundamental issue--that both types of regime rely upon repression--and suggest that no real progress has been made toward understanding the realities of these regimes.

[8]For a more general examination of international factors in this transition process, see Laurence Whitehead, "International Aspects of Democratization" in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds. Transition from Authoritarian Rule, forthcoming.

[9]This theme is discussed in the analysis of several southern European and Latin American cases in O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, ibid.

[10]The available evidence suggests that such coordination was possible in the case of aggressive United States' policies toward Guatemala, Cuba, and Chile. The challenge will be to produce similar coordination where more constructive goals are involved.

[11] The issues posed by the disparity of power in United States-Latin American relations as examined by James Kurth in his contribution to this volume.

[12]For discussions of this "doctrine" and its intrinsicaly anti-democratic orientations, see Genaro Arriagada, "National Security Doctrines in Latin America", Peace and Change, VI, Vols. 1-2, pp. 49-60, and John Child, "Strategic Concepts in Latin America: An Update", Inter-American Economic Affairs, Summer 1980, pp. 61-82.