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Democracy and Political Instability

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Introduction

On October 10th, 1982, when the UDP came to power and Dr. Hernán Siles Zuazo assumed the presidency, there was widespread new throughout Bolivia. The return to a democratic government offered the promise of a social and political structure that could sharply contrast with that of the military regimes that and ruled the country since 1966. In mid 1985 as the Siles regime came to a close, that hope was replaced by frustration and a fear of the future. The Siles Zuazo regime was a period of severe economic crisis and intense political turmoil. These events have given rise to much questioning about the ability of the Bolivian state to resolve the problems of democracy. The instability exhibited during the Siles regime has its roots in the crisis of the state brought about by the Revolution of 1952 as well as the post-revolution changes that occurred in Bolivian society and in the system of political participation. This chapter examines the political instability of the Siles Zuazo regime in the historical context of the influence of the factors that emanated from the revolution and analyses the political, economic and social factors that were in place during the Siles Zuazo presidency. More importantly, it also tries to interpret the interwoven elements of the political culture and the roles of the principal actors. In the new environment of political freedom, numerous actors demonstrated not only their values and traditions but also the importance of their highly individualized and particular interests, fears and passions.¹

¹ Cf. R. López Pinto. "Condiciones Socio-Económicas de la Acción Política", en Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas, No. 15. July, September, 1981.

The Legacy of the Revolution

The 1952 Revolution emphasized the building of a unified society that could bring together the diverse elements and create a centralized state. Under this model, the state was to become, in lieu of a national bourgeoisie, which was almost nonexistent, the main agent of development that would be responsible for molding the future.

This state charged of the elaboration of new models of societal development lost, with the passing of time and especially with the military regimes, its popular contents, to become an institution that embodied a pure technological, efficientist and pragmatic rationality. This rationality apparently independent of particular interests, was in fact permeable to the pressures of social groups with access to the state centers of decision making.

The new National Revolutionary Movement Party (MNR) government that came to power in 1952 began the modernization process by removing the obstacles that had become well-established under the traditional order. The new government's important measures were: instituting land reform and abolishing serfdom in the countryside; granting rights of citizenship to the urban and rural masses; giving the state more control over the economy; extending the state's role to new production and service activities; expanding the agricultural frontier through the development of the eastern lowlands and attempting to enlarge the internal market and diversify production.

In 1982, thirty years later, many of the objectives remained to be accomplished. Slow and uneven economic development across the national territory had obstructed the evolution of the homogeneous community that the revolution sought to achieve. Bolivia continues nowadays to have a high degree of socio-cultural and geographic segmentation that is dotted with small islands of progress. Vast regions and large population groups are excluded from the dynamics that give rise to change in society. Income distribution is among the most unequal of the continent.

By the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s these undesirable features of the Bolivian development had become clear. The development process had become increasingly dependent on international financial support. When the inflow of foreign capital abated, the process faltered. Simultaneously, the state had gradually lost its moral fabric. The inefficiency

and corruption of the government bureaucracy and its inability to manage the economy and society had become apparent. In addition, there was an increasing and open involvement of high-level government and military officials in the cocaine traffic, especially during the 1980-1981 dictatorship of Gral. García Meza. As a consequence, the revolution-inspired centralized and bureaucracy model of development, and its role as arbiter of different interests in society was increasingly questioned. Disappointment with the central government have rise to increasing demands from the regions, cities and towns, for a more participative role in the process of planning and policy-making for their social and economic development.

Democracy came in this setting of economic crisis and fragmentation of political parties and their old leadership. The result was that the political parties were unable to direct their efforts to meet the emerging demands of new social forces. As a consequence, these forces sought an outlet for expression outside the normal political channels.²

² Those deficiencies are not to be imputed only to political parties, but also to the fact that their loss of influence in society was due to the suspension of their legal activities during the military dictatorships that hindered their efforts to keep up with social changes. Another reason is given by the prevailing political culture that is prone to nature certain undemocratic practices as it

The Context of the UDP Regime

After Bolivia's two-years attempt to re-democratize was scuttled by the military coup in 1980, democracy finally returned to Bolivia when the military was forced to give up or face the real risk of a civil war. A succession of military governments had failed. The last headed by Gral. Vildoso faced two alternatives in turning the government back to the civilians: (1) to call for new elections, or (2) give the control to Siles Zuazo and the UDP, who had the elections of 1980 with a plurality.³ Popular pressure forced the president to follow the latter course.

The UDP government was formed by a coalition of political parties with different ideological orientation: the president's party, the National Revolutionary Movement of the Left Party (MNRI); vice-president Jaime Paz Zamora's party, the Revolutionary Movement of the Left (MIR) and the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB). Once the Siles Zuazo administration was installed, the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) joined the coalition.⁴

The UDP inherited a state, as it was said above, that was highly criticized on both ethical and functional grounds, and, moreover, was beleaguered by the economic problems caused by the huge Bolivian external debt. Under these circumstances UDP's ability to develop policies were limited. The process was complicated because UDP did not control congress nor organized labor. Leaders of the political opposition used these two institutions not only to defend the particular interests of their own groups, but also as places to vent their personal animosities against the government and each other.

The UDP was barely in office when internal conflicts began. The credibility of the UDP was damaged when MIR withdrew from the government only a few months after the coalition took power. MIR's departure resulted from ideological differences with other coalition members and the party's failure to gain the influence and power within the coalition it felt it deserved. A factor that contributed to the division within the UDP was the infighting among its components for control in order to be able to distribute benefits among its constituencies.

will be seen later in the text.

³ In the 1980 elections, the following results were obtained: Unidad Democrática y Popular (UDP) 507,173 votos; Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) 263,706 votos; Acción Democrática Nacionalista (ADN) 220,309 votos; Partido Socialista Uno 113,959 votos.

⁴ One reason for the participation of the PDC was to allay the fears of the Western democracies about the presence of the

The shaky state of the coalition caused the president and the UDP to devote considerable attention to internal squabbles, and distracted them from running the government and elaborating a coherent economic policy. During the Siles' regime the UDP was never able to reach internal agreement for sufficient periods of time, the enable it to use the mechanisms of the state to stop social disorder. As a consequence, the regime projected an image of a coalition that had been formed to win the elections but, when it was in the government, it was to fragmented to negotiate or establish policies to deal the worsening crisis.

Even though the UDP was a populist coalition, it quickly proved that it had little capacity for social mobilization. From the beginning it was weakened by its internal squabbles as mentioned above. Perhaps even more important was the reality of the economic crisis and the severe inflation that forced the government to attempt corrective but politically unpopular and devise economic policies of austerity, whose immediate impact was to harm the masses. The circumstances did not allow the UDP to propose or implement new distributive policies, except as a answer to pressure groups.

Siles Zuazo, however, had entered office under the illusion that he needed no mediation and that he had the support of the population, especially when facing problems with congress and organized labor. His confidence had been built by the fact that the had won a plurality of votes in three consecutive elections. It was reinforced by Bolivia's tradition of a strong executive under which the roles of congress and other political institutions are clearly secondary. Under this view they were not considered as partners in government but rather decorative elements of democracy. In fact, because the UDP did have a majority in the legislative body, congress turned out to be an independent source of power and, therefore, a continuing power struggle emerged between the executive and legislative branch. The resultant open battles tarnished the president's claims to power and undermined the regime's legitimacy.

Therefore, negotiations between the government and opposition parties, labor unions, and the private sector became dialogues of the deaf, where each group appealed to the crisis to satisfy its own demands, but with out looking for points of agreement among themselves. The group that was able to develop the strongest pressure set the rules, even if they were beyond the law. Consequently, UDP was not usually in the driver's seat. A feeling of illegitimacy

gradually over came the government when it became apparent that their decisions could not be enforced.

Democracy had to deal with the problems and behavior of political organizations and labor unions along with new social forces of regional and cultural nature, that emerged with the revolution of 1952 and were outside the normal channels of political representation.

The weak government could only achieve transitory agreements between conflicted parties. Therefore, in moments of major crisis, or long-lasting stalemated negotiations, appeals were made to the Catholic Church to negotiate a resolution. The church proved effective in mediating solutions to problems that threatened the democratic process. The most notable case was in November 1984, when it obtained an agreement to advance the date of the 1986 elections by one year.

Political Parties

A common view in Bolivia is that crisis of political parties is present in their structure,, their ways of action, their representativity and their fragmentation. But, the question is then, what fundamental factors are behind this phenomenon? A plausible explanation is that the repression to political activity in the periods of dictatorship led to an overdue of methods appropriate for underground struggle instead of more efforts to renew ideology and party organization. When democracy came, those deficiencies surfaced.

The political parties that played active roles in the Siles regime were organized after end the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay that ended in 1936. Two major ideological currents the dominated their development. The first current is nationalism, which is represented by two principal philosophical strands, the revolutionary one headed by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR), and the authoritarian one headed by the Bolivian Socialist Falange (FSB).⁵ The MNR philosophy insisted on the deep social transformations, based however in class alliances. The FSB emphasized tradition and placed high values on family, religion and leadership. The second current has a Marxist orientation and comprised several major groups: the Trotskyity of the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR), and two Stalinist parties, the Party of the Revolutionary Left and the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB).

In the fifties, the Christian Democrats appeared inspired by the European social thought of that time. In the early seventies a splinter branch of this party became the MIR, which has an ideology blending socialism with the rationalist ideology of the 1952 Revolution. The MIR was one of the members of the UDP coalition.

Among the never parties are the Socialist Party First (PS1), splinter from the older Socialist Party, with a Marxist-Leninist vision of con temporary problems in the country that

⁵ Cf. F. Calderón. "Cuestionados por la Sociedad: Los Partidos en Bolivia", paper presented at the Meeting of Universidad de

emphasizes anti-imperialism. Another is the Nationalist Democratic Action Party (ADN), that was conceived during the 1971-1978 authoritarian regime of Gral. Hugo Bánzer Suárez, and born prior to the 1979 elections as party to represent conservative interests. Finally, during the seventies many political parties with indigenous ideologies were created. The Revolutionary Movement Tupac Katari (MRTK), which voice the interests of the Aymara speaking peasants, came forth the union of several small Indian parties.

The parties within the Bolivian political scenario, both old and new, and beyond their ideological differences can be grouped in two distinct blocks. In the first block, the parties cater to several social segments under a broad mixture of different ideological issues: nationalism, class-specific interests and social mobilization. In the second block, parties tend to represent the interests of specific social groups unit narrow ideological themes. For instance, the leftist parties that voice the interests of urban blue-collar workers, miners, or, in some cases, the peasantry would belong to this block.⁶

The MNR provides a good example of a party in the first block. In the same way, the PS1 led by Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz was electorally successful because it was able to offer a platform of economic nationalism blended with a proposal of political and cultural independence from the world powers. On the contrary, parties that express limited class interests, for example, those of the urban wage-earners, or of the peasantry, obtained less electoral support.

It is worth dwelling on the MNR experience. In 1952, the MNR conducted a revolution consisting of a social movement of workers, peasants and middle-class groups that destroyed the oligarchic order that was based on a land owning elite and an enclave of mining interests. After the revolution, however, the middle-class groups that led the process succumbed to the strong pressure from peer group interests for immediate rewards. As a consequence the MNR lost much of its initial poly- class structure, which resulted in a widening gulf between the middle-classes and their more proletarian allies. This shows, in passing, the play of centrifugal forces in political parties that shelter factions of diverse ideologies.

Bolivian political parties are characterized by individualism, i.e. by the strong leadership of only one or a handful of leaders. In a way, a Bolivian political party is an

Naciones Unidas, Mexico 1985 (Unpublished).

incarnation of its leaders. Political parties, especially the more traditional, identify themselves with the political battles and with the actions of their leaders. Consequently, party actions frequently correspond less to their social interests than to the passions of their leadership.

Individualism is legacy from the old traditional society where caudillos reinforced their power within parties at the expense of minorities. Together with the multiplicity of ideological stands, this has led to the frequent fragmentation of Bolivian political parties: individual leaders take their constituency and split away from their parent organizations to form a new party. Between 1958 and 1978, the MNR split in thirty-one branches, however, at present, only two of them have national significance, the MNRH of Paz Estenssoro and MNRI of Siles Zuazo. The leftist-Marxist parties also experienced the division process. POR gave rise to fourteen groups, PCB to nine and MRTK to twenty, PS1 to two, and MIR to three.⁷ Notice that the new parties usually maintain an identity with the parent party by adding a number or an adjective to the original name.

The individualistic structure leads to infrequent and slow changes in party leadership. This has special significance, because a substantial part of Bolivian political instability originates in personal antagonisms between old leaders. Parties lacking new infusions of leadership become fragile, closed and dominated by the parts. As a consequence, political discourse often is divorced from reality and relies on old slogans and dogma instead of dealing with current reality and changes that are occurring in society. For example, since 1952, profound changes have taken place as the new classes and regional interests have appeared and direct the process of development. These phenomena, however, do not seem to have been recognized by much of the political leadership, and they partially explain why party memberships are small and why their constituencies become important only during electoral campaigns.

As a consequence of the weakness of the party system, interest groups are forced to seek other ways to express themselves, such as civic neighborhood associations, professional clubs, private-sector associations, and so on instead of the traditional political parties. These organizations, however, become involved in pressure politics, given their need to voice their interests and make known to government.

⁶ A Touraine. "Pautas de Acción Colectiva", en Revista Paraguaya de Sociología, No. 60. Mayo-Agosto 1984, pp. 7-32.

⁷ On the issue R. Rivadeneira, "Partidos Políticos, Partidos-Texti y Partidos Fantasma", en Nueva Sociedad, No. 74. September-October, 1984.

Because of the specific and individualistic nature of the Bolivian political parties, it is very difficult for them to negotiate on issues that do not directly affect their own particular interests or are of a much wider importance. This is consistent once again with the well known thesis of Max Weber that when leadership resided on the recognition by followers of the unique qualities of the leaders, it is difficult to find points of agreement among contending groups.

The inability of political parties to come a common agreement has characterized Bolivian politics since the Revolution of 1952 and has been one of the basic ingredients causing social instability during the UDP government. Political parties followed the strategy of trying to weaken the Siles Zuazo government with the hope of improving their own position in the next election. The parties, instead of seeking a common ground to force a solution to the economic crisis that threatened democracy, tried to feather their own nests. In many cases this meant that they opposed the austere anti-inflationary measures proposed by the Siles government, because such measures called for sacrifices by the various groups that were part of their constituency of that they were trying to court. For example, the opposition parties in congress regularly protested the decisions of the president and the cabinet, by requesting hearings and even censuring ministers for, mostly, trivial wrondings. To counter this, the executive branch frequently ignored the requests from congress. This conflict for power endangered democracy and increasingly contributed to the general opinion that no law was enforceable.

As a result of this conflict between the executive and legislative branches an impasse was reached. By the final months of 1984, the general social unrest that encompassed the nation threatened democracy and demanded a solution. It was decided, after the intervention of the Catholic Church, to take the unconstitutional decision to call to early elections that would cut short the Siles government's term by one year. Had the government not accepted this decision, a coup was almost certain.

In summary, it is clear that during the UDP regime the behavior of political parties placed graded importance on personal resentments, corporate interests, and the means to gain tactical political advantages, rather than on achieving a political consensus to confront the economic crisis.

Organized Labor

The Bolivian Workers Central (COB) was another important political actor during the Siles Zuazo regime, when its activity took on political dimensions that exceeded the normal trade union stance. In this period, COB brought together diverse organizations to form a heterogeneous conglomerate of blue-collar workers, middle class unions and some sectors of the peasantry, that was to play a major role in determining the fate of Bolivian democracy.

Like with political parties, labor's behavior had roots in the 1952 revolution. The worker's movement played a decisive role in the consolidation of that historic event. Soon after the revolution COB became a partner of the MNR government. Some analysts view COB's participation in that government as the planting of a seed that would lead eventually to dual power.⁸ This was to emerge some twenty years later, during the Tórres government, a popular assembly of a Leninist orientation was created that tried to reestablish co-government. The goal was to create a proletarian state, or at least obtain a majority in a populist government. This orientation had become one of the main philosophical principles of the Bolivian labor movement. It emerged strongly again during the Siles Zuazo regime.

From the outset, COB directly opposed the UDP economic policies because of the measures' negative impacts on labor and popular classes. Later, as the government measures failed to check inflation and revitalize the economy, labor's opposition became more militant. Frequent strikes and work stoppages paralyzed many institutions and created severe social and political tensions. In its attempts to resolve these conflicts Siles Zuazo was forced to establish

⁸ R. Zavaleta. *El Poder Dual*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1974, pp. 91.

direct and separate negotiations with both workers and management. The overuse of authority in these matters weakened the government who ultimately was forced to surrender to the strongest pressure. The inability of the state to use coercion to obtain its goals became apparent.⁹

In negotiations with the government, two labor positions emerged. The first was a demand for immediate wage increases to compensate for the loss in real wages resulting from inflation. The second was to press for worker participation in the management of the state's enterprises and even in the government. The UDP, under pressure from labor, picked up on this strategy and in late 1982, in an effort to gain support from the workers, it floated the idea of worker co-government, an idea that was not risk-free for democracy.

Later in March 1983, the Federation of Bolivian Miners Unions (FSTMB) proposed worker co-management of the State Mining Company (COMIBOL). This was viewed by labor as a preliminary step to obtaining co-government as well as a way to overcome the economic crisis.¹⁰ By this time, the government thought otherwise and rejected the proposal. However, within a matter of weeks it yielded to the miner's pressure, and co-management of COMIBOL was implemented with a worker's majority control.

Having obtained its co-management goal, COB went to the next step and proposed a plan embracing "organic and predominant participation on workers in decision centers and political power". In addition, labor demanded co-management with worker's majority in all state enterprises. They also pressured for the adoption of a COB emergency plan for social and economic recovery. The government, however, had decided it was not ready to surrender part of its responsibilities to organized labor and terminated the negotiations.

In the meantime, the less-militant labor leaders, who were more inclined to fight for improved wages rather than for greater labor participation in government, gained influence within COB. In this role they pushed for a high minimum wage (the so-called vital minimum wage) with cost of living adjustments. This policy was more acceptable and the government gave in, granting wage increases and benefits, although not to the extent demanded by labor. This process was to continue through the Siles government, under steady pressure from

⁹ R. Calla. "Política y Sindicatos" Temas del Movimiento Obrero Contemporáneo", Paper presented at the Meeting. CERES-CLACSO, La Paz, December, 1984.

¹⁰ R. Calla. Art. Cit.

organized labor's strikes and work stoppages.

The last big confrontation between labor and the Siles government came in March 1985, when some 10,000 miners marched in the city of La Paz and COB called a general strike to protest another devaluation of the peso and government economic policy. In the ensuing negotiations with the government, labor presented a seventeen-point list of demands. It included a request for a higher minimum wage and nationalization of the financial sector, the medium-sized mines and international trade. To blunt the militancy of the worker's protest, Siles Zuazo once again offered co-government to the trade unions under a program based on the UDP electoral platform, while COB insisted on co-government with majority, following the lines of its emergency plan. The COB considered the government proposal as being too little and too late given the short time remaining for Siles to be in power. The resolution of the conflict was not very favorable for labor; they obtained only a few improvements in their wages and benefits. On this occasion the Siles government had won the battle.

The behavior of COB is a major explanatory factor of the evolution of the economic crisis and the problems of re-democratization. The values and beliefs of the Bolivian labor movement were clear. Its strategy of wanting to obtain a majority share of power as a first step to reaching total power by the workers was evident. Furthermore, the importance of the human factors -the personal passions and rivalries among its leaders and with president Siles- clearly emerged as important determinants in the movement's policies and stance. Labor's attempt to gain co-government turned out to be a mistake. It was too one-sided and threatening. This strategy did not take into account the diverse interests of the country as a whole. It neglected the interests and the importance of other economic and social powers within society, such as private-sector business organizations and regional movements that did not share COB's position for solving the crisis. Therefore, under these circumstances, there was no possibility of obtaining an agreement that would permit COB to enter the government.

Labor's militancy amply showed COB's strengths and failures. On the one hand, organized labor was successful as a lobbyist in obtaining better wages, which transitorily mitigated the impact on inflation on its membership. COB was also able to obtain co-management with majority control in COMIBOL. On the other hand, however, labor was defeated in its use of political power to try to substitute the government on the formation of

economic policies. The internal strife within COB was a factor, but, more importantly, were COB's misjudgments about the possibilities for worker participation in government in the reality of contemporary Bolivia. COB's political tradition, dominated by its idea of class-dominance and framed by an erroneous zero-sum conception of imposing its policy on a society with deeply-rooted interests, made it impossible to reach an accord with other important groups through negotiations with the government. COB's stances were more relevant to a society facing open class-warfare, where labor is the principal actor against the existing structure. In contrast, although the current Bolivian society experiences class conflicts, they are not the main source of fiction. The real battle is between the centralized-bureaucratic state that attempts to direct social transformation, and other actors that contest the state's monopoly.

The COB strategy was built upon the past, beginning in the early twentieth century, when the tin mining interests began to be the dominant power in the country and a combative and militant labor movement began to emerge. Today, COB has neglected the changes and distribution of political power that have come about with the decline of tin-mining, with urbanization, and with the rapid growth of the classes and other interest groups, especially in the recently-developed eastern regions of the country. While these changes have been taking place, organized labor did not give up its historical tendencies of radical opposition. Moreover, it increasingly took on a strong defensive attitude, which impaired its role at the negotiation table and in the establishment of national policies. The result was that CON was successful in direct negotiations with the government only on specific problems of rather narrow scope but on the global issues.

COB's insistence on trying to impose a co-government with labor eventually broke the unity of the labor movement. COB's integrity was damaged when its strategy was undercut by the independent actions of its many impatient factions. For instance, workers of the state-owned petroleum company YPFB were able to garner huge wage increases, well above those asked for by the COB. Similar actions were taken by the white-collar union of Central Bank employees. Moreover, COB began to come apart when local unions made concessions to regional organizations against the wishes of the COB executive committee.

The Private Sector

The business organizations reunited in the Condeferación de Empresarios Privados de Bolivia (CEPB) initially supported the process of re-democratization. In fact, they were instrumental in the call to reconvene the Congress elected in 1980 which in turn chose Siles as president. But very soon after Siles inauguration, the CEPB took a strong stance against the government and became another factor of political instability. Opposition was based mainly on principle as the CEPB objected to the presence of the Communist Party in the government's coalition. The CEPB also feared the likelihood of expropriations and the growing power of the labor unions. The business sector objected to almost all economic policies of the Siles government, even to those which eventually benefitted them. The CEPB went to the point of declaring a "48 hour strike: in February 1984.

While on the hand the uncertainty accompanying hyperinflation and political unrest heavily penalized the private sector, on the other hand, the economic policies and especially the economic policy mistakes, of the Siles government had many beneficiaries in the private sector. Industrialists and large farmers in the east benefit from the rapid debt liquidation brought about by inflation and de-dollarization.¹¹ Bankers and the financial sector in general, made substantial gains with the rapid emission of money. Also, many entrepreneurs who had access to subsidized foreign exchange made very quick profits by reselling, in direct and indirect

¹¹ On de-dollarization, see J.a. Morales in this volume.

ways, their dollars in the black market.

However, the fears of the private sector eventually overcame the unintended benefits provided to it by the government. As a result its opposition to Siles was steady, strong, and especially, vociferous.

Conclusion

The behavior of the main actors in the political scenario surrounding the Siles Zuazo regime-government, political parties, private-sector business associations and organized labor-contributed to the long-run deterioration of the economy as the government was hampered in carrying out its policies because of their opposition and imperiled the consolidation of democracy. But, paradoxically, inflation permitted the co existence in the short run of the various social groups in society, in spite of their very strong differences. These differences, however, were not strong enough to produce an open civil war and were attenuated transitorily by inflation. In this unstable environment each contending group in the distribution of the national product obtained only limited and short-lived victories.¹² The net results for the national interest were null; victories meant only gratifications for individual and specific groups but did not contribute to solving the larger important problems. In the crisis, political parties, unions and even the government found an opportunity to give vent to their differences. Little consideration was given to the risk of ending the democratic experience by taking advantage of a strategy based upon the paradigm of the prisoner's dilemma instead of a more cooperative behavior. Rousseau was among the first to identify the type of "diabolic collective structure" with which we may characterize Bolivia in this period. In Rousseau's thinking the will of all is not obtained because of the pursuit of particular interests by interest groups and individuals

¹² These observations are based on A. Hirschmann mentioned by F. Nef in "Centrist Fragmentations and Political Desintegration: The Chilean Case", in *North and South*, Vol. IV, No. 8, 1979, pp. 93.

which lead to conflict.¹³ It was this type of behavior and the resultant conflicts that characterized the institutional deterioration and social commotion in the Siles regime. But, why was not the conflict resolved with a coup against Siles?

Indeed, on a number of occasions during the Siles regime, the crisis, the resultant disorder, and the disagreement about the way to confront it could have led to a coup. Given these conditions many believed this would be the end result of the new democracy. In other words why, with all the conflicts that were heightened by the crisis, wasn't confrontation pushed to the limit of a coup, especially since the government had little control over the situation? Two partial answers can be provided. First inflation, at least while it did not reach hyperinflationary levels, constituted a escape valve for social conflict however transitory. Second and more important, there was a prevailing strong democratic aspiration held by the majority of the population. Although both the left and the right faced the common temptation of forcing a coup, they realized that nobody could win, not even the military, and handle the economic situation without creating considerable personal hardship. Moreover, the memories of the corruption and violence that accompanied the recent military governments were still fresh. Finally, the almost certain negative reaction to a coup by the international community was another factor. Therefore, the idea of a coup was forsaken; Bolivian society was not ready nor willing to suffer from political adventurism. After the option of a coup was result out, the worsening economic crisis pushed the various power groups to seek another solution. The discussion was for early elections, a proposal that found considerable support in almost all segments of society.

What are the long-run prospects for democracy in Bolivia? The unsatisfactory results of the Siles experience, dominated by the economic crisis, fights between the congress and the executive branch, diverging class and regional interests, weak political Parties, strong individualistic leaders and internal conflicts in both political parties and organized labor bears some pessimism for the future of Bolivian democracy. But, this pessimism may be justified only insofar as it is assumed that the cultural and structural elements are considered within the framework of the above-described roles the principal actors. More enlightened governments can adopt strategies that would create an environment more favorable to negotiation and agreement. Moreover, it is not possible to ignore the new social forces that have emerged and

¹³ Cf. R. Boudon. *Effects Pervers et Ordre Social*, PUF, Paris, 1978, pp. 100.

are not identified with political parties nor with the labor unions and business organizations, that seek a different type of democracy, one which would encompass decentralization and pluralism, increase regional and local participation in decision making, and provide closer relationships between government and citizens.

In the mid-1980s Bolivia appears to be in the middle of a process of change where authoritarianism, with its arrogant features of a centralized and technocratic state that tries to monopolize social development, is being abandoned. Rather Bolivians appear to want a stable, participative and pluralistic society. Success in achieving this kind of democracy will depend fundamentally on the renewal of the party system and the development of mechanisms that facilitate intermediation between the government and its various constituencies, many of which are emerging, among contradictions, in the new social and economic configurations of the nation and bringing new images of collective and state responsibilities.