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**Political Transitions and Social Change: Patterns of transformation in  
Chilean society**

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## Introduction

Since the coup d' état of 1973, it has become very common to study the Chilean transition process as a classical model of the recovery of democracy in one of the few Latin American countries with a long history of democratic tradition. However, there is almost no study on the prior moments of democratic disruption in Chile, a missing link in the understanding of the coup d' état of 1973 and its causes.

After 30 years of this internationally famous coup d' état, famous because it combines several ingredients of conspiracy, repression, betrayal and idealism, Chilean society has not been able to come to terms with this tragedy of its constitutional history. Nonetheless, this was not the first time in the constitutional history of the country that a dictatorship, led by a junta military, took over the government and created a new constitutional framework. The myth of Chilean democracy, stable and permanent, only can be sustained in comparison with other countries in Latin America; however, the three main constitutions of Chile (1833, 1925, and 1980) were the product of military intervention and violent imposition. As Simon Collier has pointed out in his last book on Chile:

“It is a textbook commonplace that the Republic of Chile was a byword for political stability in nineteenth-century Latin America. Commonplaces are usually at least half true, and often more than half. Chile was the only Spanish American republic to win this reputation in the eyes of the outside world. The only other Latin American country to enjoy similar esteem was the Empire of Brazil...Chile's transition to stability, however, was more eventful than the textbook commonplaces assumes, with political life in what we may call “the early republic” marked by serious conflict as well as a promising degree of institutional continuity. The Chilean political tradition was forged in sharp and occasionally bloody struggles between government and its Liberal (and later Liberal-Conservative) adversaries...” (Simon Collier, 2003: XV).

The half true of the democratic tradition of Chilean society is the subject of this paper. Chilean social organization was the result of a successful, from the viewpoint of efficiency, of a permanent and stable political framework that was created and imposed by the forces of the order and, in one occasion, by the rise of a new social class. Unlike other studies, this paper about the Chilean political transition will strive to understand the development of the Chilean politics from a sociological perspective.

During the last 30 to 40 years of the twentieth century, Chile has undergone multiple changes that have impacted the mind of its elite and whose effects are still unpredictable. During this period of time, Chile experienced the “revolution of liberty” led by Eduardo Frei, and the “Chilean road to socialism” led by Salvador Allende. The results of these social transformations have been studied carefully in the last twenty years; however, the conditions that produced these social experiments have been only partially taken into account. For instance, the conceptual framework that permitted the rise of the socialist revolution of Allende was not the improvisation of a myriad of adventurers. On the contrary, there was a social movement that created the conditions and permitted the reception and distribution of the Marxist ideas that gave expression to the revolutionaries of the sixties and seventies in Chile.

My hypothesis is that the normative domain of Chilean society, composed by a religious sphere and a moral domain, has been the immediate factor of the transformation of Chilean society, whose expression has been different types of constitutional regimes. Following Durkheim's point about the relationship between law and social solidarity, an aspect of this research is to study the different forms of social solidarity that have supported the political and constitutional regimes in Chile. As Durkheim had pointed out about law, we can understand legal structures as expression of underlying normative structures. In this sense, the present research strives to reconstruct the normative foundations of Chilean society, its religious and moral beliefs, in the last part of the nineteenth century. In addition, this study intends to show how these normative domains have produced alterations and transformations of Chilean constitutional regimes. In this process of transformation, we can distinguish three moments or “cleavages” in which it is possible to see the starting points and the breaks in the way Chilean society has perceived itself through the eyes of its intelligentsia. In an unpublished manuscript, Charles Taylor has coined the concept of social imaginary<sup>1</sup> to explain the moments or cleavages that represent the ruptures in the self-understanding or self-representation of a given society. This study argues that if we study these moments or cleavages, we can shed light on the factors and causes that have produced transformations in Chilean society. Below is a brief description of the three moments and some of the major questions posed by each.

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the term as Charles Taylor's definition of social imaginary which he contrasts with social theory in the following ways: “I speak of “imaginary” (i) because I am talking about the way ordinary people “imagine” their social surroundings, and this is often not expressed in theoretical terms, it is carried in images, stories, legends, etc. But it is also the case that (ii) theory is often the possession of a small minority, whereas what is interesting in the social imaginary is that it is shared by a large groups of people, if not the whole society. Which leads to a third difference: (iii) the social imaginary is that common understanding which makes possible common practices, and a widely shared sense of legitimacy.” (Charles Taylor, 2001, manuscript: 20).

1. Nation Formation: this moment starts with the struggle of Chile against Spain to obtain political autonomy. The members of the Chilean elite disagree profoundly about the nature of the new nation, as well as the political and moral structure of the new society. Civil wars, fratricidal violent and the imposition of constitutional regimes would be the main aspects of the period 1810-1833. In this period of formation of the Chilean state, the influence of the Catholic trend called “enlightened Catholicism” was fundamental, and determined the key ideas of the political Constitution of 1833.
2. Economic Nation Building: this second moment starts immediately after the defeat of Peru and Bolivia in the war of Pacific and the imperialist pretension of Chile. This period of time shows the incorporation of Chile into the international trade through the export of nitrate and copper and the rise of proletariats and with them the diffusion of Marxism as a challenge to the dominant conception in Chile: Catholicism. This second moment culminates with the creation and implementation of the political Constitution of 1925.
3. Globalization: this moment starts with the tensions in the Catholic Church during the 1930’s and the effects of Second Vatican Council in Chile. This third moment focuses on the way the Catholic Church dealt with the notion of human rights and autonomy and the Church’s traditional vision of human beings as creatures created by God. The problem of political liberty would be in the center of the debate between Christian Democrats, Traditional Conservatives and Marxists during the first part of the twentieth century in Chile. Further, the problem of political liberty would relate with the problem of the relationships between the Church and the state. This third moment culminates with the imposition of the political Constitution of 1980 of Augusto Pinochet, and the implementation of a new form of state whose effects are to be determined. One aspect of this period of time is the influence of a new religious movement within the Catholic Church: *Opus Dei*. This new religious movement played an essential role in the transformation of Spain into a capitalist country. Like Spain, Chile has undergone similar changes, and the effects of these changes are still present in the current conditions of Chile.

I recognize that the scope of this research is beyond the limited space of a paper. For this reason, I will focus on the development of Chile in the first part of twentieth century with the implementation of the constitution of 1925. I have the impression that the events and experiences

concerning the 1925 constitution played a major role in the tragic events of 1973 and its aftermath. As we will see, the landscape of Chile during the second part of the twentieth century would be defined in the 1930s.

In respect to methodology, this paper will use the work and ideas of “prominent” actors of Chile, some of them belonged to the Chilean elite, others do not. Nonetheless, all they changed and created new conditions for the entire society. Of course, it is possible to argue that this form of approach does not take into account the role of the majority of the population. Unfortunately, the majority of the Chilean population in the beginning of the twentieth century was unable to write or create a permanent testimony of its ideas and concerns. Despite this inconveniency, I am really aware of the fact that figures like Pinochet, Allende or Alessandri were actors who did not represent the entire population of Chile, even though they attracted and appealed a significant part of women and men during the Chilean twentieth century. In another respect, I recognize that these “actors” were not in total control of their destinies. In this sense, I will try to show in the following pages the role and power of ideas in shaping the destiny of these men.

## The Social Conditions of Chilean Society

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the private property is under the hand of few people. Only the 10% of the Chilean population had the 90% of the land in Chile, what implies that only these landlords had access to sources of water and political power (Patricio Meller, 1996: 86).

When Chile achieved its independence backbone of the colonial economy, remained intact. This Spanish institution allowed the conquerors to subjugate the indigenous population and to establish a permanent serfdom condition on the natives. When Spain conquered the different people of Latin America, the new conquerors divided the lands and its people among a handful of *Señores*. Likewise, when Pedro de Valdivia, the conqueror of Chile, sent Francisco de Aguirre to refound La Serena (a current important city in the north of Chile) Valdivia gave all the land and Indians from the valley of Choapa to the valley of Copiapó to only eight *vecinos*. A *vecino* was a principal citizen in an urban center, a tax-paying property owner with a “voice” in the cabildo; he was also often an *encomendero*. In this socio-economic system, few landlords possessed the wealth and destiny of the Indians whose existence was reduced to condition of slave. Of course, the Spanish conquerors obliterated the real dimension of this new form of serfdom, on the pretext that the Indians were free to move every time they want; hiding the fact that the Indians were enslaved through a sophisticated form of dependence and surveillance.

The *encomiendas* grants often remained in the same family for many generations. As Brian Loveman has pointed out in his book Chile: the legacy of the Hispanic capitalism, no better example of this monopolization of power can be found than the Aguirre family whose descendants retained the *encomiendas* of Copiapó and Coquimbo until the abolition of all *encomiendas* in Chile in the late eighteenth century (1791), and remained important landowners in the region into the twentieth century. This situation was not unusual in Chile. After its independence, the socio-economic conditions of Chilean society were not altered essentially. Such as *encomienda* system, the new Chilean elite found new and “intelligent” forms to falsify the reality. In Brian Loveman words’:

“As the eighteenth century progressed, the role of the *encomienda* Indians drastically declined, while tenancies and the system of *inquilinaje* became more important. The origin of the *inquilino* laborer, who became the backbone of the rural labor force in Chile, still stirs controversy among

Chilean historians. A traditional interpretation has the *encomienda* Indian as the forerunner of the *inquilino*. More recent studies of several regions in the central valley point to the *arrendatario* and the worker receiving *préstamos de tierra* from the early eighteenth century onward. Of course, as wheat cultivation expanded, many of the remaining *encomienda* Indians fled to other farms and/or took on mestizo culture and were incorporated as peons or *arrendatarios* in the rural economy. Thus, the institutions of tenancy, as they evolved, allowed for absorption of the Indian laborer, as well as the rural *casta* and mestizo, as *inquilinos*, while *encomenderos* continued to exploit tributary Indians as long as possible.” (Brian Loveman, 2001:87).

In this way, the Chilean society was founded on a caste system that took the form of *inquilinaje* in the countryside, where the majority of population lived during the nineteenth century. At the same time, the discovery of significant sources of nitrate in the region of Antofagasta and Atacama, then parts of Peru and Bolivia, produced the attraction of immigrants and capitals that would alter definitely the social existence of Chile.

Thousands of *inquilinos* or *peones* emigrated to the North, looking for better conditions of life. However, the immense wealth of the nitrate was concentrated in few hands, the new lords of the capital. British capitalists and Chilean merchants constituted a new social elite that exploited the white gold and the thousands of immigrants who became a new social class: *obreros*.

As we have mentioned before, Chile took control of the mines of nitrate (*Salitreras*) after the defeat of the Peru-Bolivia Confederation in the war of Pacific (1879-1884). After the war, Chile doubled its size, in terms of territorial extension, and it became part of the international trade. In these transformations, capital and ideas are brought into the *Salitreras*, and a new social movement arose to challenge the inequalities under which the workers had to live. In the following diagram, we can see the fluctuations of workers in the nitrate mines during the last part of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century:

#### WORKERS IN THE NITRATE INDUSTRY

Year	Workers Employed	Year	Workers Employed
1895	22,485	1923	41,099
1896	19,345	1924	59,649
1897	16,727	1925	60,785
1898	15,955	1926	38,118
1907	39,653	1927	35,788
1908	40,825	1928	59,963
1909	37,792	1929	58,493
1912	47,800	1930	44,464
1913	53,161	1931*	
1914	43,979	1932	8,535

1915	45,506	1933	8,486
1916	53,470	1934	14,133
1917	56,378		
1918	56,981		
1919	44,498		
1920	23,542		
1921	33,876		
1922	25,462		

\*No data for 1931.

Source: Lawrence Stickell, "Migration and Mining: Labor in Northern Chile in the Nitrate Era, 1880-1930," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1978. (Cited by Brian Loveman, 2001: 170)

Liberal philosophies and economic doctrines imported from Europe reinforced in the Chilean elites the assumption that worker unions, collective association were contrary to "freedom to work". Prior 1924 Chilean laws did not provide norms for dealing with conflicts between workers and employers. In these conditions, the lack of written contracts and the consideration of strikes as subversive actions against the public order motivated the action of *mancomunales* or mutual aid societies to defend the rights of the workers. The process of industrialization of the nitrate mines also incorporated women into the labor force. Women organized separate mutual aid societies in the major cities of Chile. These new social forces called the attention of the social elite. Something new was taking place in Chilean society, and the nascent Chilean democracy had the conditions to evolve into a more inclusive system. However, the small Basque Castillian oligarchy that had founded and organized the country did not have the vision or the will to implement the necessary changes of this new society. A social crisis was inevitable.



## **Recabarren and the Foundation of the 1925 Constitution**

As we have seen, the new social conditions stimulated the rise of the first popular political party in Chile. In 1887 Malaquías Concha, a political activist, founded the Partido Demócrata (PD) whose objectives would be “political, economic, and social liberation of the people [pueblo]” and numerous reforms, including direct election of the president, municipal administration of the departments (eliminating the presidential appointed governors), taxes on land and capital, compulsory public education, and support for industrialization through protective tariffs. Appealing especially to artisans and the lower middle class, the party also promoted policies designed to improve the lot of the urban poor.

In 1894, the young typographer Luis Emilio Recabarren made the decision to be part of the Partido Demócrata. Recabarren came from a little merchant family of Valparaíso, then the main port of Chile. When Recabarren took part in the Partido Demócrata was 18 years old, and the civil war of 1891 was an event that still haunted the political actors of Chile.

A dispute between the President Balmaceda and the Congress about the use of the surplus, product of the exploitation of the nitrate, initiated a struggle between these two factions. The dispute was not futile; it was related with an old struggle about the character of the democracy in Chile. The President defended his vision of the presidential prerogative over the parliament, and in turn, the parliament, having been able to concentrate more power in the second part of nineteenth century, disputed a major role in the political process. Furthermore, Balmaceda represented a new perception of the social problems of Chile; he and others realized that the social economic conditions of Chile implied the need for further modernization based on the development of infrastructure. The Congress and the majority of the oligarchy argued against this vision; they felt that they had a right to determine the national budget and the destiny of the national resources. In some sense, they were right; they were defending their own property. In the end, the dispute would be solved by weapons. The Congress allied with the navy defeated the alliance between the president and the army, and with that the possibilities of transforming the incipient capitalism of Chile lost. Decades later, historians have recalled this period of time as the best example of a frustrated capitalism. But at that time, the principal political actors of the civil war of 1891 would remember that as the struggle against the dictatorship of Balmaceda. Since then, the figure of a strong president would torment the dreams of the political elite. To cement

parliamentarism, the new rulers implemented a set of laws that provided to the Congress ample power in the appointment of ministers, in the budget debate, and in the validation of the its own members.

But the civil war of 1891 had another significance in the history of Chile. After a bloody war and years of repression; the new authorities decided to enact an amnesty law to calm the spirits, to propitiate social harmony, and to reconstitute the Chilean family. Since its inception, the oligarchy understood politics as a family issue. In some sense, they had a good reason to think in that way; the political elite was connected through marriage or some form of socially recognized relationship. Baptism always was a good opportunity to incorporate new members into the family through the Catholic institution of *Padrinos* (stepfather) and *ahijados*.

The civil war of 1891 had created an abysmal disagreement in the political elite; The new authorities realized the need for reconciliation. As the deputy, in the beginning of the discussion of the 1891 amnesty law, declared:

“El país forma una sola familia, y no es posible que viva eternamente dividida. Ya pasaron las luchas; se obtuvo la victoria; esto es lo importante; reconstitúyase ahora la el país; olvide, perdona y venga la paz. Vivamos de nuevo unidos y felices.” (Cited by Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira, 1999/2000: 243)<sup>2</sup>

As in other times, the Chilean family found itself in a political dilemma: the need for punishment for past wrongdoing or forgiveness to reconstitute the familiar bond. Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira, in their fascinating and unique two volume book about the history of political justice in Chile<sup>3</sup>, have noted that since 1891 the political class created a model for a Chilean form of political reconciliation in which the amnesty constituted a self-amnesty. The goal of the familiar reconstitution was an excuse to exculpate the crimes of the victors. Time and the need for inclusion, in the end, prevailed over the need for justice. Such was the case in 1891. But a significant part of the people did not forget. Time to time, they rebelled against the establishment, and the government had to suspend the constitutional guarantees. It was common during the

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<sup>2</sup> TRANSLATION: “The country is only one family, and it is not possible to live forever in disagreement. The fight has ended; the victory reached. Now it is time to reconstitute the country. We should forget, forgive and the peace would be reestablished. We should live united, and happy.”

<sup>3</sup> The first volume covers the period 1814-1934 and it was published in 1999 under the title: “Las Suaves Cenizas del Olvido.” The second volume covers the period 1932-1994 and it was published in 2000 under the title: “Las Ardientes Cenizas del Olvido.” In 2002, a third volume has appeared, covering the last forty years of Chilean history; it was published under the title: “El Espejismo de la Reconciliación Chilena.”

nineteenth century the use of repressive laws to protect the internal security of the state. (Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira, 1999/2000: 245).

In these circumstances, someone like Recabarren found in the Partido Demócrata a source of political convictions and a space to use his skills as a typographer. He took in charge the publication of the newspaper “La Democracia”, the main expression of the party. Even though the Partido Demócrata defended a progressive conception of society, the PD was not a radical party that defended the suppression of the current society through violence. As Loveman points out:

“The Partido Demócrata evolved as Chile’s first populist political party, electing its first deputy to Congress in 1894. By 1903, it had obtained representation from Valparaíso, Santiago, and Concepción. The most progressive elements within the Partido Demócrata later emerged as leaders of the ever more militant labor organizations of the cities, the nitrate and mining camps, and the southern coal mines, as well as of the Socialist Workers Party (POS) formed in 1912. The party sponsored mass rallies, supported the worker’s press and cultural centers, and generally provided a legitimate voice of political opposition on behalf of the working classes. Though it never became a truly proletarian-based organization and continued to recruit its leadership from artisans and the middle class, the Partido Demócrata nevertheless challenged the assumptions and policies of the landowning, commercial, and industrial interests that dominated Chilean politics.” (Brian Loveman, 2001:164)

Within the Partido Demócrata Recabarren represented a more radical vision, but essentially he was a democrat who believes that the organization of workers and the legal means are the main weapons that the oppressed can use to transform society. Recabarren recognized that the anarchists with their obsession with violence were a real threat to the worker movement, his warnings would be correct. However, Recabarren has not been able to define his political ideas; he would radicalize his vision of society.

In 1903 the PD obtained a great victory in the election of Parliament, the party won deputies in the province of Valparaíso, Santiago y Concepción, the three major urban center of Chile. In Valparaíso, the port, the PD gains the control of the City Hall, the *municipalidad*. For the conservatives, the political victories of the PD were intolerable and they refused to recognize the validity of Recabarren election. The conservatives accused Recabarren of electoral fraud; he would be jailed for three months after the justice court lifted his charges. Unfortunately, for Recabarren the political constitution of Chile 1833, valid until 1925, provided the oligarchy with

extraordinary powers, among them the right of the Chamber of deputies to determine the validity of the election of deputy.

Likewise, according to the 12<sup>th</sup> article of the political constitution of 1833 every Chilean is equal before law, but in fact there were different conditions that a citizen has to fulfill to acquire the right to vote:

“Art. 8\* Son ciudadanos activos con derecho a sufragio:

Los chilenos que habiendo cumplido veinticinco años, si son solteros, i veintiuno, si son casados, i sabiendo leer i escribir tengan alguno de los siguientes requisitos:

1° Una propiedad inmueble, o un capital invertido en alguna especie de jiro o industria.

El valor de la propiedad inmueble, o del capital, se fijará para cada provincia de diez en diez años por una lei especial;

2° El ejercicio de una industria o arte, el goce de algún empleo, renta o usufructo, cuios emolumentos o productos guarden proporción con la propiedad inmueble, o capital de que se habla en el número anterior.

Art. 9° Nadie podrá gozar del derecho de sufragio sin estar inscrito en el registro de electores de la Municipalidad a que pertenezca, i sin tener en su poder el boleto de calificación tres meses antes de las elecciones.

Art. 10° Se suspende la calidad de ciudadano activo con derecho de sufragio:

1° Por ineptitud física o moral que impida obrar libre i reflexivamente;

2° Por la condición de sirviente doméstico.

3° Por la calidad de deudor al Fisco constituido en mora.

4° Por hallarse procesado como reo de delito que merezca pena aflictiva o infamante.” (12<sup>th</sup> article, 1833 Political Constitution of Chile)<sup>4</sup>

According to the same article 12<sup>th</sup>, the sovereignty is based on the nation, not on the people. What does “Nation” mean? Part of the struggle in Chilean society during its existence has been related with the definition of citizenship and sovereignty. Recabarren represented the idea

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<sup>4</sup> TRANSLATION: “Art. 8 Citizens have right to vote if they fulfill the following conditions:

They must be Chilean and they must be 25 years old, if they are single, or they must be 21 years old in the case of being married. They must know how to read and write. In addition they must fulfill some of the following conditions:

1° They have to possess a property or capital invested in an activity or industry. The value of the property and the amount of capital must be fixed for every province every ten years in a special law.

2° Every citizen must have an industry or art, and the earning or salary must be proportional to the property or capital, as mentioned above.

Art. 9° Nobody can vote without being registered in the electoral office of the *municipalidad* in which the person lives, and everybody must have a registration certificate (boleta de calificación) three months before the election in order to vote.

Art 10° The quality of citizen, and the capacity to vote, can be suspended under the following conditions:

1° For physical or moral ineptitude that impedes to act freely and responsibly.

2° For the condition of being a domestic servant.

3° For having failed to pay debts to the state.

4° For having found guilty of a penal crime”.

that only “the people” is the ultimate source of sovereignty and legitimacy of the political process, and the absolute right of every citizen to participate and define the political process. This is the reason why Recabarren conceived that the perfect form of government is democracy, the best expression of the idea of popular sovereignty. However, Recabarren’s trust in the potentiality of democracy would be put to test; very soon he would realize that the Chilean parliament system did not live up to its promises.

The constitution of 1833 imposed restrictions on the voters as well as the candidates. For example, a deputy is elected among 20.000 people “i por una fracción que no baje de diez mil” (Art 19°). Every deputy is elected every three years. To have the right to be elected deputy every person should have an income per month of 500 pesos. The Senate is constituted by 20 members whom are elected by special electors, in the same way as the president of the nation. To have the right to be elected senator every person should have an income per month of 2.000 pesos. The senators who are elected would remain in their position for 9 years. Recabarren testifies that a *peón* earns \$30 pesos per month, as well as many of them are illiterate whereby they cannot vote and, of course, they can never be candidates for a political position. However, we should note that in 1874 the requirements of voters were changed in order to remove the obstacles to vote. The requirements of income and property were removed to vote, but the conditions to be a candidate to the parliament remained. Despite this impediment, the modification of the electoral law permitted an increase in the number of voters from 26,815 in 1873 to 80,346 in 1876, and subsequently to 104,041 in 1869 (J. Samuel Valenzuela, 1996 : 21).

After his disappointing experience as a candidate, Recabarren led the *Comisión Organizadora del Congreso Social Obrero*, organized by the *mutualistas*. In this period of time, Recabarren met Gregorio Trincado, founder of the Mancomunal of Tocopilla. Trincado proposed Recabarren to travel to Tocopilla to manage the newspaper of the mancomunal: “El Trabajo.” Recabarren is jailed for eight months due to the publication of articles where he had criticized the inhumane condition of the workers in the nitrate mines. After this unfair detention, Recabarren made the decision to go to Antofagasta where he continued with his labor union activities, founding the newspaper “La Vanguardia.” In Antofagasta Recabarren was elected by the PD to be candidate in the next congressional elections. Recabarren obtained a clear victory. However, the Chamber of deputy refused his seat as deputy, on the pretext that Recabarren denied taking an oath on behalf of God. Recabarren is not catholic. The election is held again, Recabarren won

again, but the conservatives refused the validity of the election. Despite this failure, Recabarren did not cease to work for the improvement of the worker's conditions; he founded a new political party *Partido Demócrata Doctrinario* and the newspaper "La Reforma." In the meantime, Recabarren's enemies had accused him of conspiracy against the "nation." Recabarren was judged by the justice court as guilty and he was sentenced to jail for 541 days.

In these circumstances, Recabarren decided to leave Chile and to find asylum in Argentina, he was in this country when the massacre of Santa Maria de Iquique (1907) took place. Thousand of workers, women and children of the nitrate mines were massacred by the military forces sent by the government. Previously Recabarren had warned the risk of the anarchic movement and its persistence in the use of violence (Recabarren, *Anarquismo y Anarquistas*, published in the newspaper "El Marítimo", Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, 1904, p. 86). In fact, the massacre of Santa Maria would mean the almost disintegration of anarchism in Chile, at least in the first half of the twentieth century.

Before his departure to Argentina, Recabarren had begun to radicalize his ideas about politics. Since this transformation, Recabarren considered that the Partido Demócrata and its program are not adequate to combat the real roots of oppression. Recabarren considered that the PD has emphasized the political aspect of the oppression as the real cause of misery and exploitation of workers; he thought with Marx that the economic conditions of life are the final causes. In this way, Recabarren expressed his new convictions in the newspaper "La Reforma" in 1907:

"Hasta hace poco tiempo he creído que la Democracia y el Socialismo eran más o menos una misma idea, una misma cosa, o que ambas se completaban, que no tenían otra diferencia que el nombre. Sin embargo, el estudio y mi presencia desde hace algunos meses en las filas socialistas de esta nación, el ambiente nuevo que respiro me llevan hacia otro más eficaz y más completo que el de la democracia y me hacen comprender más exactamente la diferencia que entre ambos ideales existe.

He estudiado de nuevo ambos programas: el demócrata y el socialista !y cuán enorme es la diferencia! El programa demócrata aparece pálido, insignificante, probando con sus expresiones la poca capacidad moral e intelectual de los obreros de Chile. Sólo contiene un *programa de reformas* por realizar sobre las instituciones existentes, ampliándolas, suavizándolas, democratizándolas, pero dejándolas siempre lo que son: instituciones coercitivas de la libertad dominadas por la burguesía.

La democracia proclama reformar las instituciones, *democratizándolas*.

El socialismo proclama la desaparición de las instituciones inútiles y el reemplazo de algunos por otros complementos distintos, *socializándolas*.

Democracia es el gobierno del pueblo, por el pueblo y para el pueblo.

Socialismo es la socialización común de la propiedad de la tierra y de los medios de producción.

Más claro:

La Democracia quiere que el gobierno sea formado por el pueblo, que vengan a él los obreros y legislen en favor del pueblo, pero que exista gobierno.

Este sistema adolecerá siempre de la inestabilidad de la tiranía autoritaria. Quien sea que gobierne tendrá gobernados a quienes impondrá la ley y tendrá descontentos que conspirarán en su contra. Ejemplo: La organización de las instituciones obreras y del mismo partido tienen su base en la democracia, y su misma condición orgánica la hace engendrar diferencias, tiranías y despotismos que palpan los mismos obreros.

El socialismo acepta el gobierno sólo como forma primitiva y transitoria para establecer y consolidar la forma de la sociedad socialista, que será resistida por la burguesía hasta mucho tiempo después de producida la revolución que transforme el orden social.” (Recabarren, 1986: Tome 3, 297-98).<sup>5</sup>

In Argentina, Recabarren participated in the foundation of the Socialist party, and he began a trip to Europe to know at first hand the European worker movement. Recabarren stayed in touch with worker organization of Spain, France and Belgium. After his return to Chile, Recabarren was arrested and jailed for 18 months. This period of time was decisive to clarify his ideas. In 1910 Recabarren published his famous essay Ricos y Pobres en un Siglo de Vida Republicana (Poor and Rich People in a Century of the Republics) in which he exposed his main ideas about the social conditions of the Chilean people.

From this text, it is possible to conclude that Recabarren’s knowledge of Marx’s work, since his job as a typographer let him access to the scarce Marxist literature in Spanish, has been

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<sup>5</sup> TRANSLATION: “Until recently I have thought that democracy and socialism were the same idea, the same thing, or, I thought, they complement each other, and the only difference between them was the name. However, the study and the experience of having been a member of the Socialist party of this country, made me realize that it is possible to elaborate a more complex concept of democracy and, at the same time, I realized the difference between these ideals (democracy and socialism).

I have studied again both programs: the democrat and the socialist, and how many differences I have founded! The democratic program looks pallid, insignificant, proving with its words the moral and intellectual incapacity of the Chilean workers. The democratic program has only a set of reforms to be applied on the current institutions in order to expand them, to soften them or democratize them, but leaving intact their characteristic of being coercive institutions of the liberty, dominated by the bourgeoisie.

Democracy proclaims to reform the institutions, democratizing them.

Socialism proclaims the disappearance of the useless institutions and the replacement of them by other forms, socializing them.

Democracy is the government of the people by the people for the people.

Socialism is the common socialization of the property of land and the means of production.

In a more clear way:

Democracy wants that the government must be formed by the people, constituted by the workers, in order to legislate for the people, but keeping the existence of the government.

This system will always have the problem of the possibility of the authoritarian tyranny. Whoever the ruler there must be ruled people on whom law must be imposed, producing resented people who will conspire against the ruler. For example: the organization of the workers unions and the (democratic) party have their foundations on the (notion) of democracy, and this condition (of these institutions) produces differences (among their members), tyrannies and despotism that the workers can clearly perceive.

Socialism accepts the government only as a primitive and transitory form in order to construct and consolidate the socialist form of society. This socialist alteration would be resisted by the bourgeoisie during a long time even after the revolution that will transform the social order.”

developing into a more complex interpretation of the political and social struggle. The presence of Marx in Recabarren's thought is markedly apparent after Recabarren's travel to Europe. Like Marx, Recabarren thinks that power is related to class struggle. Like Marx's book The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, Recabarren's essay Ricos y Pobres en un Siglo de Vida Republicana analyzes the social conditions of Chile after a century of independence from the Imperial Spain. In this work, Recabarren describes the historical process of Chile. Recabarren's essay strives to understand the historical process of Chilean society through the notion of class struggle. According to Recabarren, we can see Chile as a product of the class struggle in which the rise of new forms of social classes, proletariat and middle class, has been a determining factor in the transformation of Chile. Recabarren considers, like Marx, that the main aspects of society are not determined by individual behavior, but social structures. However, Recabarren disagrees with Marx over the revolutionary agent; Recabarren thinks that the dialectical process of class struggle does not have only two main actors: the bourgeoisie and the proletariats. In this respect, Recabarren points out:

*“La clase media que se recluta entre los obreros más preparados y los empleados, ¿habrá hecho progresos? ¡Recorramos su condición y convenzámonos! Esta clase es hoy mucho más numerosa que lo que era antes en proporción a cada época. Ha aumentado su número a expensas de los dos extremos sociales. A ella llegan los ricos que se empobrecen y que no pueden recuperar su condición y los que logran superarse en la última clase.*

(...)

*Es en esta clase, la clase media, donde se encuentra el mayor número de los descontentos del actual orden de cosas y de donde salen los que luchan por una sociedad mejor que la presente.”* (Recabarren, 1910/1976: 69-70).<sup>6</sup>

Bearing in mind that the middle class is a key concept in Recabarren's thought, Recabarren disagreed with Marx in the determinist character of the economic conditions. For Recabarren there is the sphere of the human consciousness in which human beings through reflection and education can achieve superior conceptions of society. In this respect, Marx not only believed that class struggle is the essence of the movement of history, but also he thought that the infrastructure of society is build upon its economic foundations. In this manner, the dynamic of society is out of the control of individuals. Recabarren shared with Marx the latter

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<sup>6</sup> TRANSLATION: “The middle class is formed by the more educated workers and employees. Has this social class changed? If we see its development we must accept the fact that this social class has undergone significant changes. This social class is more numerous today than it was in the past. It has transformed itself altering the extremes of the social structure. The middle class receives the riches who have become poor and the poorest who have become richer. (...)

In the middle class, we can find the majority of people who are critical and unsatisfied with the current conditions of society. The people who will struggle for a better society come from this social milieu”



aspect, but he considered that human beings as a species has a drive to learn and to transform its own nature. Recabarren affirms:

*“Este estado moral de los pueblos es indigno.- La existencia de los seres humanos debe tener un objeto, y ese objeto no puede ser otro que hacer de la vida una idealidad, fuente de goces verdaderos, donde los seres humanos perfectos disfruten de las creaciones de la inteligencia. Para llegar a ese objetivo, la humanidad debe encaminarse gradualmente hacia su más completa perfección.*

*No puede ser más indigno que unos pocos hombres se deleiten esclavizando al mayor número y haciéndolos trabajar a sabiendas de que les explotan.” (Recabarren, 1912/1976: 111)<sup>7</sup>*

It is well known that Marx has clear influences from German Idealism, through Hegel Marx has received Kant’s idea about the dignity of human as an end whose existence cannot be reduced to a thing. In this respect, George Lichtheim referring the development of Marx’s thought points out:

“...In modern parlance the Marx of 1844-45 was an ‘existentialist’ in revolt against Hegel’s all-embracing pan-logism; he was not a positivist. The notion that ‘objective’ thinking might furnish a guide to practical conclusions would have struck him as even more preposterous than the Kantian invocation of disembodied ideals supposedly located in the moral consciousness. Viewed from the original Marxian standpoint, scientificism and moralism are two sides of the same coin. The ‘union of theory and practice’ is not *science*; it is a fusion of philosophy and action mediated by the vision of a unique constellation of circumstances: the approach of a social revolution which will inaugurate the reign of freedom.

In contrast to all this, the thinking of the mature Marx plainly discloses a growing emphasis upon the scientific study of processes independent of human volition, and a corresponding stress upon the concept of ‘historical necessity’...

(...) For Marx the historical process moves towards a goal which can only be described in quasi metaphysical terms. Its internal logic culminates in making man sovereign over his circumstances. The social revolution, determinedly propelled by causal circumstances which can be understood and guided, is the -partly conscious- agent of this transformation. The factor of consciousness is represented by the theorist who has perceived the meaning of events, and at a second remove by the socialist movement itself; hence theory and practice can be unified, on condition that the former is permitted to guide the latter. Despite an increasing tendency to emphasize the element of determination, Marx never quite abandoned his youthful vision of breakthrough in which theory and practice interact to bring about a total transformation of human condition. In his eyes every other goal was not merely unworthy of serious effort, but also unrealistic: if mankind aimed at less it would merely perpetuate its enslavement to circumstances not of its own conscious making.” (Lichtheim, 1982:236-237).

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<sup>7</sup> TRANSLATION: “The current state of society is despicable. The existence of human beings must have a better goal, and this goal must be the transformation of human life into an ideality, where every human being can enjoy the fruits of their creation. To reach this stage, humanity must develop itself gradually toward its total perfection. There is nothing more despicable than the existence of some men who consciously enjoy exploiting and enslaving other human beings”.

Lichtheim emphasizes that in the thought of the mature Marx the transformation of social conditions is represented as causally determined process similar to the scheme of Darwinian evolution (Lichtheim, 1982: 237). In this respect, the alteration of the social conditions is only possible by the effort of an organized group; this is the function of political parties in which the proletariat is the real agent of the social transformation. However, the tension between the possibility of change and the constraints of the social systems always present an indissoluble tension. Within this conceptual framework, Recabarren considers that the possibility of social emancipation is based on the existence of a new social class that represents a moral superiority: the middle class. Why does Recabarren have these commonalities with the young Marx? It is impossible to say what intellectual influences determined Recabarren's thought, primarily due to the lack of major research about the ideological conditions of the Chilean socialism in this period of time, and secondly the lack of further scholar work on the connections between European and Latin American political thought.

As it has been mentioned above, Recabarren thought that it was possible to overthrow the capitalist system through the actions of the *obreros* and middle class, using democratic means. In this manner, in his essay El Socialismo. ¿Qué es y cómo se realizará?,<sup>8</sup> Recabarren emphasizes his trust in the possibility of progress through the alteration and transformation of law. In this aspect, Recabarren takes distance from the Marxist notion of law as part of the superstructure whose function is to maintain the bourgeoisie oppression (Recabarren, 1912/1976: 111). Nonetheless, Recabarren always maintained the possibility of the general strike as the essential weapon in the struggle against the oppression of capitalism. However, Recabarren was dismissive of the role of violence in the struggle against capitalism. In fact, Recabarren considered that anarchism with its obsession of violence was not only a provocation to increase the violence against the worker unions, but also a good pretext for the political establishment to justify its aggression and exploitation of workers. Thus for Recabarren the force of ballots, through the organization of political organizations, and the general strike are the main weapons which the workers have to transform the capitalist society (Recabarren 1921/1976: 35-36).

It is clear that Recabarren in his effort to give coherence to his political discourse, he had to provide moral arguments that can demonstrate the moral superiority of his political conceptions. In this effort, Recabarren has deduced similar conclusions than José Carlos

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<sup>8</sup> Published in the newspaper "El Despertar de los Trabajadores" (October 8<sup>th</sup> and November 21<sup>st</sup> 1912)

Mariátegui, the famous Cuban thinker, a form of historicism which emphasizes the role of the revolutionary praxis and the potentialities of the human history insofar as history is thought as an open book that must be written in the process of the struggle for freedom. Thus Recabarren sustained that the validity of critical thought must be confirmed by the success of the revolutionary action whose goals are the instauration of a morally better society. For Recabarren, Marxism has a superior morality that can provide to human beings a superior form of coexistence. As Lichtheim has affirmed “the heart of Marxism (as of rationalism generally) is the belief that insight into nature of reality is all that is required to release the forces making for the eventual triumph of liberty and rationality.” (Lichtheim, 1982: 238).

Recabarren wrote essays, managed newspapers and led the workers union. In this effort, Recabarren founded in 1911 the *Partido Obrero Socialista* (POS) in the city of Iquique, northern part of Chile. From this moment, Recabarren gave shape with his ideas the new political organization. The POS became a significant political actor. In fact, since its foundation, the POS mobilized the workers union to complain about the inhumane conditions of work. As the diagram below shows, the Chilean government created the *Oficina del Trabajo* in order to receive complaints from workers, and to register the activity of worker unions. Of course, it was not a casualty that the Oficina del Trabajo has been created the same year than the POS was founded.

**STRIKES IN CHILE, 1911-20**

Year	Strikes	Workers Involved
1911	10	4,762
1912	18	11,154
1913	17	10,490
1914	5	829
1915*		
1916	16	18,523
1917	26	11,408
1918	30	24,529
1919	66	23,529
1920	105	50,439

\*No data reported for 1915

Source: *Boletín de la Oficina del Trabajo*, No. 18,1922, p.263. (Cited by Brian Loveman,2001:171).

The emergence of the POS transformed the socialist movement into an organized institution. In this process, in 1917, the POS took control of the *Federación de Obreros de Chile* (FOCH), initially founded by Catholics and Social Christians of the train worker union,

underlying a hidden struggle between Catholics and Marxists to capture the heart and mind of the people. In 1919, during the second convention of the FOCH, the POS controlled the majority of the votes of this organization. Recabarren created the newspaper “Gran Federación Obrera,” whose name would change to “Justicia.”

After his defeat as Presidential candidate, Recabarren rode as a deputy candidate. In this occasion, he won the election; the deputy chamber accepted his victory. In 1921, Recabarren became the first socialist deputy. The Chilean socialist movement has become a real political force, Recabarren recognized that there were new social conditions to expand and deepen the socialist movement in Chile and Latin America. Between December 1921 and January 1922, in the city of Rancagua, the POS became the Chilean section of the International Communist, Komintern, and the FOCH became part of the Communist International. With these transformations, the POS became the Chilean Communist Party. Recabarren traveled to the Soviet Union to take part in the Fourth Congress of the International Socialist. He returned to Chile in February 1923. In the peak of his career, in 1924, after years of fighting for the worker’s dignity, Recabarren refused to ride again as a deputy. On December 19<sup>th</sup>, at seven o’clock, Recabarren committed suicide. He was 45 years old.

As we have seen, in the end of nineteenth century, Chilean society was experiencing deep changes in its social structure. The rise of mining laborers created new conditions in the northern and center of the country. New ideas and thoughts were challenging the traditional institutions of Chile. Since the development of the nitrate industry, Chile had been integrated into the European market, and like Europe, the struggle between liberalism and socialism represented the profound changes of a society whose social parameters have been disintegrated. In these circumstances, the Catholic Church reacted with a revival of Thomas Aquinas’s thought through the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* reconfirming the authority of Thomas Aquinas’s thought in Catholic institutions, schools and universities, not only in theology but also in philosophy. However, Thomas Aquinas’s philosophy implied a rejection of the modern concept of self-determination of human beings. For this reason, some conservative Catholic intellectuals considered that rise of Marxism, with a clear appeal to political mobilization represented the inevitable clash with the “enemies” of Christian civilization.

With its proclamation of independence from Spain in 1810, Chilean society embraced the ideals of Enlightenment. However, the decisive influence of Catholicism impeded the social transformations that took place in Europe<sup>9</sup>. In the end of the nineteenth century, the struggle between those who advocated for the independence of the state from the church and those who considered that the link between the state and church was indissoluble was resolved in favor of the former. It is well known that the conception that defends that religious and secular-political institutions should normally operate independently of one another was initiated by William of Ockham. The impact of this thinker was essential in the political development of the Anglo-Saxon world; however, the Catholic Church, with Thomas Aquinas's philosophy as an ideological tool, resisted the transformations of Europe and America and it determined the way Latin America interpreted the relationship between the religious and the secular institutions and also the public and the private sphere. Likewise, when the Catholic Church considered that it has lost its privileges in Chile, it considered that a fundamental task was to reconstitute its political power through the creation of the Catholic University of Santiago (1888), the first Catholic university in Latin America, and the defense of the *Patronato*, the colonial institution that secured the entanglement of the state and the Church. In the article 10 of the 1823 constitution it was consecrated that "La religión del estado es la Católica Apostólica y Romana: con exclusión del culto y ejercicio de cualquier otra. (The religion of the state is the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman: it is forbidden the cult and practice of any other religion). The constitution of 1833 preserved the rights of the Catholic Church as the official Church of the state. Since then, the integration into the society was the exclusive dominion of Catholic property-owners.

However, despite the efforts of the traditional powers in Chile, including the Catholic Church, the emergence of the Chilean Communist Party prefigured the development of new political forces. Recabarren's movement was only a symptom of underlying forces that were taking place in the new Chilean society. In the beginning of the twentieth century in Chile, after the end of the First World War, the economic conditions proved that the ideal of an autonomous and independent nation was impossible to be fulfilled. The invention of artificial nitrate destroyed the nitrate industry and the main source of revenue for the Chilean state. The foundation of the nationalist idea of a sovereign nation was put into question, and the political forces of the country responded ambiguously. In 1920, the presidential election would represent the opportunity to challenge the political establishment. As we have seen, Recabarren represented the statization of

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<sup>9</sup> For an interesting account about the relationships between Latin America and modernity see: Jorge Larraín, (2000). Identity and Modernity in Latin America. Great Britain: Polity Press.

the means of production as the fundamental solution for the problems of poverty and marginalization of the majority of Chileans. However, a new leader would take advantage of the new ideas and trends of Chilean society. Arturo Alessandri, a lawyer, and the son of Italian immigrants would reap the new opportunities. With rhetoric and political ability, Alessandri captivated the hearts and mind of the Chilean masses in a way that nobody had seen before. As Simon Collier has described him:

“Arturo Alessandri fought the presidential election of 1920 with great vigor. Chile as Tarapacá writ large. His rhetorical gifts were considerable: no other Chilean politician of the twentieth century has equaled him in this respect. He was the nearest any modern Chilean politician has ever come (in a political culture resistant to such things) to being a “charismatic leader.” The magic of his name was sufficient, nearly forty years later, to help one of his son win the Chilean presidency. Stories about his speechmaking abound. He could hold a crowd as few others have been able to do. One of his secrets was the inclusion of carefully placed demotic expressions in his story- as when he described the Chilean upper class as *la canalla dorada* (“the gilded canaille”) or his supporters as his *querida chusma* (“beloved rabble”). His speeches no longer read well, if they ever did. His repeated and far from original catchphrase, “*el odio nada engendra; sólo el amor es fecundo*” (“Hatred creates nothing; only love is fertile), however unexceptionable as a sentiment, seems politically vacuous –but it clearly moved his audiences. Everything was in the timing and delivery. The man himself remains controversial. (Simon Collier and William Sater: 205)

The election of 1920 provided the opportunity to the Socialist Party to show its strength. Although Recabarren was in jail, the POS decided to nominate him for the Presidency. The rhetoric of Alessandri was decimating the socialist forces, despite socialists’ convictions. In the words of a witness and member of the socialist party, Elias Lafferte, denounced:

“La demagogia (de Alessandri) no llegó a nuestras filas, porque nosotros teníamos un concepto más o menos claro de la cuestión de clases, que habíamos aprendido de Recabarren, y comprendimos que ningún voto socialista podía darse a Alessandri...Un diputado demócrata llegó a Iquique a tratar de convencernos de que abandonáramos la candidatura de Recabarren para proclamar a Alessandri, pero el partido dijo que no.” (Cited in Julio Pinto and Verónica Valdivia, 2001: 67)<sup>10</sup>.

Unfortunately for Elías Lafferte, in the election of 1920 in the province of Tarapacá, Recabarren only obtained 154 electors against 3,260 obtained by Alessandri, and 915 by Barros Borgoño (candidate of the National Union).

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<sup>10</sup> TRANSLATION: “Alessandri’s demagoguery did not have any effect in our members, because we had a real understanding of the class struggle, learned from Recabarren, and we understood that we had not to vote for Alessandri...A democrat deputy came to Iquique to convince us that it would be better to abandon Recabarren’s candidacy, but the party said no.”

Arturo Alessandri won the Presidential election of 1920 and, despite the strong opposition of the National Union that represented the forces of the establishment, Alessandri was appointed president. However, in the parliamentary election of 1921 the Alliance, the political coalition that supported Alessandri, was incapable to change the forces in the senate. Despite the rhetorical power and a substantive majority in the Chamber of deputies, the obstruction of Alessandri's agenda by the senate would be successful. The promises of social legislation and constitutional reform would result in a bitter and long struggle between the senate and the president. Frederick Nunn has pointed out that in the 1920's everybody agreed that Chilean society needed some kind of reform:

“to alleviate the desperate situation of the lower classes and strengthen the nation's fiscal system. All but the most reactionary of Chilean oligarchs realized this. Conservatives, most Liberals and Radicals, and even some Democrats thought along lines of paternalistic measures and palliatives financed through existing sources of revenue, e.g., nitrate imposts. Only the most advanced thinkers proposed stringent graduated income taxes, until the new decline of nitrate revenues at the close of World War I made it obvious that the new sources of revenue were prerequisite to economic stability

But new sources of revenue and decisive action for social reforms were not forthcoming in Alessandri's presidency. They were not forthcoming as long as Chilean politics remained in the frenetic limbo of parliamentarism. This constitutional issue made 1920 a pivotal year and compelled Alessandri and the armed forces to act as they did. Involved with the constitutional issue – and with social issues too – was greater political consciousness on the part of all Chileans.” (Frederick Nunn, 1970: 14)

Like Balmaceda's government, the political process in Chile was paralyzed by the intransigence of the president and the congress, and in a similar way the solution to this impasse would come from the military forces. Politicians of the National Union thought to find in the military a way out to the “authoritarianism” of Alessandri. Nonetheless, like other spheres of Chilean society, the military forces had been experimenting deep changes in their members. Since 1900, the enactment of the law of obligatory military service had fomented the incorporation of workers and peasants. In this way, when the political forces, that represented the establishment and the past, thought that the solution would be the military forces, like 1891, were wrong. A new generation of officers, with more sensibility to the poorer classes, was more sympathetic to the revolutionary side of Alessandri's agenda.

In the beginning of September, 1924, a group of officers, led by Major Carlos Ibañez, demanded to Alessandri to dismiss three ministers, including the minister of war, the enactment

of a labor code, improvements in the military and the passage of an income tax law. This action was very clear to Alessandri; he did not have option, but to accept the demand. Alessandri appointed General Luis Altamirano, the inspector general of the army, as head of a new cabinet. On September 8, Altamirano appeared before the parliament and he demanded the passage of eight laws, including Alessandri's labor code. Nobody in the congress hesitated to protest; the laws were passed in a matter of hours. Alessandri had become a captive of the military. On September 9, he resigned the presidency; he found refuge in the American embassy to begin his exile. On September 11, a governing Junta, led by General Altamirano, replaced the constitutional presidency.

But the new junta very soon proved to be inefficient in implementing the changes that the majority of the population, including the new generation of officers, expected. The young officers suspected that a conservative restoration was in progress; by beginning of 1925 they thought that the new junta was paving the path for the restitution of the old oligarchs, represented in the National Union and in the person of Ladislao Errázuriz. Theirs suspicions were becoming true when suddenly Ladislao Errázuriz announced his candidacy for president. On January 23, 1925, troops surrounded the Presidential palace, La Moneda, and arrested General Altamirano, installing a new junta under the command of the General Pedro Pablo Dartnell, whose purposes he had made explicit before his coup d'état. In a clear sign of defiance against the junta of General Altamirano, Dartnell had proclaimed:

“The solemn moments which are affecting the Republic oblige this headquarters, for the general good of the Nation, to recommend to you, and to exact from you, a maximum of effort and prudence for the sake of public welfare and tranquility, the internal order of the Country and the sure march of all activities of the Nation.

An institution of order and of progress, the Army feels the weight of the immense responsibilities of the present hour on its shoulders; and as it has already defined its principles and accepted these responsibilities, it is only just that the firm base upon which its acts rest be made more robust and firm each day.

For this reason you must consider who are the enemies charged with the undermining of this base, in order that you may combat them with all your energy and at every opportunity.

No one is ignorant of the fact that a national gangrene was the result of corrupted politics, and that personal and speculative interests came before the general interest and welfare. It was thus that the needs of the Country were placed second to the ambitions of a chosen few; and so potent was the action of this gangrene that it came very near to knocking at the doors of the best organized and most strongly constituted institutions.

(...)

The army belongs to the Nation, it was not created to serve the interest of any particular party, whatever party that may be.

The professional honor of the Army is characterized by the correctness of proceedings in its own behalf and for the tranquility and order, both internal and external, of the Country's interests.



(...)

The honorable mission which is incumbent on the Armed Forces is totally removed from political gangrene, the very factor which brought the Country to the edge of the precipice.

For this reason, the Office of the Inspector General inspired by sentiments of highest patriotism, wishes to reiterate to all commands its confidence that the officers of the Army will not enter into, or by conversation demonstrate any tendency toward, political partisanship for any reason whatsoever.

Professional honor demands in imperative form that the Army follow the path trod by the Founding Fathers of the Country, and that it wear the badge of order, of respect and of discipline which have made the Armed Forces great and which have honorably earned the Country its place among the civilized nations of the world.” (Cited by Frederick Nunn, 1970: 180-181).

In this proclamation, Pedro Dartnell not only stated his own appreciation of the moment of the country, but also he was expressing a vision of the role of Armed Forces in Chilean society. Perhaps without realizing, Pedro Dartnell with his proclamation was creating the conditions for subsequent military interventions in the political process. The lessons for the future generations were obvious.

The new junta promised to restore the deposed government of Alessandri. Telegrams were sent to him, asking for his return. Staying in Italy, Alessandri had been negotiating with the Holy See the end of the *Patronato* and with that the dissolution of the entrenched relationship between the state and the Church. Likewise, when Alessandri arrived in Santiago on March 20 1925, he was ready to launch a constitutional reform. Having the Congress been dissolved in September 1924, Alessandri convoked a Consultative Commission of 53 members, representing all political forces, including the Communist. The constitutional draft was ready on July 23. With the opposition of the Radicals, Conservatives and Communists, Alessandri, with the support of the Armed Forces, called for a referendum. On August 1925, a plebiscite was held to accept or reject the new constitution. Only 45 percent of all voters participated in the plebiscite, but the constitution was accepted by 93 percent. The constitution was officially promulgated at a ceremony on September 18, the day of independence of Chile.

As we have pointed out, the new constitution eliminated the institution of *Patronato*, the government agreed to pay to the Church a subsidy and the liberty of religion, at least constitutionally speaking, was consecrated. In addition, the new constitution shifted the balance of power in favor of the presidency. The president would have the power to impose, in the absence of agreement with the congress, an annual budget, something that was denied to Balmaceda. The previous right of the Congress to validate its members was derogated, and a new tribunal was created to supervise and validate future elections. Unfortunately, Recabarren could

not see this happen. However, having witnessed the proclamation of Dartnell, Recabarren exclaimed: “the army’s action is a great step forward for the workers of Chile.” (Cited by Frederick Nunn, 1970: 69).

Unlike the instauration of the 1833 regime, the constitution of 1925 was not the product of a bloody civil war. However, there is no doubt that without the pressure and tutelage of the Armed Forces the 1925 constitution would not be implemented. But like other opportunities in the history of Chile, the need for political reconciliation obliged the new rulers to enact a new amnesty law. In the same of the promulgation of the new constitution, the president Alessandri announced a new amnesty to “celebrate the restoration of the republic and to promote peace and harmony” (Cited in Brian Loveman and Elizabeth Lira, 1999/2000: 287).

The new amnesty, as usual, was an amnesty law, and like other moments in the history of Chile the desire for reconciliation and social harmony would not be satisfied. After the promulgation of the 1925 amnesty law, Chile entered in a period social chaos. Conspiracies, coup d’état, and successive governments would mark eight years of political history. However, the lessons of 1891 and 1925 would contribute to the political education of the new generations. The role of the Armed Forces would be consecrated in the political culture of the country, and the Chilean political resolution through amnesty laws and the imposition of constitutional regimes would not be forgotten.

## Conclusions

When in 1973 a military coup d'état overthrew Allende's government and a military junta took the power in Chile, Osvaldo Lira (1904-1996), a priest recognized for his Thomistic ideas, expressed his happiness because the tyranny of a socialist government had been overthrown. In addition, Lira argued that the 1973 coup d'état satisfies all the conditions that Thomas Aquinas had defined as fundamental requisites to overthrow a tyranny (Osvaldo Lira, 1993:10).

After this declaration, Lira became an idol for the young Chilean conservatives; Many of them were his disciples at the Catholic University where he was an outstanding professor of philosophy. The transformations of Chilean society during the 1960s were perceived by this group as the apparent sign of the decadence of the Chilean values (*chilenidad*). In a period of social revolution, they remained in the margin of these transformations; even inside the Catholic Church the majority of the clergymen and members of the hierarchy sympathized with the government of Frei and of Allende.

Likewise, these young conservatives found inspiration and intellectual support in Osvaldo Lira's ideas. This priest who was a member of the religious order of *Sagrados Corazones*, ecclesiastical institution created to combat the perverse effects of the French revolution, recovered Thomas Aquinas's ideas to face the social transformations of Chile.

The lack of further studies does not permit us to determine the impact of Lira's ideas in the history of Chile during the 1960s and 1970s. However, Lira's ideas found a perfect time, the coup d'état of 1973, and the perfect person, Jaime Guzmán, to prove their power. Jaime Guzmán Errázuriz (1946-1991) was his most outstanding apostle. In 1973, Guzmán was professor of constitutional law in the Catholic university and was recognized by his opposition to Allende's government. When Pinochet took the power in Chile, Guzmán would be his most important ideologue.

As we have seen above, the constitutional regime of 1925 was the product of several social factors that were pressing the political system to change into a more inclusive and democratic organization. Since then, the political process of Chile was struggling to find a permanent solution to the problem of poverty. A problem that was rampant in the beginning of

the twentieth century. More than half of the total population did not have the minimum conditions to survive. The coup d'état of 1973, for a significant part of the political class, including prominent democrats like former president Eduardo Frei Montalva, thought that like the 1925 events there were the political conditions for a military intervention. Many democrats, like Frei and Patricio Aylwin, future president during the called "transition", believed that after a brief period of military control the republic government would be restored. History proved them wrong. However, they did not have the possibility to think otherwise. The experiences of the 1925 constitution remained vivid in the social imaginary of Chileans. The Armed Forces were part of the political process. Allende incorporated some generals in his cabinet. Carlos Prat was not an exception in the Chilean political process. Arturo Alessandri had done the same with Carlos Ibañez during the turbulent years of 1925. The entanglement between the political apparatus and the Armed Forces had proved that it was a guarantee of stability. But they were wrong. The social conditions of Chile were different. For Augusto Pinochet, who would be leader of the military junta, the political regime of 1925 needed a deeper alteration. The need to restore a strong presidential regime, similar to the 1833 constitution, was an expressed dream of the Conservatives.

The Thomist Osvaldo Lira celebrated the coup d'état, hoping that the order and respect of authority would be reestablished. He hoped that a strong presidential figure would be the perfect remedy for the malaises of Chile. He did not anticipate that his most beloved disciple, Jaime Guzmán would betray the corporatist ideas of social organization. Lira, like other Conservatives, did not realize that there was a different time and a different spirit was emerging in the ruins of the 1925 regime. They hated Marxism because it promoted the dissolution of religion and promoted an egalitarianism that it was against the Thomist doctrine of human person. But they did not realize that other political ideas would captivate the mind of a new generation of intellectual and politicians.

In the end, the Armed Forces would have the last word. They accepted the honorable mission outlined by General Pedro Dartnell as a historical mandate to purify the political institutions. In the same tenor, Pinochet would assert that the new constitutional order would avoid the old vices of the Chilean parliamentary regime. Pinochet emphasized that this new government would permit the reconstitution of a "full democracy". In his memoirs, remembering the decisive moments of the coup d'état, Pinochet exclaims:

“Es conveniente reiterar, una vez más, que el 11 de Septiembre no significó sólo el derrocamiento de un Gobierno ilegítimo y fracasado, sino que tal suceso representó el término de un régimen político-institucional definitivamente agotado, con el consiguiente imperativo de construir uno nuevo.

Por ello es que nuestra acción es una obra eminentemente creadora. (...) En tal situación advertimos la necesidad de dar forma a una nueva democracia que sea autoritaria, protegida, integradora, tecnificada y de auténtica participación social.

Un democracia es autoritaria cuando ella dispone de una autoridad fuerte y vigorosa para defender a los ciudadanos de la demagogia y la violencia, y es capaz de hacer imperar un orden jurídico que asegure los derechos de las personas...” (Augusto Pinochet, 1991: 145-146)<sup>11</sup>.

For Pinochet and the other members of the Military Junta, the coup d'état was a military obligation. Like their comrades of 1925, they realized that they were the only ones who have the power to cut the Gordian knot. And like their predecessors, in 1978, the Military Junta enacted an amnesty law to propitiate the concord and social harmony, hoping to create better conditions to establish a new constitutional regime. Augusto Pinochet and Jaime Guzmán would be the new actors of this chapter of Chilean history. A chapter that has not been concluded, because, like 1833, 1891 and 1925, the political regime has been the product of violent imposition, and despite, the more inclusiveness of the new Chilean democracy, the bitterness of the coup d'état of 1973 is still a vivid memory for thousand of Chileans.

After the detention of Pinochet in London, someone in a TV program made the comment that Chilean society is a family in which there have been prolong and permanent abuses among its members, and like classical abused families, their damage only can be discussed internally. Unfortunately for Pinochet and the Chilean family, the social conditions of Chile had changed dramatically in the end of the 1960s. Chile was no longer an island in the Southern part of Western Hemisphere. It was part of the world in which there are other rules and other actors. Recabarren's Marxism is no longer a political alternative in Chile. However, Recabarren's hopes for a more democratic and inclusive society have not vanished from the social imaginary of Chile.

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<sup>11</sup> TRANSLATION: “It is convenient to reiterate, one more time, that on September 11 not only was the overthrow of a illegitimate and failed government, but it also was the end of a type of politico-constitutional regime definitively exhausted, [for this reason] we have the responsibility to construct a new political order. Therefore our actions are creative (..) In this situation, we recognize the need to shape a new democracy that must be authoritarian, protected, integrative, technical, and with authentic social participation. A democracy is authoritarian insofar as it has a strong and vigorous authority to defend the citizens from demagoguery and violence, and it is capable to establish a legal order that can secure the rights of people...”

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Social and economic change-urbanization, increases in literacy and education, industrialization, mass media expansion-extend political consciousness, multiply political demands, broaden political participation. These changes undermine traditional sources of political authority and traditional political institutions; they enormously complicate the problems of creating new bases of political association and new political institutions combining legitimacy and effectiveness. The level of political community a society achieves reflects the relationship between its political institutions and the social forces which comprise it. A social force is an ethnic, religious, territorial, economic, or status group.