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BOLIVIA'S FAILED DEMOCRATIZATION OF 1977-1980

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ABSTRACT

Bolivia's Failed Democratization of 1977-1980

This paper analyzes the failed attempt to replace military authoritarian rule by civilian constitutional government in Bolivia between 1977 and 1980. The Bolivian case is evaluated from the comparative perspective provided by the Wilson Center Latin American Program's collaborative project on "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule in Latin America and Southern Europe."

The Bolivian authoritarian regime, even in its harshest form during the Banzer dictatorship, was not very solid by international standards. By Bolivian standards, however, it seemed remarkably durable, and even relatively successful in its own terms. The paper explains why a "controlled liberalization" was nevertheless attempted, and traces how this process escaped the control of its originators. As democratization gathered momentum, it became apparent that in Bolivian conditions political liberty would bring with it intense demands for socioeconomic change. The paper seeks to explain why Bolivia's competing political parties were unable to agree on an effective "democratizing pact" that would moderate and stabilize the process. It also argues that there was, in any case, an unavoidable risk of failure, not least because any political change threatened the various illicit privileges that had developed during the Banzer dictatorship. Given the pervasive criminality that had spread through the officer corps (largely spurred by the narcotics trade), a fierce backlash was always to be feared. The legacy of this failure damages the prospects for peaceful political liberalization--let alone for effective democratization--in Bolivia in the foreseeable future.

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Introduction

On July 17, 1980 the Bolivian military seized power. Congress was closed, civilian leaders were detained with a great show of violence, and hopes for a civilian constitutional government were dashed. An implacable and unsavory military dictatorship was established, another in a long series that has marked Bolivia's history as an independent nation. However, this dictatorship has acquired a worse reputation than many of its predecessors, in part because of the major effort at democratization that it thwarted, in part for the "southern cone" ruthlessness of its methods of repression, and in part because of its close involvement with the flourishing and gangster-ridden trade in illegal exports of cocaine.

This case study concerns the failed attempt to democratize Bolivia between late 1977 and July 1980. Applauding the military takeover, nine Bolivian banks took out an advertisement in the Wall Street Journal of October 3, 1980, which characterized the attempted democratization as follows:

Towards the end of 1977, much to the surprise of many people both inside and outside Bolivia, it was decided to put the country on a democratic course, and to hold general elections in May 1978. Since then the question of why has often been raised. There were several reasons: partly the genuine belief that the years of political stability and socio-economic progress could only be consolidated under a democracy; partly because it was felt that the final steps of important economic readjustment could only be taken with the kind of political support that a democracy supposedly creates; last, but not least, it was undoubtedly the result of international political pressure. Thereafter managing the economy gave way to political considerations, electioneering and demagoguery. A short period of two years brought about not less than three different interim governments, eighty political parties for an electorate of less than one and a half million; to say nothing of countless strikes, inflationary...increases....In summary, the nation was immersed in a climate of political frustration, social upheaval, a dangerous economic disequilibrium and at the same time stagnation in the economy.

Readers of the Wall Street Journal were being told, in short, that no doubt well-intentioned efforts from abroad to promote "democracy" in the unfavorable setting of Bolivia had created

an intolerable situation. Adopting the language of economic determinism, the bankers portrayed an authoritarian government (supposedly wedded to financial responsibility) as the necessary antidote to the excesses accompanying attempted democratization.

A Bolivian case study must therefore address the following three issues, all recurrent themes of the Wilson Center Latin American Program's "Transitions from Authoritarianism" project. What was the character of the authoritarian state in the Bolivian context (from where did it derive its strength, what interests did it serve, and how indispensable was it for the dominant groups in society)? Why, then, was a process of democratization set in motion (what were the motives, calculations, and miscalculations of the major participants)? Once underway, what determined the direction taken by the democratization effort, and was the final outcome (in this case the abortion of the process) inevitable? In order to effectively explain the recent past it has proved necessary to introduce a long historical perspective, and so to address a prior question that is specific to this paper. What could be the social meaning of traditional "democracy" (constitutional government, rule of law, a competitive electoral system) for the people of Bolivia, with their distinctive history, traditions, and socioeconomic problems?

One Hundred Years of...Democratic Experimentation

In a formal sense, constitutional democracy is far from new in Bolivia. Separation of power, the rule of law, rights of association, and periodic competitive elections between nationally organized civilian parties there have been the rule rather than the exception over the past hundred years. Such were the officially accepted norms in operation more or less continuously from 1880 to 1936, from 1938 to 1951, and from 1956 until 1964, or more arguably until 1968. The military authoritarianism of 1964 to 1978 (or more precisely of 1971 to 1978) represented a sharper and more complete break with the norms of constitutional government than had been the case for a century. That said, it must also be recognized that such norms were quite frequently honored in the breach. The reality of political, and above all of social, life was generally far harsher and more authoritarian than the formal provisions would suggest. Thus we must go beyond juridical definitions of democracy to ask what such political arrangements meant in practice for the main groups in society.

What for Bolivians has been the actual social content and meaning of "democracy?" It will become apparent from the rest of this section that the social content has varied very markedly. Oligarchic democracy meant almost nothing outside a very restricted circle of educated property-owners. Somewhat more extended democracy meant a desperate struggle for ascendancy between still rather limited groups in the small "modern" sector of the economy. Mass democracy meant social transformation of an overwhelming and unpredictable character. It is this third connotation of "democracy" that was uppermost in the national consciousness when the most recent attempt at democratization got underway. It is because

that connotation excited such widespread hopes and such deep-seated fears that the 1978-80 process became so convoluted, and ultimately led to tragedy.

Bolivia had made three serious attempts to establish relatively open and impersonal forms of constitutional government before the 1978-80 attempt. Such attempts occurred in the 1880s, the 1940s, and following the revolution of 1952. The three were quite distinctive in character, ranging from oligarchic to restrictive to mass democracy. The differences can be explained partly in terms of the international economic context prevailing at each point and partly in terms of internal social development (the more determinist explanations favored by some of our "Transitions" project contributors). But considerable weight should also be given to more transient factors, such as the short-term geopolitical balance in the region, and such subjective but powerful influences deriving from traditions, memories, and alignments.

The 1880s. After half a century of arbitrary and chaotic military-based forms of government, Bolivia (like many other South American countries) embarked on a prolonged period of fairly open and constitutional government, running roughly from 1880 to 1930. Elections generally occurred more or less on schedule, opposition parties and newspapers experienced only intermittent and relatively ineffective harassment, there was a fairly genuine division of power and some effort to maintain a neutral rule of law. Why? If we look first at the internal social development of the country, we find that the conditions for genuine modern democracy were absent. But that was probably an advantage, rather than an obstacle, to the establishment of a façade of constitutional government. The property qualifications ensured a very restrictive franchise, and all political actors had some stake in the maintenance of social peace. Constitutional government meant security and guarantees for the haves and an institutional framework to contain the have nots. It also offered a prospect of long-term gradual incorporation. Bolivia was a latecomer to the 19th-century liberal formulas of political development, but for quite a long time they seemed adaptable to internal social conditions. Analyzing how this system became adopted, the pressure from the international economy seems clearcut and forceful. Essentially, foreign investors (British and Anglo-Chilean) would not risk capital to develop Bolivian mines and railways unless an impersonal framework of constitutional guarantees could be provided and enforced. These powerful facilitating conditions lasted until the slump of 1930, when Bolivia and other Latin American governments were forced to choose between upholding the external guarantees they had given to foreign investors, and meeting a minimum of their domestic political commitments. But a favorable international environment for limited democratization after 1870 was not enough on its own. Domestic resistance of various kinds (military parasitism, regional insubordination,

the habits of caudillos) had to be overcome, and this required committed local leadership and the spur of geopolitical necessity. The geopolitical necessity came from Bolivia's defeat in the War of the Pacific in 1879, which left her landlocked (until foreigners built the missing railways), and visibly on the decline relative to her more advanced constitutional neighbors, Chile and Argentina. The committed local leadership was provided by a new class of mine-owners and bankers who learnt some liberal political ideology as an extension of their liberal economic ideology, whose interest in stable impersonal government was obvious, and who had suffered arbitrary taxation and exactions under the pre-1880 caudillos.

1945. The breakdown of the liberal international economy was accompanied by a breakdown in liberal political institutions that culminated in the Second World War. During the war, powerful groups and interests in Bolivia (and elsewhere in Latin America) that had lost ground during the liberal hegemony were attracted by the prospects of an Axis victory, and by the example of economic dirigisme and political authoritarianism offered by the Axis powers. The worldwide Allied victory of 1945 brought with it a new wave of "democratization" and "denazification," which shaped Bolivia's second transition from authoritarianism. At least in Bolivia, perhaps more than in Argentina and Brazil, it was overwhelming pressure from the international context that determined the process and character of the transition, and that overwhelmed some powerful internal forces tending towards a different outcome. Bolivia's vulnerability to international pressure derived from the distinctive character of her export sector. Because the country was a leading producer of strategic minerals and these were owned by U.S. and European registered mining houses, its political affairs were of undoubtedly direct interest to the governments of the victorious Allied powers. There was at this point no clear distinction between the geopolitical and the more narrowly economic aspects of the international pressure, which aimed to eliminate a reduct of pro-Axis sentiment and to consolidate a constitutional form of government that could guarantee the smooth supply of essential industrial and military raw materials.

Turning to domestic factors, the most striking feature of this democratization pact was that it rested on an alliance between the conservative and mine-owning interests linked with Britain and the U.S., and the Marxist political groups that had acquired a substantial following among Bolivia's increasingly active popular movement. How could such a pact come about? In fact it mirrored on the internal front the heterogeneous character of the anti-Axis alliance internationally. And, just like the international alliance, it rested on such a fragile base that within a year of "denazifying" Bolivia, the Cold War had shattered the democratic front, leaving the conservative and mine-owning interests as sole inheritors of the "democratic" legacy. This type of formal democracy was quite incapable of meeting even a minimum of popular aspirations,

or indeed of serving the true interests of even the narrow social group whose patrimony it had become. The basic process leading to its collapse derived from Bolivia's internal social development--generating a mining proletariat, an incipient urban organized labor force and an awakening peasantry, all of whom had been victims, rather than beneficiaries, of Bolivia's restricted and class-oriented forms of constitutional rule. The franchise, although enlarged to include much of the urban and mining proletariat, still excluded some four-fifths of the country's households. Thus, far too few social groups had a voice in the system, and yet from the standpoint of the dominant elites even this narrow franchise gave political expression to social forces far too radical and demanding to be accommodated by peaceful compromise.

1952. It was these internal social forces, frustrated during the democratization process of 1946, that prevailed over adverse international economic and geopolitical realities in 1952 (notably the physical isolation of the Bolivian revolution at the time of the Korean War--induced paranoia), and accomplished a much more radical and transforming kind of democratization. The 1952 revolution may look tame compared with later developments in Cuba and Nicaragua, but it was extremely bold and far-reaching for its time. It was also a democratizing, as well as a socially redistributive revolution. The type of democracy was, of course, quite different from that envisioned in the 1880s or 1940s--with more emphasis on mass mobilization, direct action, local and workplace assemblies and transformed property relations--and less concerned with division of powers, and alternation in power of competitive parties, or even with the formal structure upholding the rule of law. Nevertheless, the 1952 revolution did give rise to a twelve-year period of civilian rule, with universal suffrage extending the vote to women and illiterates. Elections were held regularly, opposition parties secured some representation, the presidency rotated every four years, and freedom of the press was for the most part sustained. Perhaps the best way to convey the character and limitations of the "democracy" envisaged by the MNR's leaders is that they were largely imitating the Mexican PRI. A newly enfranchised peasant population benefitting from massive land reform was expected to give the governing party a virtually captive electorate and a built-in majority that would make formal democracy "safe" for the revolution.

Note how radical this was at the time. It was before the Cuban revolution, in the middle of the Korean War. Geopolitical realities were as unfavorable as during the anti-Somoza revolution in Nicaragua. Almost all neighboring governments felt potentially threatened by an uncontrolled revolution in Bolivia, and international unease was compounded by the sensitivities of the United States. Note also the ambiguity that the revolution was both in the name of democracy (the thwarted 1951 election victory) and of a profound transformation of property relations.

Military Authoritarianism since 1964

The 1952 revolution nearly destroyed the armed forces. It temporarily armed the workers and the peasantry. It also granted universal suffrage, thus making peasant beneficiaries of the land reform the numerical majority in future elections. Organized labor was deprived of electoral strength by this move, but initially received compensation in the form of other privileged lines of access to the party and state apparatuses, including cabinet representation and a certain degree of worker control in the management of state enterprises. The result was an internal distribution of forces very threatening to the middle and upper classes, and unpropitious for private investment. But after a couple of years, the U.S. used the leverage of economic aid to restore private incentives and to encourage the reestablishment of the conventional hierarchies. Faced with this prospect, the post-1952 coalition proceeded to fragment, with organized labor soon occupying a strategic role in the opposition, and with the purged military apparatus reestablished courtesy of U.S. aid, and playing an increasingly assertive role on the right. Also, after 1957 the government worked to turn the peasant sindicatos against the opposition-minded labor movement.

Since 1964, Bolivian politics have been dominated by an authoritarianism whose central pillar has been the military. Bolivia's authoritarianism has taken a distinctive form, shaped by the legacy of the 1952 revolution. For example, the pacto militar-campesino was an essential ingredient of the ruling formula from the early 1960s to its disintegration in 1978. When local garrisons disarmed the peasant militias in the closing years of the second Paz Estenssoro administration, the officer corps acquired a vast clientele of rural dependents, whose vote could be manipulated in accordance with military policy. However, Bolivia's new officer corps was as socially mixed and as politically factionalized as was the revolutionary party it succeeded. Hence the military authoritarianism of post-1964 failed to establish its internal stability, either through institutional means, or through personalisms. Within the officer corps alliances had to be continuously renegotiated, and the armed forces always remained permeable and unpredictable in their relations with the other organized groups in society.¹ Military ideology was correspondingly confused, yielding episodes of socialist rhetoric, as well as bursts of pro-business activism, and swaying to the influence of models projected respectively from Peru, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina. Even constitutional democracy had a fleeting appeal. This invertebrate appearance did not extend to all aspects of Bolivia's military authoritarianism, however. Uncertain what they were for, the officer corps could nevertheless agree most definitely on some things they were against. Prime among these was any repetition of the 1952 events which came so close to destroying their institution. One constant has therefore been their hostility to the political organization of the mineworkers, for whom 1952 was a frustrated dawn. In fact all sources of opposition to the remilitarization of society and the reimposition of social hierarchy would elicit hostility from the armed forces. In this respect,

their ascendancy shared the general characteristics of authoritarian rule throughout the continent, even though some specific traits were shaped by the legacy of 1952.

Banzer's Authoritarianism

Although military rule assumed many forms between 1964 and 1978, the Banzer dictatorship proved the most successful, and endured for the longest period of time. Consideration of the 1971-77 regime indicates the essential character of military authoritarianism in contemporary Bolivia, and helps to explain how the most recent democratic transition came about. From where did General Banzer's government derive its strength? Was such a regime inevitable? Why did it peter out?

Banzer's government was always a precarious balancing act.² The initial pact on which it rested was inherently unstable. Ministries were parcelled out between rival political parties (the Falangistas and the Paz Estenssoro wing of the MNR), each of which tried to use its positions in the public administration to bolster its mass support and enhance its leverage within the armed forces. The organized private sector, which had helped to finance the coup of August 1971, was also given formal representation in the cabinet, and claims for power were also made by regional lobbies (such as the commercial interests of the eastern lowlands) and personalist factions (such as the extreme anti-communists around Interior Minister Selich). It seemed unlikely at first that President Banzer, encumbered with all these commitments, could marshal the independent authority to consolidate his rule. It is important to remember that the various garrison commanders only assented to his assumption of office in the name of the armed forces on the understanding that he would work towards an eventual constitutionalization of the regime, and that in the meantime he would submit his mandate to their periodic approval.

Despite this apparent fragility, the Banzer presidency achieved a degree of consolidation and longevity exceptional by the standards of Bolivian history. He was the longest-serving president since 1871, and unlike the great majority of his predecessors he exercised significant control over the manner of his relinquishment of office. This is the more remarkable since General Hugo Banzer lacked either the demagogic appeal of General Barrientos, or the administrative talents of General Ovando, his main predecessor in office. A man of limited vision and no great natural authority, his success must be attributed not only to luck but to the substantial economic interests he served and the shrewd advisers he attracted, and to his intermittent bursts of bold and unpredictable assertiveness. For the middle period of his government (from the autogolpe of November 1974 until some time in 1977) power was pretty effectively concentrated in the presidency, and in the leader's immediate circle of technocrat and business associates. In the pattern established during his seizure of power, popular protest was forcefully suppressed (La Paz factory workers in October 1972,

Cochabamba peasants in January 1974, highland miners in June 1976); although none of these apparent successes enabled the regime to enlist new social bases, or lastingly block off the subterranean currents of opposition. At any rate, the regime proved resilient enough to ride out a series of internal shocks, and to accommodate to such external shifts as Geisel's liberalization in Brazil, the rise and fall of Perón, the fall of Nixon, and even a period of acute international tension involving Chile, Peru, and Bolivia's outlet to the sea. Perhaps the best way to highlight the Banzer administration's record of survival is to recall that his anti-left coup anticipated by two years the outcome in Chile and Uruguay, while his move toward democracy began over a year after the similar steps in Peru and Ecuador.

Clearly, division among the regime's opponents (of which more below) provided an important opportunity for its consolidation. Reviewing the record of botched intrigues against the dictatorship, it is beyond doubt that fortuna--indeed sheer luck--played a not inconsiderable role in explaining its longevity. A period of remarkable economic opportunity greatly enhanced the advantages of incumbency (for a couple of years) although it is arguable that the windfall gains accruing to Bolivia after 1974 as a minor oil exporter were in fact sadly wasted. However, such factors are the traditional staples of Bolivian politics. The regime's relative strength and effectiveness compared to its predecessors' also rested on some more structural characteristics. By 1971 the "militarization" of the government apparatus, and particularly of the state enterprises, had created a substantial nexus of economic interests and clientele groups that required the shelter of conservative military rule. A succession of failures and defeats had taken its toll of the civilian and popular organizations that would be essential for any more democratic alternative. The once dominant populist revolutionary party, the MNR, was so badly split that one half, or more, initially supported Banzer (the Paz Estenssoras), while a very substantial minority, including most of the younger elements and many lower-class groupings, remained opposed. Conservative economic restoration had already gone far enough to create relatively powerful new social forces of the right (the so-called "medium miners" who had escaped nationalization, and the sugar and cotton bourgeoisie of the Santa Cruz area, who had escaped land reform). With the nationalization of American oil companies in the late 1960s, a major source of discord weakening the right had been removed. All these developments favored Banzer's government. It could also draw inspiration from the example of apparently successful "modernized authoritarianism" in neighboring Brazil. Finally, there was the catalyst of fear which did much to crystallize right-wing unity. In quick succession conservative interests had been threatened by "Che's" 1968 guerrilla campaign, by the example of Allende's 1970 election victory, and by the undisciplined radicalism that accompanied General Torres's government, and that found its chief expression in the proclamation of the People's Assembly (mid-1971), seemingly promising a return to the experiments of 1952. Thus, by Bolivian standards, the Banzer

government rested on a relatively solid basis of interest, ideology, and class sentiment. The power seizure of August 1971 was accompanied by a significant display of military ruthlessness with several hundred dead.

For all that, Banzer's variant of authoritarianism was not solid if compared with the other cases reviewed in the "Transitions" project. Although arbitrary and repressive, it was not efficient and systematic in the "southern cone" style. In fact, miscalculation and overreaction contributed substantially to some of the worst excesses of the regime (the killing of Cochabamba peasants in 1974 and the confrontation with the miners in 1976). For the most part it was little more oppressive than several earlier Bolivian dictatorships, and a great deal milder than the dictatorship established in July 1980. Institutionally it required continuous improvisation, lacking either the agreed process of decision-making and promotion that have characterized the Brazilian military rule, or the forceful personalism of Franco, Somoza, or Pinochet. In addition to the general reasons given by Rouquié for the typical impermanence of military rule, the lesson of Bolivian history had been that no such government ever lasted very long, and this tradition encouraged personal ambition and insubordination throughout the officer corps. The spread of corruption throughout the armed forces was apparently tolerated by the Banzer government (itself corrupt) as a suitable way to contain these disciplinary problems.

The regime's basis of ideological legitimation was also unclear. Initial promises of democratization were mixed with the rhetoric of an anti-communist national security state, followed by more emphasis on national unity to secure economic development. Even the auto-golpe of November 1974, through which Banzer consolidated his personal power, contained flagrant contradictions.

On the one hand the Banzer government outlawed representative organizations, sending the political parties into recess, replacing elected labor leaders with government-appointed coordinadores, and even providing for the conscription of civilians whose occupations were deemed strategic by the state. On the other hand, preexisting constitutional conventions were not completely foresworn. Thus, Banzer still acknowledged the limitation of a six-year term, simply changing the starting date from August 1971 to November 1974. He again pledged elections at the end of his term, now postponed to 1980. Between 1974 and 1976, even this degree of dictatorship seemed relatively benign compared with the political and economic disasters befalling neighboring countries, but from 1976 onwards economic performance waned and the contrast between Bolivia and her neighbors lost its power to impress. By the end of Banzer's government, anti-Chilean nationalist sentiment had been awakened by his unsuccessful attempts to reach a compromise with Pinochet, and in the absence of any persuasive account of the higher objectives necessitating an authoritarian form of government, the original commitment to democratization resurfaced as a plausible theme. Such ideological and institutional improvisation faithfully reflected

the limited social basis for Bolivian conservatism. Most propertied interests are limited in scale and divided among themselves by rivalries of region and sectoral conflicts (e.g., between mine-owners, tropical agriculturalists, bankers, and importers). The catalyst of a Marxist menace lost some of its power to unify these groups as other types of danger became more visible (such as the risk of Chilean or Argentine-style state terrorism, or the unbridled corruption and gangsterism associated with government-protected cocaine trafficking). In these conditions, external influences could play a part of some significance. Andean Pact pressure for democracy was reinforced when the Carter administration took up the same issue. Even a British government decision to withhold aid from the Bolivian mining company until there was an improvement in workers' rights may have had some impact.

An Ill-fated Process of Transition

In November 1977, when President Banzer embarked on a process of electoral transition, he had no sense of being defeated. This was one more improvisation, no more dangerous than many of his successful earlier moves. Certainly popular demands for change had mounted, and the international setting had also changed in ways that required adaptation. Probably the decisive impetus came from Banzer's soundings of opinion within the leading army garrisons, the only real form of political consultation allowed at that time. The ostensible focus of concern was Bolivia's claim to an outlet to the Pacific. Banzer had for a while benefitted from this issue when he reestablished diplomatic relations with Santiago and opened negotiations with Pinochet for a territorial exchange, but the Chileans had maneuvered skillfully, trying to shift blame onto Peru for any failure to resolve the question before the hundredth anniversary of the War of the Pacific (1979). With this symbolic deadline approaching, and no demonstrable gains from his policy in prospect, Banzer seemed somewhat vulnerable before his military and civilian critics. A democratic opening that could be arranged on his own terms would deprive these dissidents of the excuse to conspire, and might enable the government to deflect possible disappointment over the Pacific coast issue from the executive to an array of squabbling and ineffective political parties.

A calculation such as this seemed plausible enough at the time, even to leading strategists of the opposition. With the pacto militar campesino still in operation, the Ministry of Labor more or less in control of organized labor, and the political parties demoralized by three years of compulsory recess, only the Church and the incipient human rights movement (neither of which seemed very formidable opponents) retained a capacity for autonomous organization. This suggested that Banzer could fight an election on very favorable terms, and might well succeed in prolonging his personal ascendancy by "constitutionalizing" his rule. This was, after all, the course adopted by General Barrientos in 1966, transforming a junta in which Banzer himself had initially served as Minister of Education. The president's confidence in his strategy

probably rested on an underestimation of the grievances of the opposition, a misperception rulers often suffer from when they deny their rivals any open means of expression.

The 1966 precedent seemed encouraging, but contained one major source of embarrassment. General Barrientos had surrendered his claim to military command during the six months preceding his election as president. A military candidate for public office must not be on active duty during the campaign, it was said, for that would contaminate the supposed institutional purity of the armed forces. So, if Banzer wished to win the election, he would have to pass control of the military apparatus to some rival. On reflection, his advisers seemed to have concluded that this course was too risky. The alternative was to delegate presidential office to a trusted nominee, whose definition of the role would be constrained by the knowledge that Banzer retained command over the troops. This was the alternative adopted, and it explains why, according to the most complete official returns of the presidential election held on July 9, 1978, General Pereda Asbún (formerly Minister of Interior of the Banzer dictatorship) received an absolute majority--a suspiciously exact 50 percent of votes cast, achieved through massive fraud.

This panorama was transformed by the 20-day hunger strike in demand of a political amnesty, begun by four miners' wives on December 28, 1977. One week earlier, the government had responded to Church lobbying by decreeing a partial Christmas amnesty that would supposedly create a suitable climate for the electoral campaign. However, only 33 prisoners were released; the army was not withdrawn from the mining zones; workers who had been dismissed in earlier strikes were not reinstated; many exiles would still not be allowed to return to the country; and the labor unions remained under government control. In protest against this "mockery" of an amnesty, and disregarding warnings of the political parties who said the time was not yet ripe, the four women and their 14 children took refuge in the archbishopric of La Paz, declaring that they would fast until their husbands were released and a full political amnesty was granted. With tacit support from the Church and active encouragement from the budding human rights movement, the hunger strike soon gathered momentum. By January 18, over 1,000 protesters were on strike in churches and public places all over the republic. Later in the day, Banzer realized the seriousness of the challenge, and some violent police assaults took place, but the public discredit was too visible. If the election campaign was to proceed, and if international sanctions were to be averted, it would be necessary to concede the hunger strikers' demands in full. From the government's point of view the worst aspect of this challenge was that it destroyed the Ministry of Labor apparatus of labor control. When pro-government labor "coordinators" called for a protest against the hunger strikers, the rank and file responded with demands for free trade unions. By the end of January 1978, unrestricted amnesty was established, the independent labor movement had resurfaced and gained legal recognition, and the Banzer regime was thrown onto the defensive.

Thereafter, as the electoral process gathered momentum, the basis of authoritarian control crumbled away. As with similar upsets elsewhere (like the Uruguayan plebiscite of November 1980), it is easier to list contributory factors than to arrive at an agreed explanation. The opposition viewpoint is that years of clandestine organization and internal resistance were what really drove the regime to seek an electoral outcome. Such efforts also provided the groundwork for civilian forces to seize the initiative and campaign aggressively the moment competitive politics were authorized. Exponents of this view can point to a series of conflicts and protest movements that preceded the announcement of an electoral timetable. But it is doubtful whether the Banzer administration perceived these as irresistible pressures against the status quo. More probably the dictatorship calculated (wrongly as it turned out) that the opposition was sufficiently cowed and divided that an electoral solution would prove manageable for those in power. Such miscalculations easily occur when all channels of expression have been controlled for too long, but another factor seems to have complicated the picture, as well.

Those sharing power under Banzer's regime could envisage more than one strategy for managing the electoral process. The political ambitions of many generals had been frustrated during Banzer's almost unprecedentedly long six-year ascendancy. Some with more enthusiasm than subtlety rallied to General Pereda's electoral bandwagon, hoping for a crushing victory that might free the elected president from dependence on the commander-in-chief. Others, fearing that their careers or their economic prospects might be sacrificed in the event of an overwhelming triumph by the Pereda faction, sought a variety of strategies to weaken the officialista candidate. Thus, for example, the Paz Estenssoro wing of the MNR (with 10.8 percent of the official vote) and the Christian Democrats each enjoyed a certain degree of influence within the officer corps and could muster significant regional and sectional support.

However, the candidate with least influence among the military emerged most strengthened from the contest. This fact lends some weight to opposition claims for the effectiveness of their resistance work, if not during the dictatorship, then more probably during the run up to the election. Hernán Siles Suazo (president from 1956-60) had, from the outset, opposed the Banzer coup of August 1971. His 1978 campaign rallied student, worker, and peasant support around a coalition that ranged from progressive churchmen to communist trade unionists, endorsing a platform that was unmistakably anti-militarist. Perhaps the most dynamic element in the coalition was provided by the MIR, a new party with particular appeal among students and youth. It claimed the heritage of the 1952 revolution, and condemned those older civilian leaders (like Victor Paz) who had compromised with the military in exchange for a fragment of patronage. This party used militant language and provided enthusiastic activists, but its leaders were in practice rather pragmatic, and capable of appealing to some significant

military and business interests. Despite the fraud, Siles officially obtained 24.6 percent of the vote, registering particular strength in the altiplano, especially in La Paz and the mining zones. This was largely an expression of the strong hostility towards the dictatorship felt in those areas and a consequence of effective organizing by the UDP coalition, both in the urban areas and among the surrounding aymará-speaking peasant population. Nevertheless, for such a public display of dissent to be recognized also required some lack of vigilance or even some connivance from the higher reaches of the administration. The human rights movement and international observers certainly played an important part in drawing attention to the scale of officially tolerated fraud. But it should be recalled that President Banzer remained directly responsible for the conduct of the electoral campaign and may have had his own reasons for undercutting Pereda's victory. His political interests would not necessarily be ill-served by a strong showing from the anti-militarist opposition. The Siles coalition could hardly rest content with a "constitutional" Pereda government based on military and conservative support. Consequently a strong showing by Siles would keep the Pereda government weak, and dependent upon the most highly organized nucleus of conservative leadership, which was still centered on President Banzer's military and financial associates.

It would, however, be misleading to overstate the orderly and rational basis of the behavior of Bolivian powerholders at this juncture. Disunity and distrust characterized the ruling group as their initial calculations fell apart and centrally-held power devolved onto a range of semi-independent local factions. In this complex process one aspect was the most strategic. A majority of the electorate were still rural cultivators, most of whom had benefitted from the agrarian reform of the 1950s. Both Paz Estenssoro and Siles Suazo could claim credit for the land distribution of that period. But since the death of General Barrientos in 1968 there was no military candidate who could appeal to the peasantry as a benefactor. A younger generation of better educated peasant organizers had emerged since then, and had found that the complex post-reform needs of the rural sector were not being well-attended by a military establishment accustomed to manipulating docile peasant leaders and contemptuous of an indigenous population known mainly for the conscripts it provided. Once independent labor unions had been reestablished in the cities, the example of autonomous organizations overthrowing government-protected pseudo-leaders soon spread to the countryside, and the twenty-year-old rift between worker and peasant organizations began to close. Thus, in 1978 military control over the rural vote was far more tenuous than it had been in the previous electoral contest of 1966. So the electoral campaign caused a crisis for the military-peasant pact, already partially discredited by a previous history of misuse. The crisis was first felt at the garrison level, where local commanders customarily maintained a clientele of dependent peasant leaders. Any garrison commander must fear that the regime would measure his loyalty by the electoral returns secured in his region.

But as the election campaign gathered momentum, the task of delivering an acceptable result became increasingly onerous. In a region like Tarija, where Paz Estenssoro had a traditional ascendancy, the solution might be for the garrison commander to renegotiate his relationship with relatively manageable local peasant organizations. In parts of the northern altiplano where rural activists were most assertive, and Siles did best, the mechanisms of the military-peasant pact quite simply failed to operate. But in much of the eastern lowlands, where conservative and landlord influence remained entrenched, blatant fraud and intimidation became the norm. With such a diversity of strategies employed at the local level, the typical officer was forced into decisions for which there was no institutional consensus. In short, the election campaign undermined military discipline, disintegrated the military-peasant pact, and created a climate of uncertainty in which radical mobilization might be rewarded by political success. What began as a "controlled" liberalization slipped out of control, as long-repressed social demands surfaced, and the authoritarian regime split into warring factions.

As the results were announced, denunciations of fraud came pouring in. Here, international pressures may have played their most important part. The electoral process had been launched to promote national unity against Chile, and to head off complaints by the human rights lobby. Instead it had aggravated internal disunity and confirmed some of the worst fears of the regime's international critics. Generals Banzer and Pereda each sought to shift blame for this disaster onto the other. Pereda called for an annulment of his own election, hoping to try again with less tainted results.³ Banzer declared that when his term ended on August 6 power would devolve on the armed forces, given the absence of a clean electoral mandate. On July 21, with support from Banzer's traditional stronghold of Santa Cruz, Pereda seized power, promising new elections within six months.

In the ensuing two-year interregnum rival civilian factions all intensified their bids for military support, successive generals attempted to exercise the reins of power, and fresh elections were alternately approved and then postponed. An intricate sequence of developments occurred, worthy of reconstruction, but beyond the scope of this analysis. A series of simplifying assertions must substitute for a full account. The military found themselves unable to resolve their internal problems by once again suppressing civilian political life. Civilian political groups were unable to construct a united front against the military, at least in part because they lacked an electoral verdict which measured the true weight of each party against its rivals. A series of precarious interim governments faced a cascade of social demands that had been pent up during the dictatorship. These were not only economic demands from the independent peasant, worker, and student organizations, but also political demands for freedom, justice, and the investigation of past crimes and abuses, pressed by the Church and human rights movement. Conventional businessmen found this absence

of governmental authority inimical to any orderly economic management. The narcotics mafia, already well-entrenched during the Banzer government, stepped up its political and criminal activities, and added to its para-military capabilities. Outsiders reacted to the turmoil in Bolivia's internal affairs by increased meddling. The result of these competing tendencies was eventually to create the possibility of an "unmanaged" and genuine electoral transition to constitutional government, but only in a climate of great confusion, high tension, and severe risk.

Relatively unmanaged elections were held in July 1979, but they produced inconclusive and disputed results. In the presidential contest, Siles officially led Paz, but only by 1,500 votes, with Banzer running a respectable third (Siles 528,700; Paz 527,200; Banzer 218,600). This time the socialist candidate, Marcelo Quiroga, who had gathered support by denouncing the Banzer regime's crimes, jumped to fourth place with over 100,000 votes and five deputies, a significant force to the left of Siles. (In 1968 Quiroga had made similar charges in Congress against the recently deceased president, General Barrientos.) According to the 1967 Constitution, since no one candidate had over 50 percent of the popular vote the issue must pass to the newly-elected congress. But there Paz had 64 votes to only 46 for Siles, with 73 required for ratification as president. Each of the two front-runners denounced the electoral fraud practised by his rival, but Siles probably had more grounds for complaint.⁴ In any event, Congress failed to elect either, and after nine days of humiliating deadlock, the two leading candidates had to compromise, throwing their joint support behind the president of the senate, who was elected on an interim basis for one year.

The failure of Bolivia's second presidential election to produce a broad-based civilian coalition, or an indisputable victory for one party, left the process of democratization in dire jeopardy. The socialist candidate, Marcelo Quiroga, announced ten days after the election that the armed forces had presented a 16-point set of demands to the various civilian candidates. These alleged demands included inclusion of the high command in all cabinet discussions and decisions; preservation of the purchasing power of all military salaries, with pay raises for the officer corps; and a guarantee of adequate resources for COFADENA, the military institution that operated various strategic public enterprises. Although the military denied making these demands, Quiroga's sources of information generally proved well-informed, and his party proceeded to use its reputation in Congress to introduce a series of well-documented indictments against the Banzer administration, charging corruption, human rights violations, and even treason (the latter concerning the negotiations with Chile). On September 3, 1979, the army high command responded with the following warning:

Instead of promoting a united effort to settle differences which are an obstacle to the consolidation of democracy, some elements have decided to promote actions intended to involve the armed forces....(They

are following) a path which is dangerous for the institutionalization of the country, even inciting a confrontation between the branches of government.... Let no one be deceived, because the consequences of a policy of provocation will be entirely shouldered by those who intend to plunge the country into an unbearable situation.

Two months later the army briefly and bloodily seized power and closed Congress, but in the face of determined popular resistance it backed off after 16 days, allowing democratization to proceed.

Nevertheless, for so long as Congress was functioning, the Socialist Party proceeded with its documented denunciations, and the other parties were unable to restrain this initiative (which had considerable popular support) ahead of the next round of elections. It was in such a climate that, in July 1980, a third and final attempt was made to complete the formal democratization process. At least there was general agreement on the procedures for holding genuine presidential and legislative elections. However, following the open election of June 29, 1980 the experiment definitively collapsed.

Within the military leadership there were those who favored a Peruvian-style return to barracks. As usual their most persuasive argument was that this would restore the prestige and unity of the armed forces, which would, of course, retain the possibility of returning to power in the event of civilian mismanagement. This argument only prevailed, however, for rather short periods of time when the evidence of military unpopularity and disunity was at its most unmistakable. As the July 1980 election drew closer, counter-arguments became more persuasive. According to one senior officer, "Bringing off a successful coup in Bolivia presupposes bringing one off in the army first. García Meza and Arce Gómez utilized the campaign the left-wing parties were waging against the armed forces at that time (accusations levelled against General Banzer, slashing the defense budget) to reverse the majority trend in the high command which favored respecting the democratic process. They pointed out that the military institution could not tolerate such attacks on its prestige any longer and cleverly played on the fears that troop strength and salaries might be cut."⁵

Here we have a recurring problem of political strategy for aspiring democratizers. On the one hand they must demonstrate that democracy offers the opportunity to correct past abuses and ensure against their repetition. Too much restraint on this score will demoralize their followers and be viewed by the authoritarian right as evidence of weakness. On the other hand any reference to military excesses may trigger an institutional backlash that jeopardizes the whole process of transition. There is probably no safe and reliable strategy that escapes this dilemma. In Bolivia there was quite pervasive criminality in the officer corps, so that the

temptation to denounce military excesses was hard to resist, especially in a closely-fought election. My own guess is that however skillfully the civilian democratizers had handled military susceptibilities, they faced an unavoidable risk of failure, since the military and economic factions involved in the narcotics traffic would be under no illusion that their privileges could survive a democratic government, no matter how tactfully the civilians behaved.

There can be no precise reconstruction of the rival political strategies that led up to the coup of July 17, 1980, for too many disparate forces competed for allegiance, too many incompatible perceptions were in play, and the scene kept shifting too quickly to permit the operation of stable and well-informed calculations. As in other episodes of attempted democratization under study, the margin of unpredictability can for a brief period become extremely wide, with unsettling effects on the outlook of all participants in the political process. There were ample reasons for such uncertainty in Bolivia. In November 1979 there had been a coup to thwart the electoral process that with the evident support of some 50 congressmen lasted 16 days, and cost over 200 lives, before it was overcome. The following month another fragile civilian government, under pressure from the IMF to confront a rapidly deteriorating economy, discovered that the result of raising gasoline prices was an impressive nationwide movement of peasant protest which blocked roads across the country until farm prices were raised. Throughout the ensuing seven months of electoral campaigning there were repeated incidents of threats and violence, expressing the military's discontent with the democratization process. The murder by paramilitary forces of a leading Jesuit advocate of the human rights cause brought out a 70,000-strong funeral procession, but not long thereafter a plane carrying UDP leaders crashed in circumstances that pointed to sabotage. Siles was deterred by violence from ever setting foot in the lowland city of Santa Cruz, despite its importance for the election campaign. On the other side, the civilian political groupings were too uncertain of their relative strength in relation to each other, and too riven by historical rivalries and memories of betrayal, to construct a firm "democratizing alliance" among themselves. Although they shared a common awareness of the dangers from the right they differed profoundly in their reactions to that threat, and differed also in the behavior they anticipated from each other, given a common danger. In brief outline, Victor Paz responded to the threat by strengthening his ties with the "less extreme" right; Hernán Siles redoubled his efforts to secure international protection and support (especially from the Carter administration); Juan Lechín concentrated on reviving the labor movement, in the process flirting with some unsavory right-wing associations; and Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz (socialist party candidate of the "next generation") focused on the past misdeeds of the military. While difficult inter-personal relations undoubtedly contributed to their differences (Victor Paz, Hernán Siles, and Juan Lechín had for almost 40 years campaigned together and maneuvered against each other in the merry-go-round of Bolivian populist politics), the obstacles to more effective collaboration

lay deeper. There were profound underlying disagreements about what kind of democracy was possible or desirable in Bolivian conditions, which may be summed up as disagreements over what should be the correct relationship between the machinery of the state and the mass organizations. The electoral process was only seen as one step towards resolving these long-standing issues of political controversy. It might temporarily determine who became president, and under what formal or implicit understandings, but that was only a proximate, rather than the ultimate, objective of civilian political action. The deeper issue remaining to be resolved was what parts of the legacy of the 1952 revolution could be revitalised or adapted to provide mass support and direction for future popularly-based governments. Both the character and the durability of any "democratization" process would depend upon how that question was answered.

The drive to produce a constitutionally elected government was touch-and-go to the very end. Just as the military contained an uncertain current of pro-democratic opinion, the civilians included various groups that might compensate for a poor electoral showing by defecting from the "pro-democratic" alliance (as some close associates of Paz Estenssoro had done in November 1979). In his efforts to avert a pre-electoral coup, U.S. Ambassador Weissman unavoidably became a figure for controversy.⁶ The fragility of the democratizing effort is best illustrated by the contrast between the three successive electoral tests that were held. The 1978 results appeared to favor the right, those of 1979 gave considerable strength to the center, whereas the results of 1980 gave a clear margin (though not quite an absolute majority) to the two candidates of the left.⁷ My own guess would be that on a true count the 1978 and 1979 results would have resembled those of 1980 (i.e., those in control of the count inflated the strength of first one anti-Siles candidate, and then another), but the conflicting sides will never reach agreement on this point. Their disagreements over the electoral results reflected more than just a series of differences over empirical questions. The rival candidates also had different perceptions of the distribution of real power in the society, and differing conceptions of what type of more or less democratic political arrangements might be viable. It is doubtful whether a different set of constitutional or electoral provisions would have softened these differences, although the question is worth debating. It seems that the minimum conditions for a stable democratizing alliance were absent (disagreement over the character of the desired democracy, disagreement over the means to promote democratization, and disagreement over both the strength and the reliability of the constitutional elements that would compose the alliance) with the result that every constituent part of the alliance had grounds for discontent with the rest, and the process of democratization itself was characterized by costly delays and unseemly recriminations, providing just the discredit for which the enemies of the process must have hoped. Although Siles finally emerged with a clear lead in the third election, he did not obtain an overwhelming victory, and even some of his supporters concede that their enthusiasm had been sapped by the length of the struggle.

Once the June 29 elections had taken place, most observers supposed that the moment of greatest danger had passed. Provided this third electoral test produced a relatively clearcut verdict, there should be, it was thought, clear sailing to the inauguration of a constitutional president on August 6, 1980. In reality, however, the post-electoral period was the most dangerous of all. The results of the popular vote were sufficiently clearcut to dispel any illusions either within Bolivia or in neighboring countries about the likely outcome of a successful democratization. As General García Meza, the army commander, told Brazilian reporters on July 3, "In Bolivia there is an extremism disguised as democracy...(the Armed Forces) have always shared that desire of the people (for democratization). What we disagree with at this time, as the neighboring countries also disagree, is that an extreme leftist government should assume power, something that could influence other nations, especially in South America, including Brazil."⁸ Since Siles had not received 50 percent of the popular vote, and had only 57 supporters in the newly-elected congress (out of 157), it was still possible to imagine some maneuver that would deprive him of victory. However on July 9, Paz Estenssoro finally ended his conflict with Siles, as he had long been urged to do, telling a Lima newspaper it would be "negative for the country's democratization process" to prevent Siles from taking office, or to force him into a constraining political pact.⁹ Thus, after almost nine years of estrangement from the Siles wing of the MNR, Paz parted ways from Banzer (who had, after all, played his part in blocking Paz from the presidency the year before) and moved towards reconciliation with the left. As he may well have feared, in the eyes of the right this move clarified the necessity for a coup.

The military had learned from their previous unsuccessful efforts to thwart the democratization process, particularly the short-lived dictatorship of November 1979. This time great violence would be needed to break the expectations established by the election, and to overcome an aroused resistance. Having left it so late to intervene, and having allowed the victims the moral support of an election victory, they had to proceed with unrestrained ferocity. What gave the impetus for this assault was not so much fear for the survival of their institution (which if anything is more threatened by the proliferation of para-military forces than by the left), nor any deep ideological commitment. Rather it was a condition that sets the Bolivian example apart from most of the examples of authoritarianism under study: the prospect of large-scale illicit enrichment for the officer corps, through a more unfettered development of the narcotics trade.

Concluding Reflections

The issues I have indicated as impediments to a stable "democratizing alliance" in Bolivia were also present to varying degrees in several other Latin American countries, although not perhaps in quite the same acute form. Formal democracy may not be an entirely convincing end-in-itself for popular movements whose followers have

urgent material needs to satisfy, and whose leaders have learned that political power can be used to redistribute income and reshape the processes of production. This is especially true in countries where mass politics is linked in the historical memory to the idea of socioeconomic transformation, and where the collapse of mass politics led both to a reconcentration of income and wealth and to a closure of political avenues of expression. In such circumstances, it is hardly surprising if subsequent generations of popular leadership come under pressure to view democratic procedures from an instrumental rather than a fundamentalist standpoint. For popular movements of this kind, democratically-elected government is clearly preferable to conservative authoritarianism, but important groups within such movements inevitably demand that social redistribution accompany formal democracy. And in due course, if it is necessary to preserve the new pattern of distribution by sacrificing some of the formal liberties which accompanied democratization, Latin American history suggests that some popular movements (not just their "totalitarian" leaders) may perhaps reluctantly make that sacrifice to "save the revolution." We can see this as a major issue for Nicaraguan democracy, and it remains an unresolved issue for the Chilean left, and presumably for the various fragments of Peronism. In Bolivia the dominant interests threatened by the democratic transition did their best to create alarm about the scale of this threat, trying to show that they were not opposed to a responsible democracy, whereas their supposedly democratic opponents were totalitarians in disguise. This campaign had some effect, in part because, as just explained, it contained an inescapable grain of truth, although the front-running candidate, Hernán Siles, could lay a more plausible claim than any rival Bolivian politician to being a true democrat. He had already served as president from 1956-60, showing an unusually scrupulous regard for constitutional propriety, but inevitably in the 1978-80 period his critics described him as a dupe of the totalitarian left. (When interpreting these charges, it is as well to recall that General Banzer has bluntly described the Socialist International of Brandt and González as a form of international "extremism.") Conscious that the authoritarian right was eager to appropriate the mantle of "democracy" for itself, the political leaders of the center and the left tried to avoid open disagreements among themselves about their respective views of democracy. But these political leaders were deeply divided over the issues raised by socioeconomic redistribution, and they had learned from past experience that their political rivals might adopt a purely instrumental approach to the value of formal democracy. Quiet awareness of these underlying truths did prevent Bolivia's civilian politicians from uniting around a more solid and effective "democratizing pact." Generalizing from this example, while it is always justified to enquire into the scope for promoting democracy through the conscious strategies chosen by political elites, it would be rash to underestimate the structural and historical constraints on such initiatives that now exist in various Latin American countries.

Bolivia's economic and social structure seems to resemble that of neighboring Peru and Ecuador, both of which achieved successful transitions to "democracy" at the end of the 1970s. However, Bolivian political traditions were far more radical, as indicated above in the discussion of the 1952 revolution.

It is debatable whether the Ecuadorean/Peruvian form of democracy could have generated a significant degree of support and enthusiasm in Bolivia. Indeed, Cotler and others have argued that even in Peru, "formal democracy" elicits little positive allegiance, existing more because of a temporary bankruptcy of the alternatives than because of its inherent local appeal. Although it had once had far milder connotations, "democracy" after 1952 meant for Bolivians the kind of social redistribution associated with the names of Siles, Lechín, and Paz Estenssoro. For Peruvians it still meant the more modest activities of a Belaúnde Terry. The Bolivian version of "democracy" necessarily excited more hope, and also aroused far more fear, particularly among the military, the bankers, and the major private exporting groups. These privileged groups contained elements that were exceptionally hostile to any form of democratic control because of their links to the the military-controlled narcotics smuggling industry that had flourished under the shelter of the Banzer dictatorship. In addition, the international setting for a Bolivian attempt at democracy was distinctly adverse. (Note the contrast with 1945, when the international conjuncture was very different.) Argentina, in particular, and the Southern Cone dictatorships, in general, perceived a threat that might have internal ramifications, if the civilian form of government established in the Andean Pact region were to spread any further south. From this standpoint, any rebuff to the political ambitions of the Bolivian armed forces, however well merited, might set an unacceptable example. It would not be necessary for Siles to act recklessly in order to incur the enmity of southern governments. Indeed, no matter how much restraint his administration might show, its mere existence would be regarded by neighboring governments as intolerable. Thus, the election apparently gave rise to some degree of precautionary intervention by elements of the Argentine military.

The legacy of Bolivia's failed transition to democracy will not be an asset in any future attempt of the same kind. In the same way that a failed attempt at economic stabilization increases the difficulty of making any future stabilization policy effective, a failed democratization teaches lessons that may be harmful to future endeavors. For example, it teaches privileged minorities that they need not run the risks of a political transition; that a viable alternative exists if they resort to redoubled ruthlessness. It teaches the victims of deprivation to insist on immediate satisfaction of their needs, before the tortuous and uncertain process of democratic construction collapses around them. It teaches revolutionary minorities not to disarm and place their trust in a civilian political compact. For the democratic politicians themselves, perhaps the lessons are not so clear. To some extent the

experience of failure, and the high costs it entails, may teach them to make greater efforts of adaptation, and to construct more ambitious and broad-visioned arrangements to safeguard political freedom. That would be the most hopeful interpretation, and some supporting examples can be found (Venezuelan and Colombian politicians after the debacles of 1948).

However, even for the civilian politicians who have managed to survive the dispersal and attrition that have followed the July 1980 coup, the lessons are at least partly discouraging and disorienting. For example, after the assassination of Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz (which followed immediately on García Meza's coup), how many future unarmed democratic politicians will dare to speak out in parliament denouncing the crimes of authoritarian rulers? And what kind of democracy is possible if civilian leaders dare not, for fear of their lives and their few precarious freedoms, question the arbitrary power of the security forces?

This issue arises above all in such countries as Bolivia, where illicit enrichment has become the mainstay of the authoritarian regime. But it is not confined to such cases. Spanish democrats have recently been confronted by this painful issue, for the failed democratization of their country in the 1930s still casts its long shadow over their efforts. In all of the countries under study, the same issue is likely to present itself in one guise or another. In my opinion it is a defining characteristic of authoritarianism that the security forces may commit crimes with the promise of impunity. Unless that promise is conclusively revoked there can be no true transition to democracy. (By this standard we must recognize that some authoritarian tendencies may exist even in apparently well-established democracies.) Whether we analyze the social meaning of democracy in a particular country, or examine more generally the source of its appeal, or the obstacles to its attainment, a central question is always how to subject the official security forces to democratic control, and to the rule of law. Although past success in this regard may feed upon itself, the process is always precarious. A history of failure to curb security excesses makes the task of democratizing far more costly and laborious.

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¹I have elaborated on these themes in "The State and Sectional Interests: The Bolivian Case," European Journal of Political Research (Amsterdam), June 1975, and "Politics and the Military in Bolivia," Society of Latin American Studies Bulletin (London), No. 26, 1977.

²See my "Bolivia Swings Right," Current History (Philadelphia) February 1972, and "Banzer's Bolivia," Current History (Philadelphia) February 1976.

³With 75 percent of the vote tabulated by July 19, the official totals just before nullification were: Pereda 763,204 (50.1%); Siles (UDP) 320,223 (21.8%); Paz Estenssoro (MNR) 164,652 (11.2%); René Bernal (PDC) 155,165 (10.6%). On this occasion Marcelo Quiroga (PS) was credited with under one percent of the vote. Paz Estenssoro and Juan Lechín both publicly estimated that 60 percent of the recorded votes were fraudulent, and most other observers gave similar opinions. One indication of the character of the fraud comes from comparing the official tally one and two days after the election:

	<u>July 10</u>	<u>July 11</u>
Pereda	153,211	283,824
Siles	129,063	103,527
Paz	52,364	82,324
Bernal	26,148	98,930

Since Pereda was not likely to obtain an absolute majority in Congress (where Siles would be strongly represented) his bid for the presidency required an outright majority of the popular vote, which may explain the last-minute scramble to inflate his support. On July 11, 1978, Siles proclaimed himself president-elect.

⁴Compare the official results four days after the election, with 67 percent of the vote tabulated, with those finally confirmed at the end of July:

	<u>July 5</u>	<u>July 31</u>
Siles	469,575	528,696
Paz	374,843	527,184
Banzer	214,657	218,587

Just as in 1978 in order to block Siles the support of Pereda and Bernal was inflated, in 1979 the Paz vote may have been artificially boosted for the same reason. Siles again proclaimed himself president-elect on July 16, 1979. The supporters of Paz replied that the army was deeply split, and that there would be a coup unless the government handed power to them.

⁵A senior Bolivian official interviewed by Yves Hardy, Le Monde, April 1981.

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⁶Argentine journalists held the following interview with General Banzer on July 3, 1980, which appeared in Clarín, Buenos Aires, July 4, 1980.

Q: What can you say about the alleged interference by the Department of State and the U.S. Ambassador in recent events?

A: I am really sorry about it.

Q: Do you disapprove of the State Department's declaration of support of the democratic process in Bolivia?

A: I do not disapprove of the declaration of support, that is interest, but I do disapprove of any declaration implying interference with Bolivian freedom, like saying "we will not permit that."

Q: By that phrase you mean not permitting a coup?

A: I mean whatever it refers to....!

Q: Even in reference to a coup?

A: Whatever it refers to! Even referring to a coup.

⁷Official results:

	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Siles (UDP)	484,383	528,696	507,173
Paz (MNR)	213,622	527,184	263,706
Pereda/Banzer	986,140	218,587	220,309
Quiroga (Socialist)	under 10,000	over 100,000	113,959

⁸O Estado de Sao Paulo, July 3, 1980. García Meza also referred to peasant complaints at the large number of votes received by Siles, asserting that the armed forces had the support of the peasantry who made up 70 percent of the population. Siles made clear that on assuming office he would replace the high command of the armed forces. The coup began on July 17, 1980 in the garrison at Trinidad, which was then being visited by García Meza. This was the capital of the one department carried by Banzer in the 1980 elections. Extremely underpopulated and with an economy based on cattle raising, this was the one area untouched by land reform or peasant organization. A key demand of the Trinidad garrison was "to reaffirm the military-peasant pact."

⁹La Prensa (Lima), July 9, 1980.