

**THE LEGACY OF DICTATORSHIP:  
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
CHANGE IN PINOCHET'S CHILE**

edited by

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## THE CHILEAN RIGHT AFTER PINOCHET

Sofia Correa

During most of the twentieth century, the Right has expressed itself politically through two parties of long-standing tradition and significant political power, namely, the Liberal Party (PL) and the Conservative Party (PC). The latter, closely linked to the Catholic Church, was denominational-by-nature. Other small and scarcely relevant political parties have always existed, responding to nationalist and/or corporatist ideas. Towards the mid-1960s, for reasons that we will not go into here, the century-long Conservative and Liberal parties found that their electoral support had diminished to such an extent that they decided to merge and create, together with nationalist sectors, the National Party (PN). The historical circumstances under which the National Party was created and in which it developed politically were extremely adverse for the right and, therefore, this new party assumed a highly aggressive political disposition somewhat out of tune with its earlier predecessors. In fact, under the government of the Popular Unity (PU) it became the most vocal opposition party, adopting stances and direct forms of action which helped bring about the military coup in September 1973.

Once the coup had been carried out, the PN dissolved voluntarily and, during the first ten years of military rule, almost none of its leaders expressed any partisan political views whatsoever. Towards 1983, and on account of the first signs of flexibility on the part of General Pinochet's government, political movements and parties began to organize. It soon became evident that the Right was split up into several groups by significant and apparently irreconcilable differences. Support for the military government - active in some cases and passive in others - had had a political cost for the Right which was manifest in the break-up of its former unity. Several attempts at reunification failed, so when a plebiscite was summoned in 1988, the Right was divided into two main parties, Independent Democratic Union (UDI) and National Renewal (RN) and into some minor political parties or movements which, despite the fact that they belonged to the right, were either for or against the government of General Pinochet. Also in the latter case were some rightist figures who joined the Party for Democracy (PPD), which was under the control of renewed Socialist sectors. Notwithstanding the tension existing between them, both UDI and RN and the more extreme nationalist groups supported the 'yes' option, under which Pinochet would have been allowed to continue as President of the Republic for a further eight years if it had not been for the final outcome on that occasion.

The opposition's victory implied calling for presidential and congressional elections within a year. In order to face those elections in the best possible conditions, the different parties entered into electoral agreements. The opposition as a whole formed a coalition known as the Coalition for Democracy (CPD) which included the small Right-wing Party of the Alliance of the Centre (PAC). It should also be borne in mind that some Right-wing figures had joined the PPD. RN and UDI agreed to face the elections together, as allies in an electoral pact called Democracy and Progress (DyP). Nationalist sectors stayed out of this pact and instead joined yet another political coalition which was to have very little effect.

One of the greatest surprises resulting from the congressional elections was the great number of votes obtained by the right and particularly by RN which, with the support of one third of the voters, became the second political party in the country, after the Christian Democrats. <1> UDI obtained 9% of the votes, thus exceeding the 5% legal minimum required to constitute a political party. In contrast with this high electoral support achieved by these leading sectors of the right, the rightist PAC - within the CPD coalition - was unable to get any of its candidates elected to Congress. Moreover, electoral results obtained by the nationalist right were disastrous. Thus, the right's panorama became clearer; obviously, it was to be composed by two parties, RN and UDI, and of the two it was obvious that RN could muster much more voting power.

The fact that the right is currently expressed in two competing political parties which are, at times, in open disagreement, needs some explanation. The traditional division of the right into two parties (the Liberals and the Conservatives) stemmed from very different causes; it was basically the denominational character of the Conservatives, i.e. its total and unconditional adherence to the Catholic Church which distanced this group from the Liberals; the Conservative Party, after all, believed itself to be the Church's 'political arm'. However, given the changes that have taken place in the Catholic Church since the 1960s, a party such as this is inconceivable today. Thus, the differences between UDI and RN are of a different nature: i.e. eminently political.

In my opinion, the basic aspects that divide them are: their 'political style', the social sectors they wish to represent, the degree of adherence to Pinochet and the military government, and their individual disposition to accept reforms which may alter the institutional legacy of the military regime.

Political style is an important factor in Chilean politics, particularly on the right, given the tendency shown in the past by right-wing leaders to congregate support and exercise influence based on their strong personalism.

This is no different today. For instance, one cannot talk about UDI without taking into account the crucial fact that this party was created by Jaime Guzmán, and that until the day of his assassination (2 April 1991) it always responded without any hesitation to his personal leadership; the fact that Guzmán did not hold the party's presidency had no major consequences. UDI's hardcore party militancy has always been controlled by relatively young political figures (under 40 years old), most of whom were former students of Guzmán at the Catholic University. In effect, before Guzmán's death it was difficult to find UDI members of his generation or older, or who had had acted on their own account: no one could overshadow him or dispute his preeminence. In my opinion, this would explain, for example, why persons such as Héctor Riesle (Ambassador to the Vatican, and subsequently to Paris during the military government) and Francisco Javier Cuadra (Secretario General de Gobierno and later Ambassador to the Vatican during the military government), although close to Guzmán in ideological terms, were to enter RN and UDI.

Moreover, Guzmán's crucial role as founder and leading figure of the party, is consistent with his total and uncritical adherence to two prominent Chilean political figures, namely Jorge Alessandri and Pinochet. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that he in turn would demand the same type of personal loyalty from UDI's top figures for himself.