

The defeat of Pinochet was largely due to the unity fostered among the opposition. The presidential elections to replace Pinochet will probably take place in December 1989. Can that opposition unity continue until then?

We in the Party For Democracy (PPD) and in the Socialist Party are very clear about the need to preserve that unity. We need a common political platform on some fundamental issues which need to be tackled with urgency, such as social investment in health, education and social security. We are not talking here of a socialist programme, because the dilemma is not between socialism and capitalism, but between dictatorship and democracy. We can learn from the lessons of some European societies which have successfully created strong democratic regimes after decades of totalitarianism or authoritarianism, through the quality and strength of democratic forces. In Chile, I am confident that the unity of the 16 parties and movements which defeated Pinochet can and should be recreated to see him go.

But are you not being over-optimistic? The recent foundation of PAIS (the Broad Party of the Socialist Left) which includes the left-wing *Almeyda* socialists, the Communists and the left-wing *Palma* radicals, surely poses a potential threat to that unity?

No. I don't think so. PAIS is an attempt to give an official identity to parties and movements which Pinochet wants to exclude from the democratic process. Because they by and large represent what I would call the traditional Left, they are more easily identified with the politics of state-oriented socialism of Allende's Popular Unity, and so what they are doing is in fact testing the sincerity of the military regime. We think that no one should be excluded because of his or her ideas, and have every confidence that PAIS will eventually integrate without reservation into our broad political and social-democratic front. It is true



Ricardo Lagos: Candidate for consensus

INTERVIEW Tightrope To Transition

During the 1970-73 Allende government, **Ricardo Lagos** was one of the Chilean president's most respected economic advisers, and acted as delegate to the United Nations in New York for periods throughout those years. Following the September 73 military coup which brought Pinochet to power, Lagos became an outspoken critic of the regime as leader of the opposition Socialist Party. He has played a prominent part in the umbrella group Party For Democracy (PPD) which brought together the coalition of forces which produced a 'No' vote in the plebiscite on Pinochet's future as president last October. Lagos is a front-runner to lead a future democratic government in Chile. *Benny Pollack*, who worked with Lagos at the UN during the Allende government, interviewed him for *Marxism Today*

that we need now to advance further, to agree on a common platform and not just a common candidate.

Programme and candidate: which is more important?

They are both important. As I said, after 15 years of repression, the Chilean people need urgent action. The health, education and social security systems have been all but eliminated, and no parliamentary or presidential system can survive without addressing those issues first. So it is important for Left, Right and Centre to agree on

a minimum programme of reconstruction as well as a candidate to face the military regime's candidate.

Reconstruction will cost money. You are obviously aware that the international financial community is wary of a future democratic government's economic policies. Businessmen fear that the high rate of profitability of their investments - around 40% - which has made the Chilean regime the darling of the banks, will be badly affected. And there are no signs of the foreign debt problem receding.

How would you tackle these problems?

Virtually all the democratic forces in Chile see a renegotiation of the country's foreign debt as vital. We have been paying 5-10% of our Gross Domestic Product just to service the debt and this blocks all attempts to break the vicious circle of dependency: we cannot develop, nor embark on redistributive policies. We very much favour a concerted Latin American renegotiating effort, so that the creditors' countries have a responsible, coherent partner to talk and listen to. There are three important actors in the foreign debt drama: the creditor countries, the debtor countries and the bankers. Creditor countries can persuade the banks and finance institutions operating within their boundaries that it is in nobody's interest to bring default nearer by being inflexible. After all, the whole international financial system depends on this: we all win or lose depending on how we manage the crisis. What we all have to understand is that the debt problem is not merely economic or financial, but political, needing lots of common sense to argue the issues through.

But how will you finance the social investment required to sustain democratic progress in Chile after the dictatorship?

The point I am trying to make is that we need the cooperation of the international community, so that we can redirect resources hitherto going to service the debt, towards a minimum vital programme of social investment. Without it, no democratic regime can survive: the pressures after years of repression will be too difficult to handle. We simply cannot afford to ask the Chilean people to postpone their legitimate aspirations for fairer income distribution, humane wages, and decent education and health services.

The next presidential election will take place in December 1989 - but under the terms of the 1980 constitution which severely limits the exercise of democratic rights. Specifically,

it prohibits the participation of 'subversive' parties, maintains a 'National Security Council' as watchdog over the new political system, and gives Pinochet the right to appoint a number of senators. Do you accept these terms?

These limitations are unacceptable. Even the National Party and the National Renewal Party, both of which supported Pinochet in the plebiscite, are now against these undemocratic aspects, and are campaigning for the reform of the constitution.

Does the future government intend to take those responsible for human rights violations to court?

If we are going to be a truly democratic society, those guilty of crimes of any nature should be punished. Independent tribunals should examine cases brought by individuals. There is no way this issue can be hidden under the carpet. But we should not have, say, Nuremberg trials in Chile. Justice will have to be done and will have to be seen to be done, but massive political or criminal trials are out of the question, in my opinion.

What economic system should replace the current one? The 'law of comparative advantage' has brought significant benefits to certain exporters, such as fruit and wood producers, whose goods have been very competitive abroad. Will this continue?

The positive aspects of the current economic model should be preserved. We need and want foreign investment, and we need and want income from exports. We should be able to guarantee a good rate of profitability in both cases, but not at the price of unrestricted exploitation of labour. This cannot continue in a democracy - for moral, ethical reasons. I am sure responsible members of the business community realise they cannot base their success on the inhuman exploitation of labour; such a system is bound to break up sooner or later. And in Chile, after 15 years of unfairness, abuse and exploitation, change is in everybody's interest.

Can you expand on the nature



After the dictator: Will Chile say 'yes' to democracy?

of the PPD and its relationship to the Socialist Party? How do you intend to avoid the potential contradictions of being the leader, simultaneously, of two political groups?

The PPD is an umbrella organisation, of which the Socialist Party is part. We have there people from the Right and the Centre as well. All agree that democratic reconstruction is the first priority and ideological differences can be argued over after. The PPD has no ideological goals other than the restoration of a democratic regime, while the Socialist Party is still committed, and rightly so, to the establishment of a democratic socialist society. These goals are not contradictory, for without a working democracy, a socialist society is simply out of reach. But the enormity of what the Pinochet dictatorship has done is such that before we can even begin to think about socialism, we have first to consolidate a fair, modern, participative

democratic system.

Who will be the candidate for the presidential election?

The PPD and Socialist Party are firmly in favour of a consensus candidate, someone with sufficient moral and political standing to keep the coalition united. There will still be problems agreeing a common list of parliamentary candidates, but we will do our utmost to achieve it.

The Socialist Party is now divided. Are the ideological dif-

ferences between your own moderate Socialist Party and the *Almeyda* socialists irreconcilable?

We hope to rebuild a strong Socialist Party which will include all the major ideological currents of the old, historical Chilean socialism. That way we would offer to the electorate a strong and broad left-wing alternative. The other big blocs are doing that: Christian Democrats in the Centre, and the democratic Right. Perhaps this, plus the Communist Party, will represent the realignment of forces in a future democratic regime. But the future Socialist Party should be sophisticated and flexible enough to represent the new class situation in Chile. We cannot exclude the new urban and small-producer farming sectors. We will have to see how best to harmonise long-overdue social justice with economic efficiency; political freedom with responsible exercise of rights; wealth creation with fairer distribution of income and resources.

We have to seize the opportunity given to us by the plebiscite victory. Pinochet is isolated, and the armed forces do not want to fall with him. They will continue to support the process of transition to democracy. But the armed forces need to be convinced themselves that we in the opposition mean business: that we represent a sizeable majority of the Chilean people, that we have a coherent programme and that we can guarantee its implementation through democratic consensus. •

Marxism Today

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