

LOW POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONG RURAL  
WOMEN IN CHILOE, CHILE:  
CONSEQUENCES FOR DEMOCRATIZATION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**Low Political Participation Among Rural Women  
In Chiloé, Chile:  
Consequences for Democratization**

by

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A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Department of Political Studies  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

September 2002

St. John's

Newfoundland

## Acknowledgements

A number of people offered support, financial, academic and otherwise, without whom this thesis would never have come about. I first offer thanks to Colleen Clarke and Tony Dickinson of MUN's International Centre, who developed the program with CIDA and UACH and secured the funding that made my research trip to Chile possible. Jorge Toro, at UACH in Valdivia, spearheads the program on the Chilean side and assisted in the coordination of my visit. Debbie Guerra, at UACH, offered invaluable academic and emotional support during my stay in Chile and gave much needed direction to the research upon my arrival, in addition to providing me with excellent Chilote contacts. Alejandra Leighton in Castro and her husband Raul went out their way to provide me with contacts and interview opportunities. Lena Barahonas and her husband Raul in Castro offered me information and contacts but most importantly friendship. I also thank all of the people from Chiloe who allowed me to interview them, politely putting up with my Spanish, and in many cases inviting me into their homes. From the MUN Political Science Department I thank Osvaldo Croci for his helpful comments on my initial draft. Most importantly I thank David Close for his assistance in getting me the research grant and even coming to Chile, but most importantly for his guidance, patience and wisdom during the writing of my thesis and throughout my two years at Memorial.

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## List of Abbreviations

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| AD-MAPU  | Agrupacion de Mapuche                                  |
| AH-V     | Humanist-Green Alliance                                |
| ANAMURI  | Asociacion de Mujeres Rurales e Indigenas              |
| APS      | Area de Propiedad Social                               |
| CIDA     | Canadian International Development Agency              |
| CONADI   | National Corporation of Indigenous Development         |
| CONAPACH | National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen of Chile |
| CUT      | Central Unitaria de Trabajadores                       |
| FPMR     | Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front                       |
| GDP      | Gross Domestic Product                                 |
| GNP      | Gross National Product                                 |
| IMF      | International Monetary Fund                            |
| INDAP    | Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario                   |
| MEMCH    | Movimiento de la Mujer Chilena                         |
| MIR      | Movement of the Revolutionary Left                     |
| MUN      | Memorial University of Newfoundland                    |
| NGO      | Non-Governmental Organization                          |
| OPDECH   | Oficina Promotora del Desarrollo Chiloe                |
| PC       | Partido Comunista                                      |
| PDC      | Partido Democrata Cristiano                            |
| PL       | Liberal Party  |
| PN       | National Party   |
| PPD      | Partido Por la Democracia                              |
| PRODEMU  | Promocion y Desarrollo de la Mujer                     |
| PS       | Socialist Party  |
| PR       | Radical Party  |
| RN       | National Renewal                                       |

|            |                                       |
|------------|---------------------------------------|
| SD         | Social Democracy Party                |
| SERNAM     | Servicio Nacional de la Mujer         |
| SERNAPESCA | Servicio Nacional de Pesca            |
| UACH       | Universidad Austral de Chile          |
| UCC        | Centre Centre Union Party             |
| UDI        | Union Democratica Independiente Party |
| UP         | Unidad Popular                        |

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Figure 1 Chile



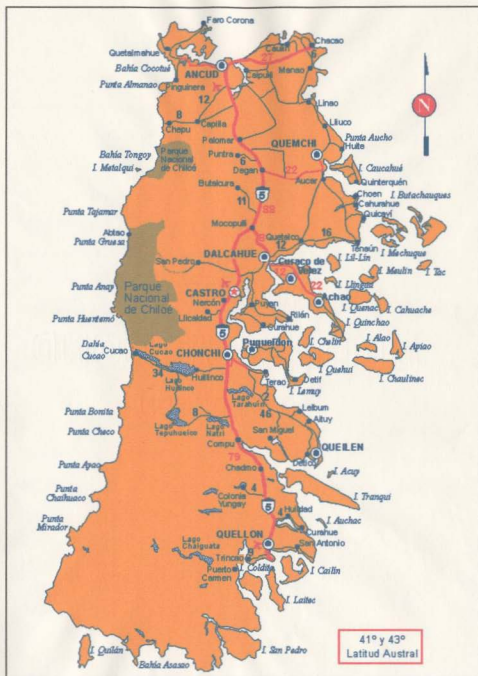


Figure 2 Chiloé

## **I. Introduction**

### **I.1. Description**

This thesis, the research for which is based largely on fieldwork done in Chile between May and August 2001, seeks to answer why rural women living in the southern Chilean island of Chiloe participate so minimally in political activities and organizations. To question low participation implies an expectation of significant levels of participation, which prior to arriving in Chile was what I believed I would find - not in the sense of a formally developed civil society such as one would come across in North America, but in terms that citizens of a democracy, regardless of its economic standing, would seek to promote and further their objectives through political processes, be it through labour unions, civic associations or simply through voting. In rural Chiloe, this was not the case, as women there displayed very little interest or knowledge in politics or government. The reasons for this are varied and make up the focus of this study.

### **I. 2. The Research**

To begin, a more detailed description of the context and circumstances surrounding the research trip is required. Memorial University of Newfoundland, through its International Center, sustains a relationship with the Institute of Marine Biology (IMB) of the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH), located in Valdivia, Chile. The objective of the relationship is to enhance community-based mollusk aquaculture and related scientific research in Chile. This is accomplished, with the sponsorship of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), by developing the research, education and community extension capabilities of UACH. Some of the many benefits of this research cooperation have been the enhancement of mollusk biology skills in IBM scientists, graduate and undergraduate students and the

development of base-line data for potential new species aquaculture. These have resulted in increased funding possibilities and have helped bring the IMB to a position of dominance within the Chilean aquaculture/marine biology community, which will have a significant impact on its future abilities to respond to the aquaculture needs of the region and country.<sup>1</sup> Total funds allocated to the project amount to approximately 1.1 million dollars.

The MUN/CIDA/UACH program has recently offered financial and technical support to a women's fishing cooperative in Caipulli, a village on the island of Chiloe. Similarly, support was offered by the program for the research and production of a documentary about the cooperative by an anthropology student from UACH. As such, the opportunity to study the Caipulli cooperative and similar organizations in Chiloe, but from a political perspective, was offered to me. Subsequently, I traveled to Valdivia in early May 2001, and worked under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Debbie Guerra, an anthropology professor at UACH.

Very little has been written, in English or Spanish, on the southern Chilean island of Chiloe, let alone specifically on women's political participation on that island. As such, the initial research for this thesis, conducted prior to arrival in Chile, was based on fairly broad categories related to the subject. These included examinations of women's movements in Chile and across Latin America; political activities of indigenous women in the region and around the world; and various feminist and Third World analyses of political participation. The literature painted a picture of activism, empowerment and sisterhood - a burgeoning

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<sup>1</sup>Dickinson, Anthony. (11 June 2002). *Final Narrative Report (draft)*. *Mollusc Aquaculture Enhancement in Chile* [e-mail to H. Exner], [Online]. Available e-mail: [adickins@mun.ca](mailto:adickins@mun.ca)

force to be reckoned with - and my expectations of what awaited in Chiloe paralleled these descriptions.

The fact that what little I knew about women's participation in Chiloe revolved around studies done on the Caipulli cooperative, that which has been successful in a variety of aspects, both financially and socio-politically, served to further skew my expectations regarding the levels of participation among women in Chiloe. The Caipulli cooperative, while an excellent case study, is an isolated example given its unique external support system, that which will be expounded upon in a later chapter. The preliminary research questions were thus based on the assumption that other women's cooperatives would not only be present, but would be similarly well organized. This turned out to not be the case.

Similarly, most of the material published in English on Chilean indigenous peoples focuses on the Mapuche, the country's largest and most powerful indigenous group, and my initial research reflected this bias. The Mapuche are a relatively well-organized and politically significant force in Chile, and several outstanding protests and incidents have made international headlines. Mapuche women have been increasingly active in struggles against the state and the reasonable expectation that indigenous women in Chile would be politically aware was adopted.

This assumption too had its problems. The indigenous population of Chiloe is made up primarily by those of Huilliche descent. The Huilliche are a branch of the larger Mapuche group, however politically they remain separate. The Mapuche are overwhelmingly concentrated in the country's ninth region<sup>2</sup>, with the city of Temuco as their organizational base, while the island of Chiloe is located in the country's tenth region. As the Mapuche

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<sup>2</sup>Chile is divided into twelve administrative regions.

struggle deals largely with land claims and environmental conflicts, this territorial separation has meant that politically, the Huilliche have been left out. Subsequently, heightened levels of activism, participation and political awareness found amongst Mapuche women are largely missing from indigenous and rural women in Chiloe. A study of political participation by Mapuche women would probably reach quite different conclusions than those found in this study about rural Chilote women.

The research for this study was to focus on the various types of political activities indigenous Chilote<sup>3</sup> women engage in, given the context of their fisheries-based economy, significant indigenous activism and residence in a country only recently coming out of a repressive dictatorship. I had read enough development literature to know not to expect North American style feminism or civil society. But nothing prepared me to find an almost complete lack of political participation. As such, the research question moved swiftly from an examination of political activism to an explanation for its absence.

The field work indicated this: rural women in Chiloe are in general poor, minimally educated or even uneducated, carry the primary responsibility for raising children and maintaining the household, and often work outside the home in such economic activities as collecting algae or processing salmon. As such, these women have a lack of interest in formal politics, no time for political participation, and no conception of any material benefits that could result from political activism - something that is key given the poverty of the area.

Despite a lack of formal interest in politics and government, however, Chilote women do participate quite fully in their communities. They are often involved in their children's schooling and their church. A number of indigenous women were found to be active in their

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<sup>3</sup>*Chilote* is the term used to describe residents of the island of Chiloe.

respective community organizations. And perhaps most significantly, these women are increasingly forming economic groups, such as cooperatives or associations, primarily as a way to increase earnings. What became evident is that in spite of the women's complete lack of interest or knowledge regarding government, national issues or politics, they were generally quite integrated into their community.

Notwithstanding the reasonable level of very local civic involvement by rural women in Chiloe, their incapacity to participate at a greater and more political level implies a serious flaw in Chilean democracy. If their economic inequality and social marginalization prevent any kind of influence on their part on public policy, they will have limited options from which to improve their quality of living. Further, it is reasonable to extend their circumstances to the poor, rural and otherwise marginalized women across Latin America, posing serious questions about the quality of democracy across the region.

The purpose of this thesis therefore is twofold: it will first examine why rural Chilote women disregard political forms of participation, as well as ask what other types of activity they engage in; and second, it will analyze the consequences of such widespread disengagement to the quality of Chilean democracy.

## II. Chile: Building an Imperfect Democracy

As could be expected, the particulars surrounding Chile's political history have had a profound impact on the environment within which Chilote women lead their lives, despite the relative isolation of the island. The language, church, economy and institutions which so undeniably shape their community are all vestiges of the events and outcomes of Chilean political society. As such, it is necessary to explain in detail the more relevant parts of the country's history in order for the reader to truly understand the context of the research.

At a brief glance, Chilean history resembles that of most other Latin American countries, beginning with wars of conquest and subjugation of indigenous peoples; *encomiendas* and the influence of the Catholic Church; independence and bloody internal conflicts between Liberals and Conservatives, or whatever names the left and right political factions adopted in each individual country; populism and ultimately military dictatorship. However with a more thorough examination one can see a variety of individual characteristics that set Chile apart from its neighbours and help explain its subsequent path.

### *II. 1. Conquest and Independence*

Chile is a country of extremes, running over 4200 kilometers from the top to the tip, including deserts, valleys, rain forests and glaciers and bounded by the Andes and the Pacific ocean. It was first encountered by Europeans in the early sixteenth century, as Magellan and his successors rounded Cape Horn.<sup>4</sup> Chilean territory took a few hundred years more to effectively colonize; its geographical isolation, periodic natural disasters and the

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<sup>4</sup>Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

exceptionally aggressive position adopted by the *Araucanian*<sup>5</sup> or Mapuche aboriginals left Pedro de Valdivia's newly established colonies particularly vulnerable. Large mineral stocks, fertile valleys and a supply of Indian labour, despite intermittent rebellions, kept the Spaniards coming and by 1780 the territory had a largely rural population of between 500,000- 750,000 inhabitants outside of Indian territory.<sup>6</sup>

The nineteenth century brought with it an era of political change in Chile. The last few decades of the eighteenth century saw the Spanish colony granted an autonomous captaincy-general, no longer subject directly to the viceroy of Peru.<sup>7</sup> Chilean governors had professionally and capably administered the territory and the governing elite remained faithful to the crown. However, Napoleon's conquest of Spain and the subsequent abdication of King Charles IV in May 1808 produced a sudden shift in thinking and within months the idea of independence had gained considerable ground.<sup>8</sup> Creole juntas established in Venezuela and Buenos Aires gave plenty of food for thought, and on September 18, 1810, the Chileans established their own in Santiago, followed by a promised Congress the following July.

The remainder of the century was marked by a number of conflicts, though in comparison to its neighbours Chile was stable. The Spanish attempted reconquest in the twenty years following independence, a confrontation complemented by a civil war in 1829-

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<sup>5</sup>*Araucano* is the name given by Europeans.

<sup>6</sup>Loveman, 91.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>8</sup>Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32.



30. Subsequently a new constitution, which established a centralized political system and extended considerable power unto the executive, was enacted in 1833.<sup>9</sup> This regime, fairly described as "autocratic", lasted until 1891 despite a civil war in 1859 and the War of the Pacific in which Chile fought Peru and Bolivia from 1879-84. However, Congress' struggle for power to approve the budget, taxes and the size of the military resulted in yet another civil war in 1891.<sup>10</sup> The war, which lasted eight months and cost 10,000 lives, resulted in a congressional victory and a shift of power from the executive to the legislature. Though admirable in its democratic intentions, the uncompromising multi-party system running Congress proved incapable of effectively administering the rapidly changing Chilean society. Economic crises following the First World War and subsequent conflicts with the military led ultimately to a coup on January 23, 1925.<sup>11</sup>

The following seven years were characterized by military intervention, political conflict and a succession of presidents including Carlos Ibanez who assumed a dictator's role from 1927-

31. By 1932, political normality had returned, but still under the rubric of the 1925 Constitution. The new constitution established a strong presidency and a two-house legislature and promoted political participation through voting.<sup>12</sup> It provided the formula under which political competition would be waged until Pinochet implemented constitutional

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<sup>9</sup>Lois Hecht Oppenheim, Politics in Chile: Democracy, Authoritarianism and the Search for Development, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>10</sup>Loveman, 110.

<sup>11</sup>Harold Blakemore, "From the War of the Pacific to 1930," in Chile Since Independence, ed. Leslie Bethell, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 76.

<sup>12</sup>Oppenheim, 13.

changes in 1980, and paved the way for forty years of a stable and effective constitutional democracy for which Chile was lauded until the brutal coup of 1973.

The interim period saw a rise of left-wing political movements and parties, including the Communist parties, Socialist and *Partido Demócrata Cristiano* (PDC). Carlos Ibanez, the ousted dictator and candidate for the Radical Party, came back to win the presidency in 1952 with a special brand of populism; Ibanez, nicknamed the 'General of Hope' seemed to be the solution for those believing a 'strong man' was needed to cure Chile's ills. His government achieved little, however, except to legalize the Communist Party, further segmenting the country's political parties into the very distinct left, right and center.<sup>13</sup> Jorge Alessandri succeeded Ibanez, but also failed to deal effectively with the country's increasingly grave economic and social problems.<sup>14</sup> Consequently the Radical Party finally lost power after twenty-four years of political domination, and in 1964 Eduardo Frei, a Christian Democrat, won the presidency.

Nineteen sixty-four marks an important shift in Chilean politics. With Frei's victory, the PDC replaced the Radicals as the voice of the center; the United States government began to take seriously the rise of the left in Chile; and the concept of structural reform swept the continent and paved the way for attempts at land reform and nationalization of industry. The right, fearful that a three-way split could result in a Socialist victory in the 1964 presidential elections, decided not to present a candidate and instead threw their support to the PDC; the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>14</sup>Alan Angell, "The Left in Latin America Since 1920" in *Latin America: Politics and Society Since 1930*, ed. Leslie Bethell, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 129.

Americans also favoured Frei. The scheme worked and Frei won a majority - 56 percent - of votes.<sup>15</sup>

Though political support from the right pushed Frei to victory, it made his presidency a balancing act which no one could have managed. Frei's initiatives for land reform and the nationalization of Chile's all-important copper industry<sup>16</sup> served to alienate the right at the same time that it was deemed inadequate from both the PDC and Socialists; despite his significant executive power, Frei had to carefully consider the demands of the three competing parties as Congress was fairly evenly split between them. Additionally, Frei made legitimate attempts to mobilize the rural and urban poor and launched the notable grass-roots organizations, *Juntas de Vecinos* and *Centros de Madres*. Far from increasing his support, however, his awakening of expectations amongst the poor which he was ultimately unable to satisfy played a significant role in the victory of the left in 1970.<sup>17</sup>

## II. 2. *Experiment With Socialism*

The 1970 elections were contested by three parties: former President Jorge Alessandri for the right; Radomiro Tomic, considerably more left-wing than his predecessor, for the PDC; and Salvador Allende, a three-time presidential candidate and loser, for the left's new coalition called *Unidad Popular* (UP).<sup>18</sup> The results demonstrated the extreme ideological rift in Chilean politics. Allende and the UP won with 36.3 percent of the popular vote, only

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<sup>15</sup>Oppenheim, 25.

<sup>16</sup>By the late 1960s, copper provided 70 percent of the country's foreign exchange and profited US\$120 million annually.

<sup>17</sup>Oppenheim, 27.

<sup>18</sup>Loveman, 247.

40,000 votes more than second place Alessandri who received 34.9 percent. Tomic lagged behind with only 27.8 percent, a drop by half for the centrist PDC. However, because no candidate had won a majority of votes, the Constitution sanctioned a choice by Congress between the top two vote-getting presidential candidates. Though the right courted the PDC with an offer to replace their candidate with Tomic and form a coalition similar to that previously held, Tomic immediately threw his support behind Allende and was followed by his party members after the UP guaranteed certain constitutional amendments.<sup>19</sup> Salvador Allende was confirmed president by Congress on October 24, 1970.

Allende's term began on a high note, and his first year as president saw a number of changes that on all sides appeared beneficial for *el pueblo*. Copper was nationalized by a constitutional amendment unanimously agreed to by Congress and ambitious agrarian reforms were pursued where the Frei government had left off. Wages were increased to reflect the rise in inflation and stimulus was placed on eliminating unemployment. But it could not last. Copper profits dropped as high-skilled technicians quit in objection to a variety of government policy changes and American spare parts were made unavailable to the Chilean mines. The agrarian reform program caused a significant drop in production and food purchases soon cost 56 percent of export earnings.<sup>20</sup> Industry also witnessed a drop in production as company owners were reluctant to invest in capital for fear their sector would eventually be nationalized. Despite price controls, a drop in production, rise of cost of living,

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 248.

<sup>20</sup>Collier and Sater, 341.

depletion of the government's foreign reserves and a lack of supply of locally produced goods resulted in a burgeoning black market and an eventual skyrocketing of inflation.<sup>21</sup>

To compound difficulties, Allende had very limited room to maneuver. He only had electoral support from a third of the voters, a slim plurality for the radical changes he was intent on implementing. Congress was, as always, ideologically divided, and handicapped several important UP bills. But even within his own coalition, Allende had trouble pleasing all sides as the six competing factions argued constantly over what policies to implement.<sup>22</sup> The U.S.-led international boycott of Chilean mineral products, capital flight and a refusal by the Americans to administer loans<sup>23</sup> contributed to the deterioration of the economic situation.

Though the first year of the Allende government saw a variety of both gains and losses, the second year witnessed much more acute and active opposition. A demonstration in December 1971 by mostly well-to-do women and their maids in Santiago protesting a scarcity of food, popularly called the *March of the Empty Pots and Pans*, constituted the first mass mobilization against the Allende Administration.<sup>24</sup> It would not be the last. Polarization amongst politicians was soon reflected by society in general, as demonstrated by the October *Paro* (strike) of 1972. In that episode, the truck owner's association declared a nationwide strike in response to fears that the government would soon nationalize the entire

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 343.

<sup>22</sup>Oppenheim, 62.

<sup>23</sup>Despite the Americans' best efforts to provoke an international freeze on bank loans, several Western European banks did provide loans to the Chilean government, and China, the Soviet Union and a variety of Latin American countries offered monetary assistance.

<sup>24</sup>Oppenheim, 64.

industry. Combined with another, larger, women's march in Santiago in the same month, the middle class effectively displayed their dissatisfaction with the Allende government at the same time that UP supporters stood up to show their support. These organized into worker associations called *cordones* and took over the very industries they worked for to avoid being locked out.<sup>25</sup> The disruption of the Chilean economy on all fronts as well as the manifestation of political polarization between all sectors of society necessitated the inclusion of the military into politics in early November, 1972. This served to appease the opposition who felt the officially apolitical military's presence would guarantee the UP's agreement with the truckers and ensure fair congressional elections the following March. It would come to do much more than that.

The March 1973 congressional elections, though highly anticipated by all sides, proved indecisive. Allende, who had hoped to win a majority, recorded an increase in percentage of votes but still fell short with a total of 44 percent. The opposition, hoping to control two thirds of the seats in order to impeach Allende, had to deal both with falling short of their original goal as well as the fact that despite Allende and the UP's mishandling of affairs, their popularity had increased. As one officer remarked of the elections, "It was supposed to be a last chance for a political solution, but frankly many of us were relieved when the Marxists received such a high vote because we felt that no politician could run the country and that eventually the Marxists might be even stronger."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 71.

<sup>26</sup>Francisco Jose Moreno, "The Breakdown of Chilean Democracy," *World Affairs*, Summer 1975, 21.

Continued strikes, additional political and economic crises, rampant inflation and the heightened pitch of political rhetoric resulted in three major military events. On June 29, 1973, an attempted coup d'etat by the Second Tank Regiment in Santiago, later known as the *tancazo*, failed due in large part to the commitment of General Prats, the head of the armed forces, to constitutional government. Prats' rumoured political ties to the UP and other incidents eroded his support from the armed forces and he resigned as commander-in-chief of the military on August 23 after hundreds of wives of military officers stood outside his residence and demanded his resignation.<sup>27</sup> General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte succeeded him.

Allende, his hands seemingly tied and a coup all but inevitable, turned to his last option, a plebiscite on the APS (*Area de Propiedad Social*), the socialization of the economy bill. The executive and legislative branches had been unable to reach any compromise on the proposed bill, and despite the undesirability of giving Congress' objections to the APS legitimacy, Allende was left without an alternative.<sup>28</sup> He decided to announce the proposed plebiscite on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973. Instead of securing democracy, however, the decision hastened a coup as three Hawker Hunter jets flew over the Moneda, Chile's presidential palace, that morning and scored direct hits. Allende, after addressing the nation twice by radio, committed suicide in the Moneda, the most notable of the bloody coup's estimated 1,500 casualties<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup>Loveman, 256.

<sup>28</sup>Oppenheim, 81.

<sup>29</sup>Peter Kornbluh, "Declassifying U.S. Intervention in Chile", *NACLA Report on the Americas*, May/June 1999, 36.

*As in the classic Greek tragedies, everybody knows what will happen, everybody says they do not wish it to happen, and everybody does exactly what is necessary to bring about the disaster.*

- Radomiro Tomic to General Carlos Prats, August 1973

The immediate events leading up to the 1973 coup as well as the principal events of Chilean history indeed explain how a military dictatorship could happen in Chile, a country ranked fifth among the world's most democratic nations between 1900-1950<sup>30</sup> and often lauded as a model for other Latin America governments. On closer examination one finds that tendencies amongst Chilean politicians and policy makers made a conflict of this scale inevitable. The country had been plagued by fights for power between the executive and legislative branches for more than a century; in fact the people often favoured a strong leader who would straighten things out independently. The mid-twentieth century witnessed a political community increasingly divided into the left, right and centre, and whose unwillingness to compromise left Chilean society polarized and unstable. As demonstrated in Table 2.1, this trend endured throughout massive changes in the electoral system, such as the enfranchisement of women, and beyond the dictatorship, showing just how deep-rooted the cleavages were. Finally, the country had oft depended on the intervention of the military to mediate conflict, a pattern that was followed to the detriment of democracy towards the end of the Allende administration.

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<sup>30</sup>Alexandra Barahona De Brito, "Truth and Justice in the Consolidation of Democracy in Chile and Uruguay", *Parliamentary Affairs*, October 1993, 19.



**Table 2.1 Continuities in Electoral Results in Chile, 1937-1992 (in percentages)**

| 1992 Parties<br>Grouped into<br>1970 Alliances         | 1992 Vote for<br>Party Lists    | Total 1992 Vote<br>for 1970<br>Alliances | 1970 Presidential<br>Vote | Average 1937 to<br>1973 Vote |
|--|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Right:</b><br>RN<br>UDI<br>Independents<br>PL<br>PN | 13.4<br>10.2<br>6.0<br>.2<br>.1 |  |                           |                              |
| Total Right<br>Right and UCC                           | 38.0                            | 29.9                                     | 34.9                      | 30.1                         |
| <b>Centre:</b><br>PDC<br>Independents                  | 28.9<br>.5                      |  |                           |                              |
| Total Centre<br>Centre+PR+AH-<br>V+SD                  | 35.5                            | 29.4                                     | 27.8                      | 39.7                         |
| <b>Left:</b><br>PPD<br>PS<br>PC<br>PR<br>SD            | 9.2<br>8.5<br>6.6<br>4.9<br>.4  |  |                           |                              |
| Total Left<br>PPD+PS+PC                                | 24.3                            | 29.6                                     | 36.2                      | 24.2                         |
| <b>Other:</b><br>UCC<br>Independents<br>AH-V           | 8.1<br>2.1<br>.8                |  |                           |                              |
| Total Other  |                                 | 11.0                                     |                           |                              |

Source: Valenzuela and Scully, 1997, 518.

Chilean politicians and historians have recognized the mitigating factors of Pinochet's authoritarian regime and have aimed to adjust accordingly to prevent such a

catastrophe in the future. I will later argue that these adjustments are as much contributors to current Chilean political problems as they are solutions.

### *II. 3. Dictatorship and the Return to Democracy*

When the military junta led by Augusto Pinochet came to power after the coup of September 11, 1973, many Chileans, particularly in the middle and upper classes, outwardly applauded the move and looked forward to the end of socialist policy. The military had traditionally been called upon to stabilize politics when civilians could no longer do it themselves; no one expected the military dictatorship would come to last sixteen years.

Pinochet's authoritarian regime has been divided into five phases by political scientist Lois Oppenheim (1999): 1973-77, characterized by consolidation of power and depoliticization of society; 1977-81, which witnessed the institutionalization of new economic and political realities; 1981-82, whereby the neo-liberal Chilean economy soured; 1983-86, characterized by the growth of popular mobilization in opposition to the regime; and 1987-90, which saw a peaceful transition to formal democracy under the scrutiny of the military. I will briefly outline the more significant events of this period.

The coup itself was relatively brutal considering the lack of physical opposition. Within nineteen days of the coup, the military junta had summarily executed 320 people; the 'total' casualties from the coup numbered an estimated 1,500<sup>31</sup> (out of 2,279 killed during the course of the military dictatorship.) Individuals with suspected left-wing leanings were herded into soccer stadiums-cum-torture chambers where some of them were killed. Congress was closed, the UP and its component parties declared illegal and all others put into recess. The 1925 Constitution was immediately amended and a four-man junta, comprised of

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<sup>31</sup>Kornbluh, 36.

the leaders of the military branches and headed by Pinochet, adopted all legislative and executive powers.<sup>32</sup> A secret police force, DINA (Directorate for National Intelligence), was established and a purging of UP party members undertaken. "Overall, the brutal violation of rights during this first phase of military rule was successful. It fulfilled its purpose of preventing a widespread revolt and of suppressing virtually all organized opposition to military rule."<sup>33</sup>

Pinochet chose to adopt neo-liberal economic policies and wasted no time implementing them. Top governmental economic positions were filled by the popularly named "Chicago Boys", so-called because many of them had pursued graduate studies in economics at the University of Chicago. There they studied under such free market icons as Milton Friedman, who himself visited Chile in 1975.<sup>34</sup> The government's initial objective was to curb hyperinflation, which was combated by devaluing the peso, reducing price controls, postponing scheduled wage increases and other tactics. Eventually the government lost patience with this 'gradual' adjustment after international factors diminished the effects of the strategy and adopted what was later referred to as the "Shock Treatment" in 1975. Government spending was reduced drastically (though cuts did not affect the military), income taxes rose ten percent and a restrictive monetary policy enforced. The result was a significant reduction in inflation and a virtual elimination of the deficit - as well as an unemployment rate of almost twenty percent and an impoverishment of millions of

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<sup>32</sup>Oppenheim, 117.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 120.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 121.

Chileans.<sup>35</sup> Notwithstanding the social ramifications of the neo-liberal policies, their relative macroeconomic success prompted the labeling of the "Chilean Miracle".

A number of important legal and political changes occurred in the first few years of the Pinochet dictatorship as well. A number of acts and amendments issued between 1974-76 sanctioned the various human rights abuses committed by the government, including provisions to prohibit entry to certain individuals, censure media and restrict civil liberties and due process.<sup>36</sup> Significant of these was the 1980 Constitution. This document institutionalized exaggerated presidentialism and a weakened Congress, "a reflection of the military government's negative view of the capacity of democratic political processes to solve the most pressing problems in Chilean society."<sup>37</sup> Among other things it created a two-house legislature, extended the Presidency term from six to eight years and revoked a number of civil rights. It also, however, provided for a 1988 plebiscite that would allow the Chilean people to choose whether or not to allow Pinochet to continue as president, a move that would ultimately end the dictatorship.<sup>38</sup>

The economic recession that hit most of Latin America and the world in the early 1980s took its toll on Chile. Copper and other export prices plummeted as a result of the international crisis; imports which faced low or no tariffs under the neo-liberal economic plan

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<sup>35</sup>Loveman, 268-9.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 273.

<sup>37</sup>Peter M. Siavelis, The President and Congress in Postauthoritarian Chile: Institutional Constraints to Democratic Consolidation, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 13. Pinochet objected to the inclusion of the clause but submitted to significant political pressure and allowed its admittance.

flooded the market from countries whose industries received a variety of tariff and non-tariff protection.<sup>39</sup> The United States, under the economic policies of newly inaugurated Ronald Reagan, limited new loans, throwing Chile and most of Latin America into further recession. Several major banks became insolvent, gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 14 percent and the stock market crashed. The economic boom that had helped legitimize the dictatorship went bust.<sup>40</sup>

The immediate consequence of the economic crisis was a revitalization of political opposition. Strikes were initiated - fourteen National Days of Protest were staged between May 1983 and 1986; opposition newspapers boldly called for Pinochet's ouster; and armed rebellion, led by the MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left) and the FPMR (Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front), ultimately led to an attempt on Pinochet's life.<sup>41</sup> These tactics spurred little concrete political change, and a new campaign of repression was unleashed. However the pressure was on, and Pinochet knew it. Following the period of domestic dissension, international pressure, highlighted by a papal visit to the country in April, 1987, soon called for a peaceful end to the dictatorship. By mid-1987, government and opposition forces began preparations for the constitutionally guaranteed plebiscite that would determine the presidency for the 1989-97 term.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Loveman, 292.

<sup>40</sup>Mark Ensalaco, Chile Under Pinochet: Recovering the Truth, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 135. Ironically, the crisis pushed the Chilean government towards significant economic intervention into various companies and industries, leading critics to term the process the "Chicago road to Socialism."

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>42</sup>Loveman, 302.

The plebiscite, which essentially asked voters whether or not to accept another eight years of the Pinochet dictatorship, was scheduled for October 5, 1988. Opposition forces, which united to form the *Concertacion por el No*<sup>43</sup>, ran a campaign intended to assure voters they had nothing to fear, change was possible, and that they could succeed in bringing about democracy. They also successfully enregistered 92 percent of eligible voters. On the other side, government forces emphasized their accomplishments and warned that a return to democracy would result in another era of political polarization.<sup>44</sup> The election, carefully monitored by international observers, ran smoothly and the *Concertacion* won with 55 percent (versus 44 percent for Pinochet) of the six million votes cast.<sup>45</sup>

The plebiscite, whose results Pinochet reluctantly accepted, despite fears he would not, led the way to a fairly painless transition to democracy. Presidential elections were slotted for December 14, 1989, with the newly named *Concertacion para la Democracia* running candidates against the regime's choice Hernan Bucchi, Pinochet's former finance minister, and Francisco Javier Errazuriz, a millionaire who ran a populist campaign. In the interim, the government and opposition forces negotiated a package of fifty-four constitutional reforms, a promising start for the burgeoning democracy.<sup>46</sup> Patricio Aylwin of the *Concertacion* subsequently won the presidential elections with fifty-five percent of the vote; however his party faced a number of *leyes de amarre*, or binding laws, from the

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<sup>43</sup>The *Concertacion* includes the Christian Democrats, the Radical Party, the Socialist party and the Partido Por la Democracia.

<sup>44</sup>Loveman, 304.

<sup>45</sup>Oppenheim, 182.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

outgoing regime. Pinochet implemented decrees that would prevent the regime's many military and bureaucratic political appointees from being dismissed by the new president; he even offered incentives for magistrates to retire early so that he could replace them with younger judges who would defend the dictator's constitutional order.<sup>47</sup> But perhaps most illustrative of the old regime's hold on the *Concertacion* was Pinochet's continued command of the army and status as lifetime senator.

#### *II. 4. The Road to Democracy*

Since Chile's return to democracy over a decade ago, the country has experienced significant beneficial changes and once again is an obvious model for other redemocratizing countries; elections have been fair and regular, with Eduardo Frei, a Christian Democrat, claiming the presidency in 1996 and Ricardo Lagos, a Socialist, doing so in 2000. Civil liberties are to a good degree guaranteed and protected, and the different facets of the political system, including the executive, judicial and legislative branches and the parties, operate within formal institutional rules.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Chile had the continent's best economic performance over the past decade. Despite these successes however, the country is flirting with a democratic crisis. Political apathy is high; popular participation is falling; and Chileans themselves view democracy very sceptically. How can one explain this apparent paradox?

First the facts. Though voting is mandatory in Chile, making voter turnout an unreliable predictor, the actual number of eligible voters who are registered fell from a high

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<sup>47</sup>Ensalaco, 180.

<sup>48</sup>Guillermo O'Donnell, "Illusions About Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy*, 1996, 34-5.

of 92.2 percent after the 1988 plebiscite to 81.29 percent for the presidential elections of 1999. Furthermore, despite mandatory voting, abstention rates have increased from a low of 2.3 percent in the 1988 plebiscite to a rate of 12.2 percent in the municipal elections of 1996 and 12.7 percent in the parliamentary elections of 1997.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps most telling is the percentage of spoiled or unmarked ballots. In the 1988 plebiscite, this stood at 2.3 percent, but grew to 6.1 percent for the referendum on constitutional amendments in 1989. In presidential elections, the rate rose from 2.5 percent in 1989 to 5.5 percent in 1993; in municipal elections from 9.0 percent in 1992 to 11.0 percent in 1996; and in congressional elections the number of spoiled ballots increased from 5.0 percent in 1989 to 8.8 percent in 1993 and finally to an astonishing 17.8 percent in 1997.<sup>50</sup> (See Table 2.2) Far from being a statistical anomaly, these results reflect growing citizen dissatisfaction. Indeed, Chile ranked 15<sup>th</sup> out of 17 in a 1996 *Latinobarometro* survey measuring how citizens evaluated their respective countries' degree of democracy.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Alfredo Riquelme, "Voting for Nobody in Chile's New Democracy", *NACLA*, May/June 1999, 31.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 32. To compare, the average rate of nullified votes in Western European parliamentary elections between 1977 and 1990 averaged about 1.0 percent.

<sup>51</sup>Paul W. Posner, "Popular Representation and Political Disatisfaction in Chile's New Democracy", *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Spring 1999, 59. Only Mexico and Guatemala ranked lower.



**Table 2. 2 Percentage participation rates in elections 1989-99**

|                                   | 1989  | 1992  | 1993  | 1996  | 1997  | 1999  |
|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Valid votes as % adult population | 81.38 | 70.19 | 73.68 | 61.44 | 53.38 | 68.22 |
| Abstentions and non-registered    | 13.58 | 20.84 | 17.57 | 27.57 | 28.86 | 28.81 |
| Blank and null votes              | 5.04  | 8.97  | 8.75  | 10.99 | 17.76 | 2.97  |
| Total                             | 100   | 100   | 100   | 100   | 100   | 100   |

Source: Angell and Pollack, 2000, 360.

Two main factors can explain Chile's democratic crisis: the first involves the obsessive commitment of Chilean political parties to maintaining stability; the second to the institutional constraints imposed by Pinochet's authoritarian regime.

As alluded to earlier, one of the most significant elements contributing to the 1973 breakdown was the polarization of political society. As a result, the Chilean party system has undergone significant reforms in an attempt to stabilize the political arena. First, almost all parties except the PC (*Partido Comunista*) and the right-wing UDI (*Union Democristica Independiente*) have adopted more centrist platforms. In sharp contrast to the pre-1973 era, voters are no longer asked to choose between radically differing models of development.<sup>52</sup> An example of the phenomenon is the success of the PPD (*Partido Por la Democracia*), a self-described non-ideological 'party of issues'. The party, formed in 1987 to support the

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<sup>52</sup>Samuel Valenzuela and Timothy R. Scully, "Electoral Choices and the Party System in Chile: Continuities and Changes at the Recovery of Democracy", *Comparative Politics*, July 1997, 515.

vote against the Pinochet regime in the 1988 plebiscite, became part of the ruling left-center *Concertación* and includes amongst its members President Ricardo Lagos (who also holds membership with the Socialist Party). However the PPD avoids any labeling and “employs an aggressive catch-all electoral strategy [that] exploits the current emphasis on consensus politics in Chile.”<sup>53</sup>

Second, the structuring of political parties is different. Whereas in the late 1960s and early 1970s the Christian Democrats sided with the right, they now form an important part of the center-left coalition *Concertación*. Similarly, where coalitional patterns were determined twenty years ago by support or opposition to the Allende government, today they are formed largely by support or rejection of the Pinochet regime.<sup>54</sup>

Posner provides a useful interpretation of the consequences of the party system convergence:

The restructuring of party-base relations is consistent with, and indeed has been facilitated by, the philosophical stance of the “renovated” parties of the *Concertación*. The leaders of these parties reasoned that if ideological polarization and the overpoliticization of the state and civil society instigated the breakdown of Chilean democracy in the past, then future democratic stability could be assured only by depoliticizing the state and civil society. In practical terms, this meant significantly increasing the role of the market and proportionately decreasing the state’s role in running the economy and organizing civil society. It also meant reducing the role of political parties in organizing and mobilizing groups in civil society. The result of this strategy has been a relative demobilization and depoliticization of the political arena and increasingly limited opportunities for the popular sectors to gain representation of their interests.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>David Plumb, “El Partido Por la Democracia: The Birth of Chile’s Postmaterialist Catch-All Left”, *Party Politics*, 1998, 94.

<sup>54</sup>Valenzuela and Scully, 515.

<sup>55</sup>Posner, 61.

Thus one sees the correlation between the structural reforms undertaken by the major parties and the rise in political dissatisfaction on behalf of the Chilean electorate. Obsessed with avoiding conflict, the leading Chilean parties have turned to attributing the country's 'transition' status as an excuse not to deal with pending issues.<sup>56</sup> They have further distanced themselves from their supporters and have turned instead to an elite-led pacted democratic transition.<sup>57</sup>

Certainly a good deal of the blame for this crisis then can be placed on the current political elite. However they have been faced with many institutional constraints that have served to limit their ability to maneuver. Siavelis examines this phenomenon.

To begin with, the very nature of the Chilean political system creates a variety of functional problems. The system is one based on a very strong presidency and a weak bicameral legislative body, partly as a device employed by Pinochet's regime to reduce the influence, and hence the destabilizing potential, of political parties. Latin American governments tend to favour strong presidencies, perhaps a residue of *caudillismo*<sup>58</sup>, but statistically parliamentary systems are proven to be much more stable and "superior to presidential systems in the consolidation of if not the very survival of democratic

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<sup>56</sup>Manuel Antonio Garretón Merino, "Popular Mobilization and the Military Regime in Chile: The Complexities of the Invisible Transition" in *Power and Popular Protest*, ed. Susan Eckstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 260.

<sup>57</sup>Posner, 62.

<sup>58</sup>*Caudillo* is the Spanish term for a charismatic strongman-style political leader.

governance.”<sup>59</sup> The Chilean system has produced a strong tendency for presidential initiatives to be accepted and implemented far more readily than legislative ones. For example during the Aylwin government only 8.2 percent of laws passed originated in the legislative branch. Furthermore, while 447 of the 663 initiatives proposed by the Executive completed the full legislative process and ninety-two percent of those were made law, only 69 of the legislative’s 529 proposed initiatives passed through the system and only fifty-two percent of those became law.<sup>60</sup> Other limitations on the legislative branch’s power in the political system seriously put into question the effectiveness of Congress and the Senate as a check on the President’s power and undermine their ability to represent their constituents. Restrictions are placed on the type of initiatives the legislature can submit for consideration; for example, the executive has exclusive rights on initiatives dealing with social security. And the President’s urgency prerogatives allow him to control the legislature’s agenda.<sup>61</sup>

This is not to contend that the Chilean president has unlimited powers; the system often produces inter-branch conflicts. Chile, along with many Latin American countries with multi-party systems, often face what is known as a *doble minoria*: Presidents receive only a plurality of the vote and their parties receive a minority of seats in the Congress and Senate, a trend that will continue increasingly as the *Concertacion* loses popularity to the right. This often leads to deadlocks and uncertainties in the law making procedure. Further exacerbating this problem is the fact that presidential elections, which come since 1994 in six year

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<sup>59</sup>Valerie Bunce, “Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations”, *Comparative Political Studies*, August/September 2000, 711.

<sup>60</sup>Siavelis, 23-24. Congress is not located in Santiago, the country’s capital, but in Valparaiso, 120 kilometers away on the Pacific coast.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 150-51.

intervals, coincide with Congressional elections, which come every four years, only once every twelve years. This makes it more likely that a President will face a hostile Congress, as either the houses are dominated by opposing parties or the executive's party seeks to distance itself from an unpopular President.<sup>62</sup>

Pinochet's outgoing regime also made serious electoral reforms in order to preserve their relative power in the legislative bodies. One of their goals was to create an electoral system that would limit party-system fragmentation, or create a two-party system, and thus favoured the single-member district system like that found in the United States and United Kingdom. However they also sought to protect the presence of the Right and knew that should an opposition coalition obtain the same kind of numbers they received in the 1988 plebiscite in a single-member district system they could be effectively wiped out. Assuming they would receive around the forty percent of votes they garnered in the plebiscite, Pinochet's reformers drew up a two-member district or binomial system for both the Senate and Congress. In this system, in order for a party to win both seats they would have to double the votes of their nearest competitor. Thus a party need only garner 33.4 percent of the vote to win a seat. Any additional votes between 33.4 and 66.7 percent of the total are essentially wasted votes.<sup>63</sup> Clearly this benefits the second leading political party and induces coalitions.

There are a number of serious consequences of a binomial system. First, while the system encourages coalition building, it by no means ensures that the coalitions will work. Second, it virtually eliminates smaller parties, and potentially whole ideologies, from

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>63</sup>Siavelis, 33-34.

representation in the legislative branch. Pluralism suffers. And thirdly, by effectively guaranteeing the right a large presence in Congress, opportunities to change Pinochet's 1980 Constitution are limited.<sup>64</sup>

A further hindrance leftover from the 1980 constitution is the inability of the President to remove high-level military officials from power. This was put into place by Pinochet in an effort to insulate the armed forces' top positions from the government. While this was a greater problem during the transition era, when officers essentially had a veto over government as regarded certain positions, it still puts into serious question the legitimacy of the government and the strength of its democracy.

The presidential elections of 1999-2000 may come to be seen as turning point for Chilean politics and democracy. For the first time since Pinochet's ouster, a non-Christian Democrat – Ricardo Lagos - has gained the presidency; the right has proven to be a legitimate contender after Joaquín Lavín of UDI garnered 48.7 percent (compared to 51.3 percent for Lagos) of the popular vote; and the number of absentee ballots has normalized from a high of almost 18 percent in 1997 to approximately 3 percent.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps most significantly, the prevailing topic for debate has shifted from defenses for and accusations against Pinochet's authoritarian regime to issues of concrete importance such as poverty, health and education among others.

As tensions begin to ease and the polarization that has characterized Chilean political society for decades subsides, Chile's political elite may soon come to address the many problems currently facing the country. Chief among them is the fact that Chileans have gone

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>65</sup>Alan Angell and Benny Pollack, "The Chilean Presidential Elections of 1999-2000 and Democratic Consolidation", *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, July 2000, 367.

from being highly involved to seemingly not caring about politics at all. The *Concertacion* and the other major parties can and do boast about the institutional consolidation that they have achieved. However they will have to find a will that thus far has been lacking to reach out to grassroots support and stimulate political participation. Until then Chile, despite its achievements, will be just another unconsolidated democracy in Latin America.

### III. Political Identities of Rural Chilote Women

Having established a historical context of the Chilean state, the focus now shifts to the more apparent political identities of Chilote women. This serves to demonstrate what form of political participation the women would undertake. The most obvious political identities include: being a Chilote, as the island of Chiloe is subject to quite unique circumstances in terms of culture and economy; participation in the women's movement, as many of the Chilote women's most serious problems, such as minimal access to education, low wages and extensive household responsibilities, are related primarily to their gender; and participation in the Mapuche indigenous movement, which concentrates predominantly on land rights and environmental issues. Not all rural Chilote women are of indigenous descent, but the burgeoning women's Mapuche movement focuses on issues that affect all rural women, such as access to schools and health care, better roads, and potable water, among others.

#### III. 1. Chiloe

*La Isla Grande de Chiloe*, as Chile's largest island is known, has a rather unique place in Chilean society. The province, the last Chilean territory to fly the Spanish flag, is known around the country as a hothouse of Chilean folklore and culture. Their economy is based mostly on fishing and farming. Chiloe is actually home to about 150 species of potato, with a large majority of the world's yield using their genetics.<sup>1</sup> More than anything, however, the island is known for its rain and cold. As Charles Darwin described it in *The Voyage of the Beagle*:

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<sup>1</sup>University of California Davis (2001). Referenced on February 3, 2002 from <http://www.veghome.ucdavis.edu/classes/vc221/potato/potsum1.html>



In winter the climate is detestable, and in summer it is only a little better. I should think there are few parts of the world, within the temperate regions, where so much rain falls. The winds are very boisterous, and the sky almost always clouded: to have a week of fine weather is something wonderful.

### *III. 1. a) History and Politics*

Chiloe, located 1200 kilometers south of Santiago, is a province of Chile's tenth region, *Los Lagos*.<sup>2</sup> The island runs about 180 kilometers north to south and has an average width of about fifty kilometers. The population is approximately 140,000 inhabitants, about half of whom live in the province's few cities and towns, the largest of which are Ancud (35,000 people) and Castro (28,000 people), and half in the rural areas.<sup>3</sup> The island routinely ranks amongst the lowest in the country in terms of literacy rates, energy consumption and productivity<sup>4</sup>; twenty-three percent of the population lives in poverty.<sup>5</sup> But despite its relative poverty, Chiloe is a place with little crime and high social stability, and rarely is there a lack of food for even the most destitute.

Chiloe was first sighted in 1540 by Alonso de Camargo; it would be declared a Spanish possession in February, 1558. During the Chilean wars of independence, 1810-1818, Chiloe fought alongside Spain and was only brought into the Republic after the Treaty of

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<sup>2</sup> Chile, a unitary state, is divided into twelve administrative regions.

<sup>3</sup> Gene Barrett, Mauricio Caniggia and Lorna Read, "There are more Vets than Doctors in Chiloe: Social Sustainability and the Globalization of Aquaculture in Chiloe", working paper, May 2001, 8. The province of Chiloe ranks second in the country in terms of concentration of rural population.

<sup>4</sup> Alvaro Barros, "Astillas de Chiloe: desarrollo regional o negocio particular?" *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Urbanos Regionales*, August 1980, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Barrett et al, 8.

Tantanco in 1826.<sup>6</sup> Since then, despite its political affiliation, the province has maintained relative cultural homogeneity. Its geographic and political isolation has allowed it to preserve its mix of indigenous and Hispanic traditions; the island has a peculiar mythology involving mermaids, trolls, and witches and a variety of superstitions. A further consequence of this isolation has been a tradition of relative political apathy. According to Luis Sandoval, the local director of CUT (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores*), the national workers' organization, Chilotes are happy to leave the governing and politicking of the province and municipalities to 'Chileans', those born and raised on the mainland; indeed almost all of the local officials that I met who had any power were not native-born Chilotes, including Sandoval himself. He went on to contend that politics holds little or no interest for them; Santiago is far away and 'nothing ever gets done anyway'. Chilotes vote for the politician that promises the most and hope for the best, though expectations are undoubtedly low.<sup>7</sup>

Ethnically, the population is mostly *mestizo*, a mix of indigenous and Spanish. The *Huilliches*<sup>8</sup> form the dominant indigenous group on the island, having themselves been displaced to the island by other *Mapuche* before the Spanish conquest. They continue to maintain a presence on the south side of the island. Politically, the *Huilliche* are less organized and much less powerful than their *Mapuche* counterparts in the ninth region, *La Araucanía*. Unlike the *Mapuche*, who as described earlier countered fierce attacks and

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<sup>6</sup> Barros, 38.

<sup>7</sup> Luis Sandoval, June 20, 2001, Castro.

<sup>8</sup> The *Huilliches* (people of the South) are a tribe of the larger *Mapuche* indigenous group, including the *Pikunches* (people of the North), *Pewenches* (people of the *Pewen*, an essential fruit tree in the community) and *Lafkenches* (people of the sea). *Mapuche* itself means 'people of the earth'.

rebellions against their Spanish conquistadors and underwent relatively little Europeanization, the *Huilliche* were subjected to an unusually determined and fanatical Christianization by the Jesuits, perhaps due to the island's position as an important rest stop for sailors. In fact, the island is home to over 300 unique wooden churches built between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries that have been declared a United Nations World Heritage Site. As such, the Chilote race became fairly mixed both racially and culturally; both the indigenous language and religion have become functionally abandoned and effectively replaced by Spanish and Catholicism.<sup>9</sup> It is difficult then for the *Huilliche* to participate in the larger *Mapuche* movement (to be discussed in another section) that protects an indigenous identity that for them has been lost for probably a century.

### III. 1. b) Economy

Chiloe's economy is based largely on the cultivation of shellfish and the exportation of salmon, a boom industry that has only taken off over the last decade or so. The province exports some agricultural products to Southern Chile but for the most part that type of production is reserved for local consumption.

Before the 1980s, the Chilote economy was virtually non-existent. Some trade was done in shellfish and fish, but the industry was not very well developed. As a result, a large proportion of working-aged males migrated south to the Patagonia and Argentina where work was available in the mining industry.<sup>10</sup> This is reflected in the fact that the population of the

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<sup>9</sup>Gloria Bohn, June 6, 2001, Castro.

<sup>10</sup> Rojelio Segundo Gonzalez Gutierrez, "Efectos de la explotacion de los recursos marinos en los campesinos de Chiloe: el caso de la salmonicultura en Quemchi", thesis, Universidad Austral de Chile, Faculty of Agrarian Sciences, Valdivia, 1996, 9.

island hovered around 100,000 inhabitants between 1900-1980 while Chile's population more than doubled.

As is an all too common story in Chile, the Pinochet regime precipitated a major change on the island. Following the implementation of the dictatorship's neo-liberal economic policies, deregulation, privatization and over-expansion all contributed to a crisis in Chile's marine harvesting sector. The state responded by implementing a two hundred mile fishery zone with strict regulations to prevent further depletion of natural stocks. This crisis in the capture industry turned out to be a boon for the aquaculture and fish processing industries. The government's support for export-led growth inspired large amounts of foreign capital in the latter, with investors permitted to own one hundred percent of shares in Chilean aquaculture industries.<sup>11</sup>

The results of this boom are mixed. Economically, salmon has become increasingly important, with the value of salmon exports increasing by two hundred percent between 1993 and 2000; Chile is now the world's second largest exporter of farmed salmon in the world. All of the country's exportable Atlantic salmon is farmed in the tenth region, with a very significant portion coming from Chiloe.<sup>12</sup> In 1974, only 8.8 percent of the region's total fish tonnage came from Chiloe; by 1985 this number had shifted to 61.5 percent.<sup>13</sup> Undoubtedly the large presence of unskilled labour on the island has contributed to this expansion. Chile's

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<sup>11</sup>Barrett et al, 1. Today 45 percent of Chilean companies are solely or partially owned by foreigners.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Gonzalez Gutierrez, 13

distance from major markets is offset by its lower labour costs, offering a 'value added' boneless product that appeals more to consumers.<sup>14</sup>

Besides providing needed foreign exchange for Chile, the salmon boom has brought a variety of benefits to Chiloe. The unemployment rate has fallen significantly and migration out of the province has decreased. Husbands and fathers have an opportunity to remain at home and contribute to the running of the household, thus reducing the burden placed on mothers and older children. As one woman describes it:

Our sons and husbands work in the companies, this is how the money arrives at our houses. Almost all work is in salmon. Our sons may travel away to work, but our husbands now less so. Before the women were alone in the homes and the men travelled to Punta Arenas or Argentina. Now the men stay here. Our children now study.<sup>15</sup>

Average household income has also increased with the arrival of the salmon industry. This has had important ramifications for school attendance, as parents can now afford school fees and children's labour is no longer necessary to meet household expenses.

There is, of course, a downside to the salmon boom. First of all, the transition to salmon farming has meant a decline in the importance of artesanal fishing.<sup>16</sup> While it is true that artesanal fishing is less lucrative, it is very much an important part of Chilote culture. Community members who used to come together to fish, or had the freedom to take days off for important community festivals, now often work up to sixty hour work weeks for low wages. The Chilean government favours the expansion of salmon farming industries and

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<sup>14</sup>Barrett et al, 2.

<sup>15</sup>Oppenheim, 27.

<sup>16</sup>Artisanal fishing can be described as fishing undertaken by individuals, not companies, and using traditional techniques, i.e. non-mechanized.

often passes legislation that works to the detriment of artesanal fishing, such as in the implementation of commercial zones that deplete traditional stocks. Furthermore, it is widely recognized by the communities that the vast majority of profits are made by outsiders - and not even Chilean outsiders, but foreigners.<sup>17</sup>

New wealth has also posed a variety of social problems in Chilote communities. Greater amounts of disposable income have exacerbated the island's already high rates of alcoholism. And with a growing number of women working outside the home cleaning fish or other related tasks, the family circle is being eroded and the phenomenon of female alcoholism is rising.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly the rise of the salmon industry has had major, lasting consequences for the island. While it has indeed provided a much needed economic boost to the community, there have been serious cultural ramifications as well, the bulk of which may not be known until the next generation enters adulthood. While few in the community would wish for a return to the days when employment was unavailable on the island and families were separated for months at a time, the presence of the industry is sure to contribute to an instability that thus far has been successfully avoided on the island. Not that Chilotes would be very successful were they to protest the presence of the salmon industry in their communities.

### **III. 2. The Chilean Women's Movement**

While women play a limited role in electoral politics in Chile, particularly at the national level, women's political mobilization has had a crucial influence on both the fate of the Allende government and in the termination of the Pinochet regime. Still, Chile remains

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>18</sup>Gloria Bohn, June 6, 2001, Castro.

one of the most conservative liberal democracies in the world as regards women's issues: female political representation remains lower than that of its neighbours, abortion is criminal, effective contraception is expensive and often inaccessible, and divorce is still illegal. *Machismo* remains a very powerful concept in Chilean society.

This section will attempt to explain the apparent contradiction as to how women could play such a pivotal role in the country's history at one time and be so marginalized at others, as well as provide an overview of the history and current state of the Chilean women's movement.

### *III. 2. a) The Movement Pre-1973*

Chile did not have a women's movement much different from that of other Latin American states in the first half of the twentieth century. Their movement began rather quietly in the 1910s, as educated, upper-class women began to lobby for women's formal education. Gabriela Mistral, the Chilean Nobel Prize winner for literature, was one of the many women who spearheaded the drive which ultimately led to the creation of a Women's Reading Circle in 1919. That same year the Chilean Women's Party was established with the goals of reforming legislation concerning women; gaining the right to vote; obtaining civil rights; improving conditions for women and children; and achieving rights for women to be considered autonomous and independent citizens.<sup>19</sup> The Chilean Women's Party was unsuccessful in that it failed to ever appeal to or incorporate any women of the lower, working classes. However, partly as a result of their efforts, women were granted the right to vote in municipal elections in 1931.

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<sup>19</sup>Marjorie Agosin, "Women, Politics and Society in Chile", working paper #235, Wellesley College, March 1993, 2.

In 1936, three new women's groups emerged: the *Movimiento por la Emancipación de la Mujer*, *Acción Feminina* (associated with the Chilean Women's Party) and the *Movimiento de la Mujer Chilena* (MEMCH). Though the goals of the first two were more conservative in nature, and focused primarily on issues such as health care, child care and maternity law, MEMCH sought more political goals, specifically the achievement of women's suffrage.<sup>20</sup> Despite the internal conflicts faced by the women's movement during this period, the groups managed to unite to finally gain the women's vote in Chile in 1949.

Following this great success, the Chilean women's movement seems to have unravelled. Instead of developing their own political agenda, women typically adopted those of established, male-led political parties. Class conflict remained a significant obstacle to the achievement of a more encompassing movement. Upper-class women focussed on charitable activities as the medium for their participation, while working class women increasingly turned to involvement in labour unions. The Christian Democrat government of Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) allowed for a more evolved political role for women, creating the *Centros de Madres* (mother's centers), essentially community-based associations of housewives in urban and semi-urban areas designed to promote female participation in national life, decision-making and self-administration.<sup>21</sup> The Centers offered civic education courses and taught women typically female skills such as knitting, sewing and flower arranging to ameliorate their economical conditions. And of course, the Centers worked as an excellent

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Annie G. Dandavati, *The Women's Movement and the Transition to Democracy in Chile* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1996), 20. Frei's government created and funded a number of community based organizations, including the popular *Juntas de Vecinos* (Neighbourhood Associations), however only the *Centros de Madres* were composed solely of women. By 1983, it comprised over 10,000 centers with an estimated 230,000 members and 6,000 volunteer leaders (other estimates argue up to one million female beneficiaries.)



forum to recruit and build political allegiance to the PDC. Pinochet would later take advantage of these ready-made propaganda grounds.

### *III. 2. b) Women and the Fall of Allende's Socialist Experiment*

As has been described above, Allende came into power with a relatively limited political mandate. His popularity was probably even more precarious amongst women, who tend to vote more conservatively in Chilean political elections. This is not to suggest that Allende's social policy towards women was progressive: despite his socialist leanings, women were relegated to second-class citizenship during his regime. Women who were actively involved in the success of the Socialist Party found no corresponding inclusion in the leadership of the party; Allende did not appoint a woman to his Cabinet until two years into his term, and then only to a typically female ministry, that as head of the Social Development Agency.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps most telling was Allende's statement that he valued the Chilean woman as a 'mother' above all else.<sup>23</sup>

The political polarization that was dividing Chilean society at this time was no less pronounced amongst women. Those who were moderately conservative moved towards the extreme right, those who were liberal to the left. All the while those women in the middle or upper classes saw their way of life increasingly put at risk by Allende's Socialist government.<sup>24</sup> Several conservative women's groups were organized, including *El Poder Femenino*, *Frente Democratico de Mujeres* and the *Organizacion Civico-Familiar*. These perceived Allende's policies as a threat to the family, the nation and traditional values. They

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<sup>22</sup>Betilde V. Munoz, "Where are the Women?: The Case of Chilean Women", *International Social Science Review*, 1999, 6.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>24</sup>Dandavati, 22.

supported an overthrow of the socialist government and helped organize what was the first mass mobilization against the regime with the *March of the Empty Pots and Pans* in December, 1971. The march was ostensibly a protest against the lack of food available for mothers trying to feed their families. In reality, the protesters were upper class women and their maids, who suffered no lack of food and were stocking their pantries with black market goods. (There was a relative decrease in the food available in upper class neighbourhoods as Allende attempted to distribute it more equally amongst the less well-to-do sectors, and following the national strikes and a decrease in international aid and trade there were shortages of food). The anti-Allende media however took no pains to distinguish between rich and poor women and characterized socialist policy as a problem for all women and all families. Upper and middle class women were further used by the opposition to slander the military and called them “chickens” for not coming to the defense of starving mothers and their children. This was essentially a ploy by the right to convince the military that they had popular support for a coup.<sup>25</sup> In truth, they probably did.

Women undoubtedly played an important role in mobilizing efforts against Allende and hastening his overthrow. The *March of the Empty Pots and Pans* is the most historically recognized event, however others, such as the protest by military wives outside the home of General Prats calling for his resignation, which they eventually got, are also testimony to women's relative influence at the time. One should not, however, overestimate the significance of these events in the development of real feminist power.

First of all, most actions taken by women that contributed to the fall of the socialist experiment were done by those in the middle-upper classes, and primarily for economic, not

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<sup>25</sup>Dandavati, 23-24.

gender-based, motivations. Second, the protests made explicit reference to women's roles as wives, mothers and providers. Any power assigned to them was done so only in the context of the family. And third, most of the women's demonstrations were manipulated or even coordinated by the right wing opposition. Having a women's movement driven by the wishes of men is hardly a sign of empowerment.

### *III. 2. c) Women in the Pinochet Era*

Ironically, women played an influential role in the fall of the regime they had helped establish in the first place. However, as will be shown, the motivations for bringing down the Pinochet dictatorship were completely different from those for removing Allende.

As described above, many women, and in fact a large proportion of the Chilean population in general, were actually in favour of the coup on September 11, 1973, that brought the country under dictatorship. It brought a welcome end to the political instability, economic chaos and political polarization that had been plaguing Chileans for years. However Pinochet's unrestricted use of violence and repression to 'root out' potential insurgents soon ended any thoughts of a peaceful return to democracy. But while many wives and mothers protested the 'disappearances' of their loved ones, concrete opposition to the dictatorship would be put on hold for nearly a decade.

Despite Pinochet's widespread use of terror to solidify his regime, many Chileans were happily insulated from the direct effects or even knowledge of the dictator's tactics. None, however, were sheltered from the effects of his neo-liberal economic policies. The policies did provide for some initial economic gains, however with the souring of the world economy in the early 1980s, Chileans suffered perhaps worse hardships than their Latin American counterparts, having no protective social safety net and fewer macroeconomic

tools at their disposal. Women who had favoured Pinochet because of his stated commitment to the family and traditional values were now being forced to work outside the home just to survive; there was a contradiction between Pinochet's social policy and the realities of the neo-liberal system.<sup>26</sup>

As the country's economic situation worsened and the regime's legitimacy declined, a significant opposition arose. The burgeoning women's movement at this time was composed of three primary groups:

1. *Human rights groups*, a multi-class organization often composed by relatives of the disappeared. Their status as mothers allowed them some security against the regime's intolerance of opposition. It also helped call into question the regime's role as the defender of the family and added an 'ethical' dimension to the rational, male-dominated world of politics.

2. *Popular women's groups*, epitomized by such organizations as communal kitchens. These were largely composed of poor and working class women and often found support from the Catholic Church. Their goals were primarily to offer support to the poor, however they also served to provide a public space for women to meet and organize.

3. *Feminist groups*, composed mainly of middle to upper class women and students working with the militant left to overthrow the authoritarian government. These had some intellectual ties to Western feminists and largely sparked the re-emergence of a feminist movement in Chile, however they contended with more sexism in the left than one would find in more developed countries.<sup>27</sup>

The heterogeneity of these groups worked not as an obstacle to the success of the women's movement in provoking political change, but as an advantage as they provided opposition on so many fronts.

As described in the chapter on Chile (Chapter II), the fall of the Pinochet regime was not the result of a violent overthrow or dramatic political events. The end of the dictatorship

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<sup>26</sup>Dandavati, 41.

<sup>27</sup>Shahra Razavi, "Women in Contemporary Democratization", Occasional Paper #4, UNRISD, February 2000, 6-10.

was in fact predictable and slow moving, having followed Pinochet's carefully planned (if not successfully implemented) directives of the 1980 Constitution. If women did not do anything quite as sensational as the *March of the Empty Pots and Pans*, or conduct mothers' marches in the *Plaza de Mayo* as their counterparts did in Argentina, they still managed to demonstrate their dissatisfaction and opposition. Under the organization of MEMCH-83, a co-ordinating umbrella of women's opposition groups named after the old suffrage association, ten thousand women marched to Santiago's Caupolicán Theatre in December 1983, to call for the restoration of democracy.<sup>28</sup> Other important women's groups that formed included *Mujeres por la Vida*, established in 1986 and composed of twenty-four well known women who spanned the opposition political spectrum from Christian Democrat to Communist.<sup>29</sup> They helped found the *Asemblea de la Civilidad*, a broad coalition of opposition groups that conducted a program of civil disobedience with the intention of toppling the military government.

During this period women's groups came to be recognized as an important new social actor, comprising an estimated eleven thousand organizations representing two hundred and sixty thousand women.<sup>30</sup> They organized countless small but creative protests against the government, all of them peaceful. And in contrast to the movement during the Allende years, women from all classes united to achieve the common goal of restoration to

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<sup>28</sup>Michaela Hellmann, "Sin nosotras no hay democracia": perspectivas y limitaciones de los movimientos de mujeres en México y Chile" in *Democracia sin movimiento social?: sindicatos, organizaciones vecinales y movimientos de mujeres en Chile y México*, (Caracas: Editorial Nueva Socialidad, 1995), 229.

<sup>29</sup>Oppenheim, 175.

<sup>30</sup>María de la Luz Silva Donoso, *La participación política de la mujer en Chile: las organizaciones de mujeres*, (Buenos Aires: Fundación Friedrich Naumann, 1987), 65.

democracy in 1989. Sensing that the democratization process offered new possibilities to achieve their demands, some sectors of the movement moved into the parties of the left. The *Partido Por Democracia* and the *Partido Socialista* even adopted quota systems for women in leadership positions (to be ignored at key times.)<sup>31</sup> However the return to democracy did not offer as many opportunities as many women had hoped.

### *III. 2. d) The Women's Movement in the Transition to Democracy*

The Chilean women's movement can be said to have failed in two distinct but crucial ways. First, their significance in the eradication of Pinochet's authoritarian government has not translated into greater political representation. Shockingly, the proportion of women in Congress in 1997 was lower than before the 1973 coup. Only six members of the 120 seat Congress in 1990 were women. By 1994 the number stood at nine, and after the 2000 elections the number of female representatives was thirteen.<sup>32</sup> Representation in the Senate has fallen to two women out of a possible forty-eight as of the December 2001 elections.<sup>33</sup> Further, amongst those women who do play a role in institutionalized politics, family ties play a significant part.<sup>34</sup>

Second, the women's movement itself has suffered greatly since the transition. As one Chilean activist describes: "In the fight against the dictatorship we had a common

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<sup>31</sup>Razavi, 16.

<sup>32</sup>Gonzalez, Gustavo (2001), "Chile: More Women but Less Time for Gender Debate", Inter Press Service, January 2, 2001. Retrieved January 26, 2002 from: <http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/jan98/chile.html>

<sup>33</sup>Retrieved March 21, 2002 from the Chilean Senate's official web site: <http://www.senado.cl>

<sup>34</sup>Razavi, 16.

enemy, Pinochet...it was a fight to eradicate tyranny. That was the united goal."<sup>35</sup> However, with the end of the dictatorship, a predictable shattering of any commonality between the various women's groups came about. Once again, the movement is divided along class lines, with the educated, upper class, feminists looking for very different things than the increasingly impoverished working class.<sup>36</sup> More cleavages have developed, most prominently with the rise of an indigenous women's movement, that which will be treated in the next section. Progressive initiatives by the governing *Concertacion*, such as the creation of SERNAM (*Servicio Nacional de la Mujer*), a government ministry dealing with women's demands, have given women more of a voice, however its creation has resulted in a variety of negative consequences. Many complain that SERNAM has, first, stripped grassroots organizations of their leadership, and second, permitted the co-optation of the women's agenda by the more conservative state.<sup>37</sup> PRODEMU (*Promocion y Desarrollo de la Mujer*), created by the Aylwin government in 1990, works with women on a more local level than SERNAM. While it has achieved a variety of important advances at the grassroots level, it does little in terms of stimulating political participation.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle facing the women's movement is the persistent view among Chileans that the women's place is in the home. As demonstrated by the overview of women's historical political role, women garner their influence from their position as wives and mothers. Feminism in Chile is still perceived as an anti-male movement that fails to

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<sup>35</sup>Hellmann, 289. My translation.

<sup>36</sup>Rosa M. Canadell, "Chilean Women's Organizations: Their Potential for Change", *Latin American Perspectives*, 1993, 55.

<sup>37</sup>Dandavati, 112.

represent the majority of women.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the movement in Chile is better described as *feminine*, not *feminist*.

In the most recent presidential elections held last year, women voters supported Joaquín Lavín over Ricardo Lagos by a margin of three percent, despite the fact that men voted for Lagos over Lavín by a margin of ten percent.<sup>39</sup> Women in Chile have historically voted more conservatively than their male counterparts, as demonstrated by Table 3.1. Similarly, exit polls from the 1997 Congressional elections showed that right-wing women candidates who did not raise women's issues received higher support from women than men, while left-wing female candidates who did raise women's issues received more male than female votes.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 3.1 Percent votes according to gender, 1988-2000**

|  |                    | Men            | Women          |
|--|--------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 988<br>(Plebiscite)                        | Si<br>No           | 40.31<br>59.69 | 47.5<br>52.5   |
| 989<br>Presidential election)              | Buchi<br>Aylwin    | 26.01<br>59.04 | 32.53<br>51.6  |
| 993<br>Presidential election)              | Alessandri<br>Frei | 22.65<br>58.5  | 26.02<br>57.5  |
| 999<br>Presidential election, round<br>1)  | Lavín<br>Lagos     | 44.09<br>50.86 | 50.59<br>45.36 |
| 000<br>(Presidential election, round<br>2) | Lavín<br>Lagos     | 45.73<br>54.27 | 51.34<br>48.66 |

Source: Angell and Pollack, 2000, 371. The 'Si' vote and presidential candidates Buchi, Alessandri and Lavín are on the right side of the political spectrum.

<sup>38</sup>Razavi, 16.

<sup>39</sup>Loveman, 355.

<sup>40</sup>Razavi, 16.



What has changed is the fact that following the 1999-2000 presidential elections, a majority of women *preferred* the right for the first time in decades. Differences between men's and women's voting preferences that emerged in the most recent presidential election point to women as an increasingly important swing group. Whether or not this will translate into decisions on important legislation ostensibly beneficial to women, such as the legalization of divorce, is uncertain, particularly since their vote is so conservative. In any event, the movement would be wise to take advantage of the situation and press for the very inclusion of women's demands in the political sector.

### III. 3. The Chilean Indigenous Movement

Out of the total Chilean population of approximately fifteen million inhabitants, about one million identified themselves as Mapuche in the 1992 Chilean census, the first to allow self-identification by indigenous groups.<sup>41</sup> As a group, the Mapuche suffer a variety of social ills: thirty-five percent live in poverty, compared to the national figure of 23.2 percent; and life expectancy is five years below the national average, among other indicators.<sup>42</sup> Mapuches make up the overwhelming proportion of indigenous people in the state, about ninety percent; other indigenous groups with a significant population include Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Aymara, Atacamenos, Kawaskar and Yagan.<sup>43</sup> Because of the larger number, superior organization, greater influence at the national level and relationship of the Mapuche

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<sup>41</sup>Christina Parra-Jerez, "Chilean Government to Make it All Better for Mapuche". Retrieved November 15, 2000, from <http://www.xs4all.nl/~rehue/art/perez2.html>, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Retrieved on March 25, 2002 from CONADI's official web site at <http://www.conadi.cl/home.htm>

<sup>43</sup>Parra-Jerez, 4.

to the indigenous peoples of Chiloe, this section will focus primarily on the Mapuche indigenous movement.

### III. 3. a) History

Prior to the Spanish invasion, Mapuche society was organized loosely around the extended family; besides systems of alliances for war and economic purposes, there was little social stratification or hierarchy beyond the family unit.<sup>44</sup> This changed with the introduction of Spanish conquistadors. The Mapuche became more warlike and increasingly affected by imported illnesses and consumption of alcohol.

From the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, the Mapuche were successful in maintaining independence throughout a large portion of territory between the Bio-Bio and Tolten rivers. Several uprisings and fairly constant conflict between the Mapuche and the Spanish authorities during this time generated animosity between the two groups. However the struggle against the crown for Chilean independence in the early 1800s briefly changed the dominant attitude of settlers towards the Mapuche from barbarians to symbols of anti-Spanish resistance. Eventually, though, political realities saw the Mapuche side with the Spanish crown against the new republic, formed in 1819, in the unsuccessful *Guerra a Muerte* - the War to the Death.<sup>45</sup>

After independence, the Mapuche became to be seen as an obstacle to national unification and consolidation of the state's borders with Argentina, due to their unchallenged occupation of the region south of the Bio-Bio, in what is now Chile's ninth region. Two

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<sup>44</sup>Mario Sznajder, "Ethnodevelopment and Democratic Consolidation in Chile: The Mapuche Question", *Migration*, 1995, 33.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

extremely violent waves of military conquest, one in 1869 and the second from 1881-83, ultimately created territorial consolidation in the south for the state and effectively ended Mapuche control of ancestral lands.<sup>46</sup>

After their defeat, the Mapuche were placed into *reducciones*, or reservations. From 1884 to 1919, the state granted 3,078 titles of property comprising about 1.2 million acres of land to 78,000 individuals. The average indigenous recipient got seventeen acres compared to non-indigenous or white settlers who received an average of 1,235 acres per person.<sup>47</sup>

The lasting result of the *reducciones* has been a pauperization of the Mapuche. Land given to indigenous peoples, were they fortunate enough to receive any in the first place, was generally located in peripheral areas along the Andes. Less fertile and subject to erosion, the small plots given to the families were barely sufficient to sustain one's own family, let alone to grow produce for market. This, combined with the subdivision of community lands, led to a collapse of their cattle-raising industry and resulted in widespread poverty and dissolution of the family unit through emigration.<sup>48</sup>

Another impediment faced by the Mapuche was the pressure to integrate into Chilean society. Two organizations were established in the early twentieth century as a result of violence and land usurpations: the *Sociedad Caupolican Defensora de la*

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>48</sup>Jose Bengoa, *El campesinado Chileno despues de la reforma agraria*, (Santiago: Coleccion Estudios Sociales, 1983), 366. Indeed, a full 80 percent of Mapuche today live in urban areas, a figure higher than the national average.

*Araucania*, established in 1911 to promote the ethnic preservation and education of Mapuches, a member of which eventually became the first Mapuche elected to parliament in 1924<sup>49</sup>; and the *Sociedad Mapuche de Proteccion Mutual*, founded in 1914, a more radical organization which opposed any kind of integration and sought greater autonomy. These, along with the *Federacion Araucana*, founded in 1920 to organize annual meetings of Mapuche leaders until 1939, constitute the foundation of the Mapuche movement.<sup>50</sup>

Government involvement with the Mapuche for most of the twentieth century was restricted to attempts to integrate the natives into Chilean society through such policies as education and adoption of the Spanish language. Salvador Allende's government, however, proved attentive to the plight of the Mapuche with its implementation of an agrarian reform law in 1971, which saw a redistribution of 70 000 hectares of land to Mapuche communities.<sup>51</sup> Allende's socialist government also enacted the Indigenous Law of 1972 that saw the creation of the Institute of Indian Development and sought to combine agrarian reform with ethnodevelopment and generally increase

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<sup>49</sup>Francisco Melivilu Henriquez, elected deputy of the Chilean Parliament as a candidate of the Partido Demócrata.

<sup>50</sup>Sznajder, 38.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

Mapuche communities' standard of living.<sup>52</sup> These advancements were unilaterally repealed upon the installation of Pinochet's military government.

As a consequence of the dictatorship's stifling anti-participatory policies, there was little semblance of a Mapuche indigenous movement during the Pinochet era, with the exception of the creation of a small farmer and artisan association, AD-MAPU (Agrupacion de Mapuche). The Pinochet administration's approach towards the Mapuche was to achieve full integration as swiftly as possible. This was pursued primarily through the enactment of decree 2.568 in 1975, the aim of which was to "integrate the Mapuche definitely into Chilean society with rights and duties equal to the rest of the country".<sup>53</sup> The decree, unsuccessfully appealed by AD-MAPU, removed the ceiling of eighty hectares for farms on Mapuche land; permitted the setting up of corporations in Mapuche areas; and allowed the division of indigenous land so as to enable individual title to land. Essentially the new law allowed for the establishment of *latifundia* (large landholdings) on Mapuche land.<sup>54</sup>

The elimination of protection for Mapuche lands, combined with the military government's neo-liberal economic policies and depoliticization of Chilean society, led to somewhat of a crisis for Mapuche communities and the movement itself. Economic realities forced mounting urban migration, and, along with the new land laws, left

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<sup>52</sup>Jens Schneider, *Mujeres en el movimiento Mapuche en Chile*, (Hamburg: University of Hamburg Press, 1990),13.

<sup>53</sup>Quoted from *Chile 1979: Chile's New Law on Indian Affairs*, 57, in Sznajder, 40.

<sup>54</sup>Sznajder, 41.

traditional Mapuche communities fragmented and impoverished. Left without means to effectively organize and protest the military government (as a consequence of the regime's rigidity), there was little remaining of a uniquely Mapuche movement.

The situation perhaps was not as bleak as it sounds, however. Unable to enact a movement to advance purely indigenous goals, many native activists became co-opted into the overarching campaign to bring down the military government, not unlike members of the women's movement, a point that I have briefly addressed in section III.

2. c). According to Sonia Catepillan, vice-president of *Mujeres Indigenas Urbanas* (Urban Indigenous Women) and an active member of the Chilean Communist Party, the Pinochet era "was a period of great activity, it was a good experience...At the time we [social activists] were exceptionally well organized and united."<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the presence of a real and common enemy seems to have actually stimulated civil society in Chile, albeit clandestinely. In a sense, then, indigenous needs were served by indigenous activists, though in a framework of an anti-Pinochet opposition and not as part of a Mapuche movement.

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<sup>55</sup>Interview with Sonia Catepillan and members of *Mujeres Indigenas Urbanas*, May 31st, 2001, Castro, Chile. Berta Nahuelhuen, president of the organization, went on to state that while there were many large women's organizations active during the Pinochet period, indigenous groups were plainly missing from the scene.

### III. 3. b) *The Contemporary Mapuche Social Movement*

Since the fall of the Pinochet dictatorship, the three *Concertacion* administrations have made significant advances in legislating positive reforms for the Mapuche and an independent social movement is gaining influence.<sup>56</sup> The Aylwin government, for example, worked with Mapuche communities in establishing forestry reserves and in coordinating buybacks of ancestral land for redistribution to indigenous communities. Perhaps most noteworthy was the creation of the *Corporacion Nacional de Desarrollo Indigena* (National Corporation of Indigenous Development), or CONADI. CONADI, established with the passing of Indigenous Law 19.253 in October 1993, serves as an institutional link between indigenous groups and the Chilean government.<sup>57</sup> Law 19.253 provides a framework for positive discrimination in favour of indigenous groups; however the Chilean government has not as of yet passed any constitutional reforms to recognize rights of indigenous people, unlike governments in Brazil, Colombia and Nicaragua.<sup>58</sup>

Despite these positive reforms, there is still a great deal of tension between Mapuche organizations and the Chilean state. CONADI itself is often seen as having been co-opted by the state and as representing the state's interests to the Mapuche, rather

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<sup>56</sup>It should be noted that the bulk of Mapuche power lies in organizations centered in the city of Temuco. This has consequences for rural indigenous groups, and significantly for this thesis, Huilliches in Chiloé.

<sup>57</sup>Retrieved March 25, 2002 from CONADI's official web site:  
<http://www.conadi.cl/home.htm>

<sup>58</sup>Sznajder, 48- 49.

than vice versa.<sup>59</sup> And the *Concertacion* administrations, while having carried through a variety of admittedly positive legislation and being exponentially more tolerant to the Mapuche social movement than their predecessor Pinochet, have still been relatively inactive when it has come to passing progressive new laws. Thus many of the damaging policies initiated under the military regime have failed to be amended.<sup>60</sup>

The most serious dispute between the Mapuche and the state has to do with land claims and environmental protests against forestry and hydro-electric companies planning to build on and, from the perspective of the Mapuche, destroy indigenous lands. The most public confrontation involved the opposition of members of a Pehuenche community to the construction of the Ralco hydro-electric plant by the Spanish-Chilean corporation Endesa. The dam, the second and largest of a proposed six dams to be built on the Bio-Bio river, would flood seventy kilometres of the river valley and displace six hundred people, including four hundred Pehuenche.<sup>61</sup> Although a majority of the affected persons have agreed to be relocated, eight families, including Berta and Nicolasa Quintreman, a pair of elderly sisters, have refused. Public outrage was sparked when the

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<sup>59</sup>Rosamel Millaman, "Mapuches Press for Autonomy", *NACLA: Report on the Americas*, September/October 2001, 11.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 150-51.

<sup>61</sup>Retrieved November 22, 2000 from the International Rivers Network website at <http://www.irn.org/programs/biobio/>



latter two were arrested and sent to be tried by military court for allegedly “physically abusing *Carabinero* officers” at a blockade in February, 1999.<sup>62</sup>

Under the Indigenous Law, it would be illegal to displace the eight families without their consent, as it is specified that indigenous land boundaries can not be altered. As such, it would seem that completion of the project would be impossible. However, over half of the budgeted US\$550 million has been spent and the government has thus far pushed decisively for completion of the project.<sup>63</sup> Mapuche and environmental organizations worry that the Electricity Act, passed by the Pinochet administration, which basically gives carte blanche to projects that provide energy for the country, will be found to override the Indigenous Law. At that point the Quintreman sisters and the other seven families could be legally removed from their land.

A further point of dispute involves Mapuche protests against deforestation on indigenous lands, especially in the Arauco and Malleco regions, where the expansion of the timber industry has caused a high degree of soil erosion and is threatening the self sufficiency of Mapuche communities.<sup>64</sup> The current wave of militant Mapuche mobilisation began in 1996 and has included land occupations and the occasional burning

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<sup>62</sup>InterPress Third World News Agency, “Elderly Indigenous Women Tried by Military Courts”, 1999. Retrieved November 23, 2000 from <http://www.converge.org.nz/lac/articles/news990408b.htm>. *Carabineros* are the country’s national police.

<sup>63</sup>Former President Eduardo Frei (1994-2000) actually wrote his graduate thesis for engineering on the Ralco dam.

<sup>64</sup>Millaman, 10. The industry’s expansion is due in large part to legislation passed under Pinochet that led to cheap purchases of land in areas largely inhabited by Mapuche.

of logging machinery. These have resulted in swift and severe actions by the Chilean state, including a variety of arrests, even of children, and destruction of Mapuche land.<sup>65</sup> Government policies in favour of logging seem to be at odds with public opinion. A phone survey carried out in April 1999 by *Fundacion Futuro* showed that eighty-six percent of Santiago's population sides with the Mapuche in the conflict with forestry corporations and consider that the lands belong to the Mapuche, and sixty-eight percent find the Mapuche forms of struggle legitimate.<sup>66</sup>

At the very least, the Mapuche movement has succeeded in making forestry companies think twice before investing in new projects.<sup>67</sup> However the situation remains tense and seems to be increasingly dealt with through repression. The most recent major protest, in July of 2001, saw a violent march into downtown Temuco, resulting in the injury of fourteen officers and the detention of 120 Mapuche. The march was in protest of what the Mapuche saw as targeted police aggression against their communities: four days earlier, the government had raided the offices of the Council of All Lands, a large Mapuche organization, and arrested several of its leaders.

No simple solution will be found to ease the tensions created by centuries of conflict between the state and the Mapuche. The Chilean government, eager to improve the country's global economic standing, is reluctant to restrict the exploitation of its natural resources and discourage foreign investment, especially in view of the recent

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<sup>65</sup>Parra-Jerez, 3.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>67</sup> "Conflicto anunciado", referenced March 12, 2002 from the Que Pasa website at <http://www.quepasa.cl/revista/1455/24.html>

plunge in copper prices. The Mapuche, meanwhile, have understandably attached the preservation of their land to their very identity, at a time when urban migration and poverty threaten the existence of their culture. More pragmatically, the indigenous communities have very little to gain economically by the forestry and hydro-electric developments and have essentially been excluded as far as monetary returns are concerned.

One thing is for sure: the Mapuche movement has grown much stronger in the past decade and will continue to do so. Choices must now be made on how they are to deal with state conflict, be it with protests and violent struggle or through state-sanctioned spaces at the municipal, regional and national levels.

### III. 3. c) *Women and the Mapuche Social Movement*<sup>68</sup>

The Mapuche movement has historically been fought along purely ethnic lines with the supposition that both sexes were fighting for the same goals. During the women's suffrage movement in the 1930s and 1940s, a small number of indigenous women's groups were established, including the *Sociedad Feminina Araucana Yafwayin* and the *Sociedad Feminina Araucana Fresia*. However these were short lived and soon co-opted by the larger, more comprehensive male-led groups.<sup>69</sup> Only recently has a truly independent women's movement begun to emerge. This has been prompted by: a) the

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<sup>68</sup> Alvaro Barros, "Astillas de Chiloe: desarrollo regional o negocio particular?" *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Urbanos Regionales*, August 1980, 39.

<sup>69</sup> Schneider, 12.

fall of Pinochet's restrictive military government<sup>70</sup>; and b) the rise in importance of indigenous and rural women's issues internationally, led by the achievements of Guatemala's Rigoberta Menchu and events such as the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995.<sup>71</sup>

Traditionally women in Chile, unlike those from Peru, Bolivia and to an extent Colombia, have been largely absent from the country's agrarian reform movements<sup>72</sup>, a movement heavily linked to the political and economic standing of the Mapuche. This can be explained by the extreme machismo experienced in Chile, a trait that unfortunately has been shared by indigenous society.<sup>73</sup> Indigenous women make up what is likely the most marginalized social group in Chilean society. They have had little access to education, and so as a group show high illiteracy rates; and as a result of a particularly patriarchal familial structure, are subjected to very long working hours for little or no pay.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Pilar Campana and Soledad M. Lago, "La problemática de la mujer rural en Chile", *Organizaciones Femeninas del Campo: Problemas y Perspectivas*, (Santiago: Grupo de Investigaciones Agrarias, 1987), 11. The authors write during the Pinochet regime but assert that his policies form an obstacle to heightened rural women's involvement.

<sup>71</sup>*Encuentro de mujeres indígenas*, (Temuco, Chile: Coordinadora de Mujeres de Organizaciones e Instituciones Mapuche, 1995), 4.

<sup>72</sup>Pilar Campana and Soledad M. Lago, "La problemática de la mujer rural en Chile" in *Organizaciones Femeninas del Campo: Problemas y Perspectivas*, (Santiago: Grupo de Investigaciones Agrarias, April 1987), 14.

<sup>73</sup>Bengoa, 366.

<sup>74</sup>Ximena Aranda, *Mujer rural: diagnostico para orientar politicas en el agro*, (Santiago: Programa de Desarrollo para el Sector Campesino, November 1992), 55.

Nevertheless, Mapuche women are becoming increasingly vocal and critical of both the state's and the Mapuche movement's attitudes towards women. The past decade has seen a rise both in the number of Mapuche women's associations and in the level of their organization. Starting with the *Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres Indigenas* (National Meeting of Indigenous Women) in Temuco in 1995, there has been consistent and increasing participation in regional, national and international conferences; a number of publications directed exclusively at Mapuche women have sprung up, including *Rulpa Dungun* and *Az Zomo*; and a greater involvement of state-sponsored agencies, such as SERNAM and PRODEMU, have seen improved levels of development for rural and indigenous women.

Indigenous women's groups, while supporting the 'traditional' Mapuche struggles for autonomy and protection of ancestral lands, tend to concentrate on more pragmatic goals. These include improvements towards basic social needs in the education and health spheres, especially as concerns their children; greater access to housing and credit; and the attainment of fair prices for crafts and food goods that they market (*Rulpa Dungun*, 1990). The nature of these goals are decidedly non-political, a fact that helps explain the basic absence of indigenous women from any level of electoral politics despite their higher levels of organization and burgeoning involvement in the public sector. According to Rosa Rapiman Morales, director of *Casa de la Mujer Mapuche*, probably the largest women's Mapuche organization in the country, male leaders and members of the Mapuche movement used to find their divergence into a purely women's stream as divisive and conflicting. However, attitudes have changed as

the indigenous women's movement has proved to be complementary and progressive to the overarching movement, rather than obstructive as was once feared.<sup>75</sup>

Obviously, not all is positive as it concerns the indigenous women's movement. CONADI has been criticized for overlooking the importance of gender issues in achieving significant indigenous development.<sup>76</sup> Others complain that state-run organizations such as, but by no means limited to, PRODEMU are managed by white or mestizo women from the capital with no experience with or concern for indigenous issues.<sup>77</sup> And despite the progress of the women's indigenous movement, there are still few women in leadership positions in the mainstream Mapuche movement, though it seems to be (slowly) improving.

The last decade has seen great strides on the part of Mapuche women. However their relative lack of political influence seems to have frustrated attempts to achieve significant and sustained progress on the issues that affect Mapuche women and children most. Those issues - health, education and rural development - require significant resources; in a cash-strapped Third World economy obsessed with macroeconomic growth such as Chile's, it seems Mapuche women will for the time being remain last in line.

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<sup>75</sup>Rosa Rapiman Morales, July 23, 2001, Temuco.

<sup>76</sup>*Encuentro de mujeres indígenas*, 4.

<sup>77</sup>Dorris Miguellán, May 31, 2001, Castro.

#### IV. The Chiloe Case Study

The following chapter will examine the lives, methods and outlets for rural women on the Southern Chilean island of Chiloe as pertains to civic involvement. As discussed briefly in the introduction, the original purpose of this paper was to examine the levels of political participation adopted by Chilote women. However I have come to discover that the term *political* is unsuitable; what these women do is better defined as civic participation. And while their involvement is no less critical to the well-being and daily functioning of their communities than that of the politically involved, their choice of activity has resulted in a considerable imbalance of power and influence that works to their detriment in that they have little access to state resources to improve their quality of living.

Before I begin, let me issue a caveat. Prior to my arrival in Chiloe I had intended to focus solely on the experiences of indigenous women. However as I learned more I came to realize that the lives of all rural women, in Chiloe at least, are remarkably similar, and that a rural indigenous woman has much more in common with a rural non-indigenous woman than an urban indigenous one. Both are involved in similar economic projects, such as algae gathering, production of crafts, and occasional work in salmon processing plants; both are responsible for similar domestic duties, which in rural areas includes tending gardens and farm animals; and both have similar lack of access to such necessities as transportation and education. In these respects, rural women have relatively little in common with urban women. Perhaps most relevant to this essay is the fact that in general urban women have greater access to education, transportation and

communications and as such have a much greater capacity to become involved politically. Therefore, though I do deal more with indigenous women and look at indigenous communities as one source of involvement, my conclusions will be applicable to rural women on the island in general.

#### **IV. 1. Experiences of Chilote Women**

This section will examine the situations and experiences of two women and one co-operative: Maria Ariella, an indigenous fisherwoman and president of a very small women's fishing group; Hilda Guentee, President of *Huequetrumao*, a Huilliche community; and the members of Cultimar, a women's fishing group established in the Northern Chilote village of Caipulli.

It should be noted that these women were chosen for interviews based on their extra-ordinary involvement at the community level. Thus they are representative of only the more civically active women on the island.

##### *IV. 1. a) Maria Ariella*

I interviewed Maria Ariella in her home on June 3, 2001. Maria lives and works in the community of Natri-Bajo, an indigenous fishing village of about one hundred families.<sup>1</sup> While a majority of family income in the area is derived from fishing, many households subsidize income with work in salmon processing plants and producing handicrafts or *artesanía* (women) or work in the agricultural and forestry industries (men).

Maria is the president of a small, informal fishing collective that includes about fifteen to thirty-five women from the area. The women collect algae by hand to be sold

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<sup>1</sup>A curious practice of Chilotes is to describe populations by the number of families, not individuals.



to middlemen for eventual production in shampoos, cosmetics, etcetera. The purpose of the collective is three-fold: first, by working in pairs (rather than by oneself), time is saved and more algae can be collected; second, by selling their algae as a group, the women get better prices. And third, there are important social and familial bonds between the members of the group and the collective offers them a chance to spend time together.

Maria lives in a rundown, two-room shack about two hundred metres from the sea. She maintains a large garden and tends several pigs and chickens. She is married - her husband is an alcoholic- and has three grown children, two boys and a girl. She works in the sea almost every day of the year, but also supplements her income by occasionally working for salmon processing plants, or selling vegetables. She estimates that about fifty percent of the community's women work in fishing<sup>2</sup>, while the rest sell crafts, vegetables, or work regularly in salmon processing plants; all forms of work available to the women yield roughly the same pay. Similarly, almost all forms of women's work is manual, though Maria asserts that there have been technological improvements in the algae-collecting process since the days when her mother and grandmother did it. Conversely, men's work in the community entails a heavy use of technology, specifically in the salmon-fishing field, which according to Maria men work in for only four months of the year (it being seasonal work).

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<sup>2</sup>Fishing is a word representative of any economic activity relating to the sea. However since fishing duties are strictly gendered in Chiloe, reference to women fishing would mean collecting shellfish (generally for consumption) or algae (for market).

As they pertain to women's involvement in the community, most organized activities seem to revolve around economic undertakings. Maria's collective's only objective is to increase income. Other women's groups in the area, though formed around different activities such as selling crafts or cleaning fish, are similar in that their sole purpose is economic. Asked whether there were any political organizations in the community, Maria replied "I don't know."

#### *IV. 1. b) Hilda Guentee*

I interviewed Hilda Guentee on June 8, 2001 in *Huequetrumao*, a Huilliche community in Southern Chile. Hilda is the President of *La Comunidad Indigena Huequetrumao*, an organization whose purpose is to represent the citizens of the area and to fight for indigenous rights, though she asserts that the group is non-political. The community of *Huequetrumao* itself is not a fishing community; it relies primarily on the forestry industry for its income, in which both men and women participate. Other economic activities include agricultural work and, for women, *artesanía*, or handicrafts.

In discussing the organization, Hilda contended that it was not unusual to have women in positions of authority, but even if this is so at the communal level, there are few women in positions of power at higher political levels. Furthermore, as part of my interview with Hilda, I was permitted to sit in on a community meeting with the regional forestry engineer. Despite Hilda's official position as president of the organization, her duties would be better described as those of chief administrator. Decision-making power lay quite obviously with a twenty-five year old male from the community. In fact the regional forestry engineer's assistant, a Chilean student who had been working and

researching in the area for several months, informed me that she was the community secretary, when in fact she is not.

As far as women's involvement in the community was concerned, Hilda asserted that though women assumed most household responsibilities, women and men often worked in partnership with their spouses and maintained fairly equal economic relationships. Asked if women would benefit from having their own economic or political organizations, separate from men's, Hilda replied that there would be no point, that "...here men and women work together and towards the same ends. We don't really have different problems." Similarly, she noted that women were always well represented at community meetings.

Still, some governmental organizations, such as PRODEMU, had offered free programmes reserved for women in the community to teach them ways to earn additional income, which Hilda thought had been helpful and well received. Asked if she knew of any women's groups with a non-economic purpose, Hilda said she had heard of one in Chiloe which worked to represent women's needs. She did not belong to the group however; she was too busy with her own work.

#### *IV. 1. c) The Caipulli Cooperative*

In 1996, Cultimar, a women's fishing cooperative, was founded by Gladis Toledo in the Northern Chilote village of Caipulli. Toledo was the well-known leader of the Pulpede (a neighbouring village) algae-collectors cooperative. Caipulli, located approximately ten kilometers from the city of Ancud on the east bank of the Pudeto River, has a population of 46 households or approximately 200 inhabitants. Basic

services and infrastructure are minimal; there is no public transportation, nor a reliable source of potable water and electricity has only been installed in the last two years. The community's one-teacher school goes up to the sixth grade.

Following the catastrophic earthquake in 1960, the region's environment was changed profoundly. New marine species, including the seaweed-like algae *Gracilaria spp.* flourished; the harvesting of the latter eventually became the principal economic activity in the area and contributed to somewhat of a boom. The economic boom ended some years later following a collapse in the price of the algae and a shortage of the product as a result of over-harvesting. Toledo's idea was to provide women with economic opportunities beyond collecting algae, while also showing what a group composed exclusively of women could accomplish.

Following a radio announcement that invited women from around the area to join the cooperative, 28 became founding members, though eventually only the fifteen from Caipulli remained as the others had problems getting to the site and became frustrated with the lack of short-term results. Two others have since moved to Santiago, leaving the total number at thirteen, ranging in age from twenty to sixty-eight years old. All are mothers, though some are unmarried. The project has succeeded in increasing household income for the women and their families.

The group applied for and was awarded a governmental concession to harvest blue mussels in Caipulli in 1997; in the same year they completed a course in mussel aquaculture taught by marine biologists from the Universidad Austral de Chile (UACH), and funded by a joint Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and

Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) project. Blue mussels were originally chosen as the most appropriate and promising species, but in 1999 production expanded to include shoe mussels and Japanese oysters, and the group participated in another UACH course on oyster cultivation. The work is fairly straightforward: the women set out their lines during the winter in their concession location on the banks of the Pudeto River. In the summer when the mussels and oysters have matured, they harvest the shellfish, prepare them and sell them. Time commitment is relatively limited; the women work once a week during the winter and an average of twice a week in the summer, though during harvest times they will work up to three times a week.

Though the purpose of the cooperative is purely economic, the women have previous experience in organizations such as the school's parents' association, the church and the community council. They cite involvement in the former as a factor in their current success with the fishery. "They have learned the value of working together towards a common goal, and of forming links between the community and authorities and institutions that could help them to achieve their objectives."<sup>3</sup> Their participation with the cooperative has further developed the women's organizational skills. They produce budgets, keep careful accounts of income and expenses, and, as a result of their success, have come to represent fisherwomen from the region at related conferences and meetings: Cultimar was one of four principal groups represented at the inaugural *National Women's*

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<sup>3</sup>Video supplement *De mar y de tierra*. Besides interviews, a large portion of the information presented in this section is derived from the video and accompanying manual *De Mar y de Tierra*, Araya, Gabriel and Ovando, German, directors.

*Conference on Artisanal Fishing in Chile*, held in Valparaíso, Chile in January 2001<sup>4</sup>.

Additionally, the group has travelled to Valparaíso to meet with executives of CONAPACH (National Confederation of Artisanal Fishermen of Chile) and members of the Chilean Senate to negotiate their incorporation and representation in CONAPACH and discuss the privatization of the industry by large corporations as well as environmental concerns.

Participation with the cooperative has also seemed to improve aspects of the women's home lives. According to Catalina Alvarado, current president of Cultimar, the women's independence has increased. And far from feeling rejected or threatened by the women's greater financial contributions to the household, husbands of members are outwardly supportive of the organization (particularly since it has begun to turn a profit) and often help with heavy work and contribute during busy times. The increase in household income has also benefited the women's children as their material needs are more easily met, without putting much strain on availability, as the members work only once or twice a week, and all live relatively close to the site. When the women are working, the older children watch over the younger ones. The work in the cooperative has also strengthened familial and community bonds between the women. "The women feel their lives have changed as time has passed, leading in recent years to a process of 'liberation', manifested principally in terms of their rights, progress and creation of new ways of participation."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>"Primer encuentro nacional de mujeres de la pesca artesanal de Chile", *La Caleta*, April 2001, 19-20. There are an estimated 30,000 fisherwomen in Chile.

<sup>5</sup>Video supplement, *De mar y de tierra*.

Though the group can be deemed a success by almost any standard, it has not come without significant economic and technical aid from outside forces. UACH, based in Valdivia, Chile, in partnership with MUN and the CIDA, has been active by providing both courses in mussel aquaculture (1997) and oyster cultivation (1999). However the organization has also allocated significant economic resources to the project, paying large shares of equipment and transportation costs and providing ongoing technical support. The UACH/MUN/CIDA project similarly supports community-based mollusc aquaculture research and related scientific research in order to provide a lasting contribution to development and employment for rural Chilean communities reliant on the fishing industry.

The European NGO "Bread for the World" similarly awarded Cultimar a grant in November 1999 to purchase a boat, materials for lines and other related items, that which allowed them to expand into oyster and shoe mussel harvesting. While these contributions are very positive, Cultimar's success should be viewed as exceptional and not something that could be readily replicated throughout the island, if for nothing else their lack of money and external assistance. The efforts of two international aid organizations have improved the lives of the thirteen women of Cultimar and the members of their community, but there are thousands more like them in Chiloe and not near enough technical and economic resources to go around.

#### **IV. 2. Towards Increased Participation in Chiloe**

The previous section highlighted some experiences of Chilote women as a means to familiarize the reader with actual means of participation available to the women. I will

now examine the situation in Chiloe more generally. As mentioned previously, the three cases listed above represent women who are particularly active in civic affairs. But how involved is the average women, and in what? Also, what is being done, if anything, to heighten the influence of Chilote women in terms of political authority?

#### *IV. 2. a) Average Public Involvement*

Traditionally in Chile, women have been strictly relegated to the household, having few opportunities for outside participation, particularly in rural areas such as Chiloe. This began to change during the administrations of Eduardo Frei and Salvador Allende, as the establishment of *Centros de Madres* (Mother's Centres), which really flourished in the 1970s, precipitated a move from the private to the public sphere. Ironically, though the *Centros de Madres* were introduced as a means of support for women's household duties, they functionally served to legitimize extra-domestic participation.<sup>6</sup> Though the relative importance of the *Centros de Madres* has since greatly diminished, their role in facilitating increased women's public participation has not gone unrecognized. Today, PRODEMU fills some of the space left by their disappearance.

Similarly, the shift in economic roles for women in Chiloe came from a substantial social transformation. As recently as the late 1970s in Chiloe, before the ascendance of the salmon industry, few women worked outside the home but rather were occupied tending children, small animals and gardens, cutting wood, retrieving water and

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<sup>6</sup>Aranda, 57.



other household chores.<sup>7</sup> The shift in the region's economic structure from small-scale, subsistence fishing to technologically intensive salmon farming and processing, has changed women's roles forever. Today a large number of women work in salmon processing plants, some of which are unionized, or in informal production-based groups as a means to subsidize household income.

Rural Chilote women participate in a variety of different public activities, the majority of which can be divided into four main categories: production-based organizations; unions; *comunitarias* (community improvement-based organizations); and ethno-cultural associations.<sup>8</sup> I will now go into further detail on these categories.

#### *IV. 2. a) i) Economic-Based Organizations*

Economic-based organizations that enjoy fairly widespread participation by Chilote women can be loosely divided into two groups: informal production-based co-operatives, where the women work for themselves, and unions, in which workers unite to defend their interests against their employer.

Maria Soledad Lorca, a community radio employee and host of a weekly show on women's development in Ancud, estimates that there are about thirty informal women's economic groups in Chiloe, such as Cultimar, each with an average of 10-12 members. (There are many more men's and men's & women's organizations.) Activities include collecting algae, producing and selling crafts, and market gardening, among others. The number of groups has grown exponentially in the past few years, but an

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<sup>7</sup>Maria Soledad Lorca, June 27, 2001, Ancud.

<sup>8</sup>Propuestas de políticas de igualdad de oportunidades para las mujeres rurales, (Santiago: SERNAM, 1997), 27.

accurate tally is made impossible by their informal nature and the remoteness of the communities in which many of the groups are based. One 1997 study estimates a participation level in like organizations in rural areas across the country at eight percent of the population<sup>9</sup>, though this number would almost certainly have increased since its publication as co-operatives become increasingly recognized as legitimate and effective enterprises. The purpose of these groups is to boost profits and productivity, which they usually accomplish, however because of their small scale and informal nature, profits are never substantial. The informal co-operatives often also inadvertently though happily strengthen communal bonds between those involved in the project.

Besides informal economic co-operatives, a significant source of work-related public involvement for Chilote women is in unions, particularly in the province's numerous fish-processing plants. First, a clarification of the term itself. Pinochet's administration, as is well-known, was particularly restrictive toward labour movements and subsequently the organization of unions. Propaganda that depicted unions as troublemakers and anti-Chilean, combined with a resonating fear that involvement in them could lead to prosecution, made it nearly impossible to organize such things as fisherwomen's unions, by that name at least, as the "word [union] is like a virus, infecting whatever it is you're talking about."<sup>10</sup> One worker in a salmon processing plant related that:

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 27. Based on participation in women's and co-ed groups.

<sup>10</sup>Gloria Bohn, June 6, 2001, Castro.

Many times I've spoken with my co-workers about the necessity of organizing a union, but they're against it because they're afraid they'll be fired. They always look at those of us that understand the need to organize as troublemakers.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, many organizations that would in any other country be called a union, are often referred to as co-operatives or associations in Chile.

Despite the restrictions placed on unions during the Pinochet era, there was a movement towards their creation led both by regional NGOs and the Catholic Church, and in 1989 about twenty-five percent of fish plant employees were unionized.<sup>12</sup> However by 2000, a study by the Arcis University Center for Social Research found that, based on a representative sample, 43.5 percent of fish plants in the Chile's tenth region, of which Chiloe forms a part, have unions. And while the total number of workers, or the proportion of female workers, is difficult to gauge given the often temporary nature of the work, the study concluded that women make up more than half of those employed in the region's fish plants.<sup>13</sup> As such, one would expect women to be well represented, but this is not always the case.

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<sup>11</sup>Vida y trabajo en las fabricas pesqueras Chilotas, (Castro, Chiloe: Comision de Derechos Humanos, 1988), 21. My translation.

<sup>12</sup>Fernando Segarra, Gustavo Rayo and Gilles Tosca, Situacion actual y perspectivas del sector campesino en Chiloe, (Santiago: Consultorias Profesionales Agraria Ltda., 1990), 19.

<sup>13</sup>Propuesta de politica publica con enfoque de genero: fiscalizacion de condiciones de higiene y seguridad en empresas pesqueras de la X region, (Unidad Ejecutora Centro de Investigaciones Sociales Universidad Arcis: Santiago, March 2000), 14-15.

First of all, as is typical of Chile's machista society, men tend to occupy leadership positions in the unions, occupying 92.8 percent of board positions and 94.3 percent of presidencies in one sample.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, much of the propaganda used by NGOs to encourage union formation is aimed at men. (See Figure IV.1)



Figure IV. 1 "Organization is the first step towards the self-development which improves living and working conditions. Organization permits us to resolve common problems of artisanal fishermen."

Perhaps more relevant is the fact that it is almost impossible to unionize work that by its very nature is seasonal and casual<sup>15</sup>, as women's work in fishing plants often seems to be. This situation has not been helped by the fact that the percentage of non-permanent

27. <sup>14</sup>Propuestas de políticas de igualdad de oportunidades para las mujeres rurales,

<sup>15</sup>Aranda, 58.

manual labour positions relative to permanent positions in Chile has been inverted in the past half century, so that the majority of jobs in that sector available today are temporary.<sup>16</sup>

There are a variety of factors that make unionization critical for the women of Chiloe who work in fish-processing plants. Their triple role as worker, house caretaker and child rearer enhances the need for job security, workplace safety and a healthy work environment<sup>17</sup>, three items that are glaringly lacking from the average fish-processing plant. And their role in many cases as the single contributor to household income is complicated by the comparatively lower wages women workers in the plants earn.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, there is very little protection for women from sexual harassment, nor are there qualifying benefits for maternity leave. Legislation that is in place in Chilean statute books to protect workers' rights is often ignored, though corporations have witnessed the successful passing of a variety of creative legislation that effectively frustrates the organization of unions.<sup>19</sup> Lastly, studies have shown that participation in local organizations decreases when employees begin to work in fish plants. (See Table 4.1) As

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<sup>16</sup>Situacion de la mujer rural en Chile: recopilacion y actualizacion de antecedentes, (Chile: Organizacion de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentacion/ SERNAM, 1991), 23.

<sup>17</sup>Propuesta de politica publica con enfoque de genero: fiscalizacion de condiciones de higiene y seguridad en empresas pesqueras de la X region, (Santiago: Unidad Ejecutora Centro de Investigaciones Sociales Universidad Arcis, March 2000), 56-7.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

such, unions became more crucial as they are often a worker's only outlet for civic involvement.

**Table 4.1 Level of participation in community organizations before and after beginning work for a salmon corporation - percentage of participants who agree with ranking**

|            | Before | After |
|------------|--------|-------|
| Poor       | 5      | 22    |
| Average    | 27     | 41    |
| Acceptable | 31     | 11    |
| Good       | 36     | 25    |

Source: Gonzalez Gutierrez, 67.

In the past decade, unionization and women's and workers' rights movements have succeeded in obtaining some improvements for employees of fish plants.<sup>20</sup> Continued advances in the organization of such movements, which only began to really expand in the late 1980s, should herald further improvements, making unions an increasingly significant public forum for Chilote women.

#### *IV. 2. a) ii) Community-Based Organizations*

The two broad categories of non-economic types of organizations in which rural Chilote women participate include community and ethno-cultural organizations.<sup>21</sup> Community organizations, or *comunitarias* as they are known in Chile, attain the greatest

<sup>20</sup>Maria Soledad Orca, June 27, 2001, Ancud.

<sup>21</sup> Propuestas de politicas de igualdad de oportunidades para las mujeres rurales, 27.

participation levels, with an estimated 20 percent of rural women becoming involved in them.<sup>22</sup> These encompass a wide variety of activities:

*Catholic Church* - The Catholic Church enjoys fairly widespread participation in Chiloe, probably more so than in the rest of Chile, despite a higher indigenous population. There are about 170 parishes in Chiloe, though relatively few have a permanent priest.

Following the 1973 coup d'état and the subsequent withdrawal of the Chilean state from social welfare programs, the Catholic Church adopted a much more engaged approach than it had previously assumed. In Chiloe this entailed technical and monetary support for various agricultural and fishing endeavours.<sup>23</sup> The Church in Chiloe has also helped to spearhead initiatives to develop community leadership, maintain food banks, provide assistance in community health and construction projects, and facilitate a community radio station among other beneficial projects.<sup>24</sup>

*NGOs* - The largest and best organized NGOs in Chiloe generally centre around improving productivity in the agricultural and fishing sectors to the benefit of independent rural labourers. The largest include *Estudios Agrarios de Ancud* (Agricultural Studies of Ancud), OPDECH (*Oficina Promotora del Desarrollo Chiloe*/Office for the Promotion of Development in Chiloe) and *AGRARIA*.<sup>25</sup> OPDECH,

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Segarro et al, 15.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 17.

which had a significant role in the development of fishing co-operatives on the island in the 1980s and early 1990s, was recently torn apart following accusations of corruption amongst the executive.

A relatively new (1998) NGO with the goal of supporting Chilean rural and indigenous women is now gaining ground in Chiloe. The *Asociacion Nacional de Mujeres Rurales e Indigenas* (National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women), or ANAMURI, strives to improve the living conditions of rural and indigenous women while also supporting the creation and continuance of community associations, cooperatives and organizations. (Figure IV. 2)

*Governmental Organizations* - To its credit, the Chilean government has invested a greater proportion of resources to improving the situation of rural and indigenous women since the end of the Pinochet era. However, programs are still limited to improving material living conditions and have yet to address low levels of political participation.

There are a number of governmental organizations that serve to represent the predominant social and economic cleavages in Chiloe. These include INDAP (*Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario*/Institute for Agricultural Development), SERNAPESCA (*Servicio Nacional de Pesca*/National Fisheries Service), and CONADI.

There are also a handful of governmental organizations that represent women exclusively. Following the victory of *Concertacion* forces in the presidential elections of 1990, a National Women's Ministry was created: SERNAM. SERNAM has as its objective the promulgation of the importance of domestic work and the value of motherhood; the supporting of any projects that strengthen the family unit and any and all



of its members; the expansion of women's representative organizations and associations; and the role of liaison between women's interests and competing governmental departments, NGOs, international organizations, and foreign governments, among other objectives.<sup>26</sup> Some of the more significant achievements of SERNAM as it relates to rural women include the development of day cares for single and working mothers, the successful implementation of legislation beneficial to rural women, and the formation of special credit bureaus to assist rural women in the obtainment of loans for land and capital purchases.<sup>27</sup>

The other major governmental organization with goals of supporting rural women in Chile is PRODEMU. PRODEMU is traditionally under the directorate of the country's First Lady. However it enjoys the cooperation of many different women's groups and often includes in its directorate executives from SERNAM, INDAP and other well-known organizations, often operating closer to the grassroots than its counterparts. More on PRODEMU's objectives will be discussed in the next section.

Besides the three large *comunitaria* sectors described above, rural women often participate in very local organizations with the goal of improving some quality of their own community. These would include involvement in local schools, participation in a community council, and work in community infrastructure projects (e.g. paving roads, improving water quality, securing electricity, etc.)

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<sup>26</sup>Liliana Barria, Mujer Rural: políticas y programas del gobierno, 1990-1992, (Santiago: Ministerio de Agricultura/Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación/Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario/ SERNAM, 1992), 13.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 15-19.

The second broad category for community-based involvement, ethno-cultural associations, consist in Chiloe mainly of Huilliche communities, such as *La Comunidad Indigena Huequetrumao*, of which Hilda Guentee is president. In general, the objective of such organizations is the protection and acquisition of communal or ancestral lands for its members, based legally on the Peace Treaty signed between Huilliche leaders and the Spanish in Osorno, Chile in 1793.<sup>28</sup>

There are four main indigenous communities in Chiloe, based in the southern portion of the province, including Huequetrumao, Coihuin (where Maria Ariella resides), Incopulli and Guaipulli. The total number of members between these four communities consists of only about 1400 inhabitants (1990)<sup>29</sup>, however many more indigenous people live in the province's urban centres. Chiloe's indigenous community as a whole is reasonably well organized, working under the aegis of the *Consejo de Caciques Huilliche de Chiloe* (Chiloe Council of Huilliche Chiefs) and the *Federacion de Comunidades Indigena* (Federation of Indigenous Communities). These two principal political wings of the Huilliche are without a doubt male dominated; however from the women I talked to, there doesn't seem to be a lot of animosity towards that fact nor are there significant feelings of exclusion. Manuel Raunke, the spokesman for the *Consejo de Caciques Huilliche de Chiloe*, stated that women do involve themselves to a considerable degree, in fact more so than men, outside the executive level. According to Mr. Raunke, this is due, first, to their superior organizational skills, and second, to the fact that because much

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<sup>28</sup>Segarra et al, 20.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

of women's work is based near the home and community, women have "more time" to devote to public participation than men.<sup>30</sup>

I also spoke to the Vice-President of the *Federacion de Comunidades Indigenas*, a woman named Cecilia Leaguen. Despite being one of a very few women in a leadership position in the Huilliche community, Ms. Leaguen asserted that she has never received anything but support from her indigenous brothers (as well as the occasional inappropriate comment about her physical appearance), and has been afforded the opportunity to represent her organization and its members at various regional and national meetings, including a CONADI conference.<sup>31</sup> While Ms. Leaguen's position lends hope to the possibility of greater representation by women within the community, I feel it is important to note that she is unmarried and has no children, leading me to speculate that positions of authority are only available to those women not constrained by traditional female roles.

#### *IV. 2. b) In Pursuit of Greater Participation*

In the above section, I have shown that though rural women in Chiloe are not active politically, they do have a number of opportunities to become involved in the economic and community spheres. However if we agree that their lack of involvement in the political sphere causes concern for their equal representation and as such for their influence over policy matters, then it would seem to make sense for them to strive for greater political participation. That is not the case in Chiloe, however. While we in

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<sup>30</sup>Manuel Raunke, June 3, 2001, Natri-Bajo.

<sup>31</sup>Cecilia Leaguen, May 31, 2001, Castro.

North America may take for granted the capacity to involve ourselves politically, rural Chilote women must contend with more pressing obstacles to political participation, not least poverty. Compounding this is the fact that in Chile's very unique political culture, participation is not readily encouraged at the grass roots level.

Probably Chiloe's foremost expert on rural women and their problems is Gloria Bohn, the provincial director of PRODEMU (which is by far the largest women's organization in the province) and one of the founders of ANAMURI.<sup>32</sup> My interview with her shed more light on the subject than any other single piece of research. Ms. Bohn raised the following points:

First of all, rural women in Chiloe are busy. They work, they take care of the household, and they care for and educate their children. They generally do not have time for organizations. Subsequently, if organizations are created at all, they are created for economic reasons. The reason for this is simple enough - the women are poor, and would like to improve their and their families' living situation. If women are going to sacrifice their time in order to participate in an organization, then it is because they see immediate benefits coming from this participation. This also explains the relatively high degree of involvement in community-based projects, which generally revolve around obtaining electricity, better water facilities, roads, local transportation, etcetera. All involve the

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<sup>32</sup>It should be noted that several women of the urban indigenous women's group *Mujeres Urbanas Indigenas*, including Berta Nahuelhuen and Sonia Katepillan, felt antagonized by the fact that non-indigenous, non-Chilote women such as Gloria Bohn occupied so many of the province's top positions dealing with rural women when they had no real idea of what life is like for them. It is doubtful they themselves would consider Ms. Bohn the foremost expert on rural women's affairs, my own beliefs to the contrary.

acquisition of concrete benefits that help improve their lives in tangible ways.

Politically-based organizations simply do not have the same kind of draw: politics is abstract by its very nature; combine that with a minimally educated population who have little or no understanding about the basic attributes of government or democracy, and it is little wonder political organizations have not sprung up in the countryside spontaneously.

Understanding this problem, some might expect the Chilean government to step in and work to increase political awareness. There are several problems with this assumption. First, despite its relative economic prosperity, Chile is still a Third World country, and one with a limited tax base and a high degree of income inequality. Resources to promote non-material objectives, like political participation, are scarce. PRODEMU uses the funds it does receive (subsidized heavily by international organizations) towards the region's most fundamental needs: primary health care, roads, water facilities, and education.

PRODEMU has had some success; indeed Ms. Bohn reckons that more progress has been made in the past ten years than in the previous fifty combined. Almost every community now has access to electricity, for example. However there are still limitations to how much PRODEMU can do. The organization has run several campaigns in Chiloe's rural areas, providing women with educational sessions on a range of things from basic health care and artisan-production techniques to boosting self-esteem. Though the sessions are widely seen as beneficial, they are very difficult to implement. For the women the sessions are supposed to serve, it can be very difficult to find the time to attend and get to the meetings. Further, women must usually travel by foot, and when

it is a question of getting ten to thirty women to meet in one place, likely a majority will have to go several kilometres. On the side of PRODEMU, having the already overworked and underpaid director drive across the island to various, remote locations to meet with groups of as few as eight women often seems not worth the time.<sup>33</sup> Still, it seems they do as much as they can given their lack of resources, and given the circumstances focus pragmatically on improvements to material demands.

The municipal government also plays a role in all this, though as has been described in section II. 3., Chile has a very centralized government and programs generally come from the top. I spoke with two women, Veronica Ruiz and Sandra Barros Rojas, from the municipality of Chonchi, a region about thirty kilometres south of Castro, whose population of 11,000 is 70 percent rural. They confirmed the emphasis put on projects reflecting a desire to improve living standards over increased public participation, particularly that with a political connection. The reasons for this are twofold, though invariably connected. First, the community itself demands that it be so, having no concept of the importance of women's development, outside of their familial role of wife and mother (though their economic importance is slowly being recognized.) Second, as a division of government, the municipality stays far away from any sort of

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<sup>33</sup>PRODEMU used to require a minimum of fifteen women in order to have a session. Since this number has proven too high to be realistic, the minimum number has dropped to eight.

politicization, probably in an effort to avoid the polarization that precipitated the 1973 coup in the first place.<sup>34</sup>

The second problem limiting political interest in Chiloe is the political climate. Every person whom I asked about political participation told me that there simply was no interest in such a thing. Asked if she believed the lengthy Pinochet dictatorship had resulted in a loss of twenty years of women's political development, Ms. Bohn replied, "More. More than twenty years. Because it's reversed people's activism, made them scared to participate. Made things more complicated. And it'll take a generation to lose this sense of anxiety. Women still don't want to talk about politics, because they were punished for it before."

Reminding myself that Chile is a relatively advanced democracy, by Third World standards, despite the recent dictatorship, I asked Luis Sandoval, the regional director of *CUT* what the government was doing to promote participation and was answered with a laugh. The government doesn't attempt to promote political consciousness, asserted Mr. Sandoval, because it doesn't serve them; the less people know, the less they will complain, and the easier they'll be to manipulate.<sup>35</sup> The disjuncture between Chilotes and their political representatives was further affirmed by both Mr. Sandoval and Ms. Barros Rojas, who contended that in Chiloe the politician

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<sup>34</sup>I actually had a terrible time getting Ms. Ruiz or Ms. Barros Rojas to speak to me on the record, or to discuss anything concerning political participation on the island, having introduced myself as a student of political science - a big mistake, evidently, in Chile.

<sup>35</sup>Luis Sandoval, June 20, 2001, Castro.

who promises the most is the one who gets elected, though inevitably the promises are rarely, if ever, fulfilled.

Recognizing the Chilean government's lack of intention to promote participation, ANAMURI, an NGO mentioned briefly in the preceding section, has been established to fill some of the gap. Its stated mission is to:

Contribute to the development integral to rural and indigenous women by means of the promotion of associationism and the strengthening of existing organizations. Furthermore, to support the formation of equal relations in terms of gender, class and race, within an environment balanced between people and nature.<sup>36</sup>

Founded in 1998, ANAMURI now boasts a membership of 6,000 women nationwide. However while I was in Chiloe, none of the women I spoke to had even heard of ANAMURI, leading me to speculate that the organization is still getting established. Ms. Bohn, a co-founder of ANAMURI, attests to the fact that the organization is too short on resources to accomplish what it has set out to do, but is hopeful that the Chilean government's plans to invest more equally in the country's rural areas will result in an increase of funds to organizations such as ANAMURI. She believes that the rural women's movement is now starting to get on its feet and is optimistic about the prospects for meaningful development and inclusion in the society in which these women belong.

There is one final point to make regarding women's lack of political participation in rural Chiloe, one that is connected both to poverty and government unresponsiveness. That is lack of access to education in rural areas, due to factors including remoteness; lack of reliable student transportation; shortages of materials; and difficulty in obtaining

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<sup>36</sup>ANAMURI pamphlet.



teachers, as well as the fact that female children are often needed to contribute to household income at an early age, finishing on average three fewer years of school than their urban counterparts.<sup>37</sup> As a result of their limited education, rural women find themselves less likely to find meaningful employment and are relegated to traditional female roles and duties. Significantly for this study, women with a lower level of education are similarly less likely to participate in civil society.<sup>38</sup>

Having examined the situation in Chiloe extensively, one can establish several hypotheses: first, that the relative poverty experienced by and the large number of responsibilities held by rural women in Chiloe pose significant obstacles to widespread public participation. Second, that should a rural Chilote woman make time to become involved, it is generally to participate in a project with short-term, material results versus a political or ideological organization. And third, that the political atmosphere in Chile does not lend itself to the promotion of political participation, particularly amongst rural women.

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23. <sup>37</sup>Propuestas de políticas de igualdad de oportunidades para las mujeres rurales.

<sup>38</sup>Robert Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 75.

## **V. Democratization and Political and Economic Inequalities: Theoretical Considerations**

In the previous chapter we have established that rural Chilote women participate minimally within the political sphere, and that they do so for economic, social and institutional reasons. This section examines the system of democracy itself in political philosophy, problems associated with implementing this type of system in Latin America, and the role inequality and civil society play in respectively discouraging and promoting widespread participation. Finally this chapter will evaluate the appropriateness of idealized American practices of democracy and civil society in Latin America.

### **V. 1. Democracy and Civil Society in Political Philosophy**

Despite being first implemented in ancient Greece over two thousand years ago, democracy as a form of political governance has become widespread only in the last century or so. The great Greek philosopher Plato himself was among the first and most vehement opponents of the system.<sup>1</sup> Democracy literally means 'rule of the people', but as Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated in the eighteenth century:

There has never been a real democracy and there never will be. It is against the natural order for the many to govern and the few to be governed. It is unimaginable that the people should be continually assembled to devote their time to public affairs, and it is clear that they cannot set up commissions for that purpose without the form of administration being changed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Michale Rosen and Jonathan Wolf, eds., Political Thought, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 89-91.

<sup>2</sup>Jean Jaques Rousseau, "The General Will" in Political Thought, eds. Rosen, Michael and Wolf, Jonathan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 96-97.

Understanding that the implementation of a pure form of democracy, particularly in today's large and complex states, is unattainable, scholars have developed new terms to, first, describe our current political system, and second, to separate 'democracies' from 'non-democracies'. One of the most commonly accepted is Robert Dahl's term of 'polyarchy', which sets forth seven attributes: elected officials; free and fair elections; inclusive suffrage; the right to run for office; freedom of expression; alternative information; and associational autonomy.

Other political philosophers have similarly established preconditions for the *success* of democracy. Perhaps most relevant to my study are the analyses of Alexis De Tocqueville and Robert Putnam. De Tocqueville, in his renowned examination of American democracy in the early nineteenth century, remarked upon the universality of equality in that country, stating that:

Amongst the novel objects that attracted my attention...in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of condition among the people...The more I advanced in the study of American society, the more I perceived that this equality of condition is the fundamental fact from which all others seem to be derived.<sup>3</sup>

De Tocqueville further observed the high level of civic association in the United States and its contribution to democratic development:

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<sup>3</sup>Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Heffner, Richard D., (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1984), 11. Concerned about the possibility of a tyranny of the majority in light of the Americans' adulation of the majority and their subsequent tendency towards assimilation, De Tocqueville similarly advised that to maintain individual freedoms and liberties, a democratic society must contain an independent press, decentralization of government, and legal protection of individual rights and traditions, among other things.

Americans of all ages, all conditions and all dispositions, constantly form associations. They have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds, -religious, moral, serious, futile, general or restricted, enormous or diminutive...If men living in democratic countries had no right and no inclination to associate for political purposes, their independence would be in great jeopardy.<sup>4</sup>

Robert Putnam, in his landmark study of the Italian institutional reformation in the 1970s and '80s, similarly perceived that strong civic participation in the country's northern regions had paved the way towards greater economic and political success. Putnam sees participation in almost any form - from voter turnout and newspaper readership to membership in choral societies and football clubs<sup>5</sup> - as the primary determinant for the quality and success of governance.

The Chiloe case study has shown that in spite of minimal political participation, many rural Chilote women do engage in civic activities similar to those mentioned above, such as participation in school and church associations. In *Making Democracy Work*, however, Putnam describes how economic associations - including cooperatives or what he calls 'mutual-aid societies' - also play an important role in determining the eventual quality of governance of a region: despite their non-partisan nature, participation in such activities engenders consciousness raising and subsequently develops leadership for more politically minded organizations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 199.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital", *Journal of Democracy*, January 1995), 66.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 141-42.

If Putnam is right, then the Chilote women are contributing to the quality of democracy and governance in the province of Chiloé, and presumably in Chile as a whole, by virtue of, for example, collecting algae together. Can civil society be so powerful that it negates the detrimental effects of such things as inequality and a lack of an education in producing a stable and consolidated democracy?

## **V. 2. Democratization in Latin America**

The investigation thus turns to where and when democratic systems have been established. Using a minimalist definition of democracy, that is the employment of free and fair elections, Samuel Huntington has delineated three main waves of democratization: the first, lasting from 1828-1926, had its roots in the American and French revolutions; the second, from 1943-62, was formed in the wake of the Second World War; and the third and by some standards continuing wave began with the falls of dictatorships in Portugal, Greece and Spain and continued into Latin America, as well as Asia, the post-Communist states and a handful of African countries.

As the number of democracies has grown, so too has the gap in quality between them. Minimalist definitions, such as Juan J. Linz's, claim that democracies are consolidated when "none of the major political actors, parties or organized interests, forces or institutions consider that there is any alternative to democratic processes to gain power, and no political institution or group has a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers. To put it simply, democracy must be seen as

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'the only game in town.'"<sup>6</sup> Similarly, other scholars describe a democracy as consolidated when elections have become institutionalized. But while focussing on institutional aspects of democracies is probably the simplest way to evaluate them, it can be problematic:

The emphasis on rules and procedures leaves aside the configuration of power relations and overlooks the modes in which actors interpret rules, negotiate around them, and apply them as a function of power resources which are distributed *unequally*....democratic transitions [have] a relation of familiarity with regard to the theoretical paradigm: they resemble democracies and exhibit elements of democracy but they are not democracies. Just as the market is presently not under only capitalism, elections are not exclusively a characteristic of democracy: Somoza in Nicaragua, Stroessner in Paraguay, the Salvadoran colonels and the Guatemalan generals - all resorted routinely to elections that nevertheless did not modify the dictatorial character of the regimes in question.<sup>7</sup>

As such, though at last count our world was seen as having 119 democracies<sup>8</sup>, the range of political governance among them could hardly be greater. In Latin America in particular, deficiencies in terms of the institutional quality of democracy exist in three important respects: first, military leaders, despite having lost formal positions in government, have retained considerable informal power; second, governments are

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<sup>6</sup>Juan J. Linz, quoted in Guillermo O'Donnell, "Illusions About Consolidation", *Journal of Democracy*, 1996, 37.

<sup>7</sup>Carlos Vilas, "Participation, Inequality and the Whereabouts of Democracy" in *The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America: Rethinking Participation and Representation*, eds. Vilas, Carlos, Chalmers Douglas A. Hite, Katherine, Martin, Scott B., Picster, Kerianne and Segarra, Monique, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>8</sup>Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, *The Global Divergence of Democracies*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xii.

dominated by a relatively small elite, thereby excluding most citizens "from meaningful participation in political affairs"; and third, political systems continue to function as "patronage machines", with private interests often outweighing public needs.<sup>9</sup>

A better definition, albeit one that is not quite as quantifiable, is Dahl's assertion that "a key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals...extreme inequalities in the distribution of such key values as income, wealth, status, knowledge...are equivalent to extreme inequalities in political resources."<sup>10</sup> Latin America is the most unequal region in the world<sup>11</sup>, and though I do not intend to suggest that the countries in that region employ some form of governance different than democracy, I do suggest that their problems of extreme inequality are probably the biggest factor in their inability to successfully consolidate and deepen democracy within the region.

#### *V. 2. a) Current Socio-Economic Obstacles to Democratization in Latin America*

Following the significant social upheaval that Latin America experienced during the 1980s and '90s, with some fifteen countries casting aside dictatorial regimes in favour

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<sup>9</sup>Francis Adams, Dollar Diplomacy: United States Economic Assistance to Latin America, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2000), 98.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Dahl, as quoted in David Cameron, "Politics, Public Policy, and Inequality" in Power, Inequality and Democratic Politics, eds. Shapiro, Ian and Reicher, Grant, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988) 219-20.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Hakim, "Is Latin America Doomed to Failure?" *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1999/2000, 106.

of democratically elected representatives, and almost all of the region adopting free-market economic policies promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank<sup>12</sup>, a certain sense of optimism grew that Latin America's days of political and economic instability were numbered. Events in the past two or three years have diminished those hopes. Following healthy growth in GDP throughout the mid-1990s, Latin America registered no overall growth for 1999, not least due to economic crises in Ecuador, Colombia and most recently (and most seriously) Argentina<sup>13</sup>, and a general economic slump felt across the continent, even amongst perennial leaders such as Brazil and Chile. The administrations of ex-President Alberto Fujimori of Peru and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela resemble more closely the authoritarian regimes of yesteryear than any broad definition of a democratic regime. And Colombia is fast approaching an all-out civil war following years of escalating insurgency and paramilitary violence.

One of the region's biggest failures has been its inability to reduce inequality; in fact, disparities in income have worsened. The neo-liberal economic policies imposed in the countries have seen the real incomes of millions of Latin Americans who thought they had entered the middle class "ground down by recession and austerity measures."<sup>14</sup> More than half of the region's income goes to one-seventh of the population; per capita income of the richest twenty percent of Latin Americans is approximately twelve times that of the

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<sup>12</sup>Hakim, 104-5.

<sup>13</sup>Abraham Lowenthal, "Latin America at the Century's Turn" *Journal of Democracy*, April 2000, 42.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 46.



poorest twenty percent - the ratio is less than seven to one in the Middle East and East Asia, and about four and a half to one in South Asia.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the period from 1987-1997 witnessed an increase in poverty levels at twice the rate of population levels (44 percent and 22 percent, respectively.)<sup>16</sup>

Beyond mere economics, quality of life is suffering in the region. Access to health and medical services is limited; educational standards are low and fewer than one in three students even attends, let alone finishes, secondary school. Cities are becoming megalopolises without supporting infrastructure, and crime and pollution levels are skyrocketing.<sup>17</sup> These problems combined have given citizens a very pessimistic view about what democracy can and cannot accomplish, and support for that type of system is waning, particularly in the impoverished and weakly institutionalized states.

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<sup>15</sup>Hakim, 106.

<sup>16</sup>Vilas, "Participation, Inequality and the Whereabouts of Democracy", 21.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 107.

**Table 5.1 Percentage of Population Supporting Democracy, Spain and Latin American Countries, 1996**

| Country     | Support for Democracy | Satisfaction with Democracy | Defend Democracy | Average Commitment | Perceive Full Democracy |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Spain       | 81                    | 57                          | 76               | 71.3               | 29                      |
| Costa Rica  | 80                    | 51                          | 85               | 72.0               | 23                      |
| Uruguay     | 80                    | 52                          | 78               | 70.0               | 34                      |
| Argentina   | 71                    | 34                          | 73               | 59.3               | 12                      |
| Panama      | 75                    | 28                          | 75               | 59.3               | 13                      |
| Bolivia     | 64                    | 25                          | 84               | 57.7               | 13                      |
| Venezuela   | 62                    | 30                          | 74               | 55.3               | 16                      |
| Ecuador     | 52                    | 34                          | 80               | 55.3               | 20                      |
| Peru        | 63                    | 28                          | 75               | 55.3               | 14                      |
| Nicaragua   | 59                    | 23                          | 72               | 51.3               | 7                       |
| Colombia    | 60                    | 16                          | 74               | 50.0               | 7                       |
| El Salvador | 56                    | 26                          | 60               | 47.3               | 10                      |
| Honduras    | 42                    | 20                          | 80               | 47.3               | 13                      |
| Paraguay    | 59                    | 22                          | 59               | 46.7               | 9                       |
| Brazil      | 50                    | 20                          | 69               | 46.3               | 4                       |
| Chile       | 54                    | 27                          | 53               | 44.7               | 10                      |
| Mexico      | 53                    | 11                          | 66               | 43.3               | 10                      |
| Guatemala   | 51                    | 16                          | 56               | 41.0               | 6                       |

Source: Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation*, 180.

#### *V. 2. b) Inequality and Democratization*

Besides institutional reform and stability, probably the most scrutinized contributor to democratization is inequality, specifically what role it plays in the consolidation and survival of a democracy. Almost all studies confirm that inequality is an obstacle to democratic development; while some disagree on just how important

equality is, it can be stated "that democracy is much more likely to survive in countries where income inequality is decreasing over time."<sup>18</sup>

Inequality is not a new problem in Latin America, and it certainly cannot be blamed wholly on the market-oriented policies of the 1980s and '90s. Race, class, gender as well as regional and even religious differences have long been used as a basis for social categorization, certainly as far back as the Spanish conquest and probably even before then. What was new following the first years of Latin America's democratic transitions was the widespread expectation that democratization would serve to reduce these inequities, an expectation that thus far has been dashed by an "ascendant neo-liberalism".<sup>19</sup>

What makes equality so important for democracy? Besides the minimal political conditions, such as open competitive elections; effective observance of the law and judicial autonomy; accountability of public officials; free access to information; and civilian control of the military, "genuine democracy requires access to certain socio-economic conditions such as education, jobs, health care and housing", elements which

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<sup>18</sup>Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, "What Makes Democracies Endure?" in The Global Divergence of Democracies, eds. Diamond, Larry and Plattner, Marc, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 171.

<sup>19</sup>Douglas S. Chalmers, Scott B. Martin, and Kerianne Pester, "Associative Networks: New Structures of Representation for the Popular Sectors?" in The New Politics of Inequality in Latin America: Rethinking Participation and Representation, eds. Vilas, Carlos, Chalmers Douglas A., Hite, Katherine, Martin, Scott B., Piester, Kerianne and Segarra, Monique, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 543.

allow for the effective practice of citizenship.<sup>20</sup> Vilas, in “Inequality and the Dismantling of Citizenship in Latin America”, identifies six essential components of citizenship that are undermined by extreme and persistent inequality. These include: individual autonomy, equality of rights and obligations, efficacy, accountability, empathy, and an idea or assumption of a shared belonging to something that is common to all citizens.

Though inequality exists in developed states as well, it seems to have less of a destabilizing effect on democracy. As Seymour Martin Lipset describes in *Political Man*, this is because the intensity of distributional conflicts is lower at higher levels of per capita income. Similarly, because higher income countries generally have better education levels, conditions are more favourable towards the establishment of a stable middle class. This works in the favour of democracy since the middle class have political attitudes conducive to that system, developed by a formal education and lower susceptibility to anti-democratic parties and ideologies.<sup>21</sup>

Miles Simpson examines the impact informational inequality has on democracy. He identifies two main sources from which informational inequality arises: first, information can be blocked by elites controlling major media and publishing enterprises, and the poor generally have little time to retrieve ‘secret’ knowledge. Second, the poor are usually less well-educated than upper classes and thus have a relatively limited

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<sup>20</sup>Vilas, “Participation, Inequality and the Whereabouts of Democracy”, 58.

<sup>21</sup>Edward N. Muller, “Economic Determinants of Democracy” in *Inequality, Democracy and Economic Development*, ed. Midlarsky, Manus, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 134-5.

capacity to process knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Since knowledge equals power, one can reasonably surmise that informational inequality results in power balances favouring the elite, in opposition to democratic principles. This is manifested in Chiloe, for example, by the fact that the politician who promises the most on the island usually gets elected, though those promises are never carried through.<sup>23</sup> This is not surprising given the fact that few rural Chilotes have access to an objective local media source that could effectively evaluate opposing candidacies, present platforms and stage debates; Chilean television broadcasters are all based in Santiago, newspapers are hard to come by in rural areas and the internet is out of the question, as few own computers and there are no internet cafes in the Chilote countryside. Local radio is the one possible source of unbiased and relevant information.

Perhaps most relevant to this study is Simpson's claim that education and literacy "[increase] the capacity to empathize with people outside an individual's immediate community that in turn increases media participation and interest in politics...Traditional life and the community's hold on the individual weakens with literacy thereby facilitating political mobilization."<sup>24</sup> Vilas iterates a similar point when he asserts that "under conditions of extreme inequality, empathy recedes to close affective ties...it becomes extremely difficult, if at all possible, for the poor to decipher

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<sup>22</sup>Miles Simpson, "Informational Inequality in the New World Order" in Inequality, Democracy and Economic Development, ed. Midlarsky, Manus, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159.

<sup>23</sup>Luis Sandoval, June 20, 2001, Castro.

<sup>24</sup>Simpson, 160.

landscapes beyond their daily lives and troubles and their immediate localities. A retreat to 'primordial ties'...takes place which substitutes for the 'imagined communities' of nation, state or anything falling beyond the frontiers of everyday life."<sup>25</sup>

The relative poverty of most rural Chilote women offers them limited opportunities to visit other towns - they have neither the time nor the means to travel - and as such they have little empathy for the problems of the neighbouring community let alone those of their province or region as a whole. As has been stated previously, when these women engage in civic activities it is on a very local basis, and for a cause with fairly immediate and material benefits. As such it does not come as a big surprise that rural Chilote women fail to participate in the fairly broad and abstract political struggles, such as an amendment to a constitution, that characterize today's complex democracies.

In retrospect, it is little wonder the democratization process in Latin America has been slow and troubled. The political reform towards democracy has been undertaken side by side with economic reform towards market-oriented principles. Despite claims that democracy and capitalism go hand in hand because of their respective attachments to freedoms, be they political or economic, the two inherently contradict each other: democracy depends on political equality while capitalism, particularly the neo-liberal variety currently espoused by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the State Department, the IMF and World Bank, among others, exacerbates inequalities.

It is often asserted that capitalism fosters democracy because it best promotes and sustains economic growth and development, an attribute traditionally linked to

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<sup>25</sup>Vilas, "Participation, Inequality and the Whereabouts of Democracy", 62.

democratic stability in global quantitative analyses. It is argued that although capitalism exists in some non-democracies, there are not any democracies that do not employ capitalism. However, Todd Landman offers convincing statistical analysis that global trends notwithstanding, indicators from the Latin American region show "there is no significant positive relationship between economic development and democracy. Levels of *per capita* GDP, *per capita* energy consumption, or the real urban wage do not have any relationship with any of the measures of democracy."<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the most ironic element to the argument that capitalism fosters democracy is the fact that in most Latin American countries, economic restructuring was made without any consultation of the citizenry or even of legislative and other representative bodies.<sup>27</sup> In Chile, for example, it was the dictator Pinochet who initiated and institutionalized the transition to free market economic policies.

#### *V. 2. c) Civil Society and Democratization*

One of the greatest obstacles to institutional democratic consolidation in Latin America is the concentration of power in the hands of the few: a relatively small elite tends to control both the political and economic realms, a trend that works to reinforce itself. This is manifested in the region's firmly entrenched tradition of executive dominated and state-centred politics. Further, Latin America has long been recognized as a hotbed for the development of *caudillo*-types: military dictators "who provoked

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<sup>26</sup>Todd Landman, "Economic Development and Democracy: the View from Latin America", *Political Studies*, September 1999, 618.

<sup>27</sup>Vilas, "Participation, Inequality and the Whereabouts of Democracy", 20.

innumerable civil wars in the nineteenth century and prolonged dictatorships during the twentieth", part of a "historical phenomenon linked to an authoritarian mentality that [has] no respect for either the law or democratic values."<sup>28</sup> Though the era of governance by military strongmen is over, at least for now, the mentality that tolerated *caudillos* in the past sustains inordinately strong executive branches today.

Recognizing the dissociation of the masses from politics in Latin American countries, the argument has arisen in consolidation discourse calling for the strengthening of civil society. The argument has been particularly influenced by Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* and similar studies. This type of participation would theoretically improve civic ties and promote political awareness, thus helping to consolidate democracy.

Civil society is defined by Diamond as:

the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from "society" in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on the state, to improve the structure and functioning of the state, and to hold state officials accountable.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Carlos Alberto Montaner, "Culture and Behaviour of Elites in Latin America" in *Culture Matters*, eds. Harrison, Lawrence E. and Huntington, Samuel P., (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 59.

<sup>29</sup>Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation*, 219.

<sup>30</sup>Huntington, Samuel P., as quoted in Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation*, 239.



Diamond goes on to provide an extensive list of the means by which civil society contributes to the development, consolidation and deepening of democracy, which is worth outlining here:

- Civil society provides “the basis for the limitation of state power, hence for the control of the state by society, and hence for democratic institutions as the most effective means of exercising that control.”<sup>30</sup>
- Civil society supplements political parties as a medium to stimulate political participation, increasing political skills and efficacy and encouraging an appreciation of the obligations as well as the rights of citizenship.
- Civil society is integral to the development of education in new democracies, funding programs, training civics teachers and developing related curricula.
- Civil society contributes to the formation of alternatives to political parties for articulating, aggregating and representing interests. This is particularly relevant to traditionally marginalized groups such as women and ethnic minorities who hitherto have been denied access to conventional institutional political channels.
- Civil society supports democracy by effecting “a transition from clientelism to citizenship at the local level.”<sup>31</sup> Civic organizations, using tools such as the international media and NGO support, are now in a much better position to defend the rights of individuals, particularly those living in rural areas, against abuses by

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 242.

“landlords, developers, miners, security forces, and other agents of state authority.”<sup>32</sup>

- A more developed and pluralistic civil society “tends to generate a wide range of interests that may cross-cut, and so mitigate, the principal polarities of political conflict.”<sup>33</sup> As different sectors begin to associate with each other, exclusivist impulses are softened and a more sophisticated, tolerant approach is adopted to deal with political strife.
- The development of a strong civil society assists in the recruitment and training of new political leaders. This is achieved through the experience attained with significant involvement in the organization and implementation of associational goals, that which also serves to offer women advancement opportunities not found in traditional avenues.
- Civil society aids in the development of civic organizations, institutes and foundations with the explicit purpose of democracy-building, ie. non-partisan election-monitoring efforts and work in areas such as electoral system reform, democratization of political parties, decentralization and transparency of government, strengthening of legislative bodies and the enhancement of government accountability.
- Civil society works to provide information to wide groups of people, thus educating citizens in matters they otherwise would know little if anything about.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 245.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

This is particularly true in countries where the media is closely tied to government, as is often the case, and so fails to provide controversial or unfavourable coverage.

- Civil society plays a significant role in disseminating information and understanding about economic reform, counteracting the clout given to associations such as private business interests and established trade unions on account of their being better organized and represented, and assisting marginalized groups such as farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs in mobilizing against detrimental reform policies.
- Finally, by doing all these things, civil society works to actually strengthen the state itself. "By enhancing the accountability, responsiveness, inclusiveness, effectiveness, and hence legitimacy of the political system, a vigorous civil society gives citizens respect for the state and positive engagement with it. In the end, this improves the ability of the state to govern and to command voluntary obedience from its citizens."<sup>35</sup>

Though civil society appears in this light to be theoretically perfect, it does have its problems. Howell and Pearce examine two of these. First, they argue, there has been an Americanization of the debate itself, as well as of the goals NGOs and international donors seek to achieve and the processes they adopt to do so. The U.S. approach sees civil society's main function as protecting the rule of law, providing legitimate peaceful opposition, and allowing for expression of consent in acceptable ways. Ultimately

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

though this view is a deeply conservative one, “wherein political stability is as important as political freedom, and protection from the state is more important than conceptualizations, debate and action around how best to develop the common interests of a society.”<sup>36</sup>

Second, Howell and Pearce examine the situation in Latin America in particular and determine that the civil sector there is being increasingly divided into two separate streams. One is composed of “more traditional charitable organizations and other agencies linked to the social and economic elite” and the second “associated with the relatively newer forms of grassroots organizations and so-called ‘non-governmental organizations’ that support them.”<sup>37</sup> The traditional organizations, which would include for example the Catholic Church, tend to have a greater capacity in which to influence public policy due to their ties with the state and private interests; however these are more reluctant to criticize and outwardly oppose state actions. It would better serve the public interest and democratic values for grassroots organizations to be given at least equal footing with the traditional sector.

Pamela Paxton further questions the place of civil society in developing democracy. In her study “Social Capital and Democracy: An Interdependent Relationship”, Paxton examines the relationship between social capital and democracy using data from a large, quantitative, cross-national survey. Paxton concludes that while social capital does indeed promote democracy, the relationship is reciprocal; thus

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<sup>36</sup>Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 59.

<sup>37</sup>Salamon and Anheier as quoted in Howell and Pearce, 215.

focusing exclusively on the development of civil society may not, in itself, produce democratization – the institutional environment in which associations and organizations are embedded is equally important. Similarly, respect for human rights, the promotion of rule of law and the encouragement of transparent governmental processes will tend to further the development of civil society indirectly.<sup>38</sup>

Paxton additionally concludes that an association's type is critical in determining its benefits to democracy. Associations with high levels of connectedness, i.e., whose members have ties to multiple organizations, tend to increase levels of democracy. However associations that are relatively isolated, or present in a society with low levels of trust, are actually detrimental to the development of democracy.<sup>39</sup> Seligson makes similar observations in her study "Civic Association and Democratic Participation in Central America: A Test of the Putnam Thesis".

These qualms about civil society are fairly significant as regards the Chiloe case study. First, given Howell and Pearce's observations that the type of civil society promoted by international donors and organizations concentrates largely on issues of political stability, and further that large, traditional organizations are given proportionately greater influence, implies that the types of activities rural Chilote women participate in are immaterial. Seemingly little of the literature has evaluated the

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<sup>38</sup> Pamela Paxton, "Social Capital and Democracy: An Interdependent Relationship", *American Sociological Review*, April 2002, 273.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 271-2. Consider for example the negative impact on democracy from associations such as the Ku Klux Klan.

significance of such informal activities except to bulk them under the generic term *grassroots*.

Paxton's point that democracy and civil society are reciprocal is particularly relevant to the situation in Chile. Indeed, if the country's current political and institutional problems continue and no effort is submitted to encourage participation, it is unreasonable to expect any flourishing of civil society. Further, her postulation that the type of association is critical fairly dismisses any suggestion that a small, informal algae-collecting cooperative will contribute, directly or indirectly to the strengthening of Chilean democracy.

One final observation about the democratic potential of civil society involves the question of access. As this study indicates, the very poor rarely have the time or means to participate in even the most grassroots of organizations. Where Diamond discusses the benefits to democracy of an active civil society, it appears that a majority of his claims have little or no relevance to the type of participation the women of rural Chiloe have the capacity to become involved in. No one questions that the development of, for example, election-monitoring groups within civil society could and does help strengthen democracy in Latin American states. However these activities require the time and skills more commonly found among the educated middle classes and may, thus, exclude many of the poor. Therefore though activities undertaken by civil society can and do help the poor, they generally do little to actually promote participation, particularly political participation.

Civil society, as Diamond asserts, is unarguably an important contributor to the consolidation and deepening of democracy in Latin America. However it should not be regarded as an end within itself. Until inequality is reduced, access to education is increased, and the institutional problems of the region are addressed, the very poor will remain non-participants within the fledgling democracies, with or without (more likely without) a vibrant civil society.

### V. 3. Why Democracy?

A close examination of the evidence leaves one a bit pessimistic with regard to the prospects of consolidated and meaningful democracy in Latin America. It is hard to foresee a time when the region's lower class, an ever expanding group, will receive the full and equal political benefits, theoretically due all citizens, now enjoyed by the elite. The ascendance of neo-liberalism makes this prospect even more remote.

In theory, democracy is an ideal system of governance. Immanuel Kant, in proclaiming the virtues of freedom and equality, stated that "the only conceivable government for men who are capable of possessing rights, even if the ruler is benevolent, is not a *paternal* but a *patriotic* government...each regards himself as authorised to protect the rights of the commonwealth by laws of the general will, but not to submit it to his personal use at his own absolute pleasure."<sup>38</sup> John Stuart Mill emphasized the 'improving' effect that democracy has on its citizens, writing that "it is evident that the only government that can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state is one in which

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<sup>38</sup>Immanuel Kant, "Freedom and Equality" in *Political Thought*, eds. Rosen, Michael and Wolf, Jonathan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 98.

the whole people participate; that any participation, even in the smallest public function, is useful; that the participation should everywhere be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow; and that nothing less can be ultimately desirable than the admission of all to a share in the sovereign power of state."<sup>39</sup> And finally, John Rawls asserted that majority rule is the best system to produce just and effective legislation, arguing that "the benefits from discussion lie in the fact that even representative legislators are limited in knowledge and the ability to reason. No one of them knows everything the others know, or can make all the same inferences that they can draw in concert. Discussion is a way of combining information and enlarging the range of arguments. At least in the course of time, the effects of common deliberation seem bound to improve matters."<sup>40</sup>

Unfortunately, democracy rarely works so well in practice, even in the developed world where society is less poor and unequal and the dominant culture tends to support democratic principles. Perhaps the political theorist one should be quoting is Rousseau, who mused that "Were there a people of gods, their government would be democratic. So perfect a government is not for men."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>John Stuart Mill, "The Democratic Citizen" in *Political Thought*, eds. Rosen, Michael and Wolf, Jonathan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 100.

<sup>40</sup>John Rawls, "Majority Rule", in *Political Thought*, eds. Rosen, Michael and Wolf, Jonathan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 102.

<sup>41</sup>Rousseau, in *Political Thought*, eds. Rosen, Michael and Wolf, Jonathan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 97.



Indeed, contemporary history has seen its share of detractors of democracy, though they are increasingly few and far between. Perhaps the most successful alternative to democracy in the past century has been communism, a system wherein V.I. Lenin played a significant role in its implementation. Lenin saw democracy as a bourgeois ploy to fool the workers, arguing that democracy could not exist so long as classes did. He stated that "bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, and under capitalism cannot but remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor."<sup>42</sup>

Few will argue that democracy has been a successful cure for society's greatest evils. Some may even argue that Latin America, where many political systems are built around elitism and inequality, is unsuited to pluralist, constitutional democracy. But if democracy is the wrong type of government, what could possibly replace it? Authoritarianism did little to assuage the hardships plaguing the region, but rather exacerbated them. Castro's communist Cuba, despite having attained relative success in a number of social arenas, is hardly a model for development and governance. So what's left? Feudalism?

Though it is not a panacea, democracy continues to offer greater opportunities towards justice and equality than any other form of government experienced by men and women. As Winston Churchill famously declared, "Democracy is the worst form of government, with the exception of all the others." Though it probably doesn't merit the

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<sup>42</sup>V.I. Lenin, "Bourgeois and Proletarian Democracy" in *Political Thought*, eds. Rosen, Michael and Wolf, Jonathan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 103.

women. As Winston Churchill famously declared, "Democracy is the worst form of government, with the exception of all the others." Though it probably doesn't merit the veneration it has been given by contemporary Western society, democracy *is* the least bad way to organize a polity, and one can expect, though somewhat optimistically, that if we move towards a purer version of it in Latin America, conditions there will improve for everyone.

## VI. Conclusions

Many essays, books and theses look at what rural, poor women in the developing world *do*- but very few look at what they *do not do*. We see documentaries and read articles about the various successes of small women's organizations around the globe, not unlike the Caipulli cooperative, improving some aspect of their community, getting a better education, or attending protests to invoke legislation. But if the Chiloe case study is in any way representative, the overwhelming majority of these poor rural women are not able to voice their demands. They are back at home working, caring for their children, and tending to other household duties. In short, they have neither the time nor the means to become politically involved.

Increasingly, however, rural women are becoming active in endeavours outside the home. In Chiloe, this is taking the form not only of small community organizations, with pragmatic objectives linked to basic needs, but also of economic associations, such as informal cooperatives or unions. By some standards, participation in these groups will indirectly develop Chilean democracy by virtue of increasing levels of trust, strengthening community ties, and providing an organizational basis as well as a forum to exchange ideas. This thesis argues that while this development of civil society is beneficial, it will in and of itself increase neither the levels of political participation amongst rural Chilote women nor the quality of Chilean democracy.

In an attempt to define the political situation of the rural Chilote women, several background chapters were offered. In chapter one, the political history of Chile was considered. During the late nineteenth and early to mid twentieth centuries, Chile

enjoyed a long run of stability and prosperity, at least relative to other Latin American countries. Following a period of extreme polarization among the left, right and centre of the political spectrum, Chile suffered a military coup led by Augusto Pinochet in 1973 which turned into sixteen years of repressive dictatorship.

Most relevant to this essay is Chile's transition to democracy following Pinochet's defeat in 1989. The country has been crippled by various anti-democratic hold-overs from the Pinochet era, including the designation to a number pivotal positions in the Supreme Court and military of candidates sympathetic to the former dictator's agenda; the implementation of electoral laws consciously designed to favour the right; the presence of "bionic" senators, or former presidents given automatic, lifetime seats in the Senate; and the adoption of a constitution which among other things preserves the very unequal power of the nation's executive branch, often trivializing the role of congress.

Worse still is the political community's tendency to ignore the grassroots in an effort to maintain stability. Compromise certainly has its place in politics, and considering its absence was the principal factor in the 1973 coup, the importance of reaching compromise immediately following Pinochet's ouster can hardly be overstated. But it has come at a price: political apathy is high, support for democracy is low and the country is being increasingly dominated by elites, both economically and politically. Many feel that the country's politicians are now using the need to maintain stability as an excuse not to face the tough issues, at a time when no real threat against institutional democracy exists. Further, despite the election of three consecutive centre-left

politicians, Chile has retained the neo-liberal policies adopted by Pinochet; though poverty has fallen, inequality continues to climb.

Given that elitism is now characteristic of Chile's political atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that activism has been proven difficult to cultivate in Chiloe and elsewhere. Combined with harsh fiscal policies that have shifted the focus of many Chileans towards mere economic survival, it has become difficult at best to promote political participation and democratization in Chile.

Chapter two examines the three main political identities of the case study subjects: being Chilote, being indigenous and being women, for all the consequences that flow from this triple identity.

Being Chilote represents a certain way of life, one that is rural, poor and sometimes hard, and often indicates ties to fishing and the sea. Economically, this means one of two things: struggling to maintain a traditional and independent lifestyle as an artesanal fisherman, or working for low wages in poor conditions for the large salmon fishing corporations that the state favours. Neither option offers much stability or opportunity for upward mobility.

Politically, it means being alienated from the centres of power. Apathy could hardly find a better home than Chiloe, where people's demands have not mattered, do not matter and could not matter, given their isolation and small population, in the system as it is today. It comes as no surprise that Chilotes in general, not just the rural women focused on in this report, have little interest in politics; activism has never worked for them.

Being a woman in Chile means realizing most of your importance in the home.

*Machismo* is a substantial force in Chile - it is the only Western democracy where divorce continues to be illegal - and most of women's influence comes from their role as mother or wife. Even amongst female politicians, success usually comes as a result of family ties.

The women's movement in Chile is not insignificant; women played a considerable role in both Allende's collapse and Pinochet's fall. In fact the movement was probably at its strongest in the years leading up to Pinochet's ouster, as women had a common goal to unite behind. Their contribution to the struggle did not go unnoticed, and women were granted their own ministry when the *Concertacion* took power. Fairly soon after, however, the movement buckled under the pressure of battling internal divisions. Today, what remains is a movement that is directed more towards *feminine* than feminist values. Many of the leaders of Chile's women's movement have been co-opted into the conservative state organizations' executives, and goals subsequently tend to revolve around family and community issues. This is not inconsistent with public opinion: in Chile, women actually vote more conservatively than men, and feminism is still viewed upon as anti-male.

The women in this case study suffer many of their biggest obstacles - having minimal access to education, holding sole responsibility for the care of any children and of the household, receiving low wages - by virtue of their being female. Unsurprisingly, there is little feminist consciousness-raising on the island, and rather than feeling oppressed by their gender roles, many women seem to take pride in them, particularly as

mothers. It will be some time before rural Chilote women use their gender status as a means to achieve political goals.

Finally, being Mapuche, the country's largest and most influential indigenous group, is offered as a significant political identity. The Mapuche social movement is considerable, and Mapuches play a fairly large role on Chile's political scene, often showing up in national and even international news. But the Mapuche movement is centred in the city of Temuco, in the ninth region, and tends to focus on land and environmental issues in that region.

The indigenous of Chiloe are Huilliche - a branch of the larger Mapuche nation - and face related but different problems. Due to historic factors, Chiloe, and hence the Huilliche, were subject to much greater cultural assimilation than the Mapuche to the north. Language, religion and traditions were lost, thus the Huilliche have much less culture to protect and preserve than their Mapuche cousins. Similarly, indigenous lands in the ninth region have come under much greater attack, due to their large forests and hydro-electric potential, than lands in Chiloe. While the attacks are unwelcome, they have served to unite the Mapuche people and spark greater organization. Combined with their much larger population and concentration in and around Temuco, the Mapuche can voice their demands more forcefully than their Huilliche counterparts ever could. Furthermore, the small Huilliche organization is fairly dominated by men. There are a handful of women leaders, though they usually operate at the community level, and the special concerns of women remain unvoiced.

An indigenous movement has thus far proved of little use to the women of this case study; however it may be through a uniquely indigenous women's movement that the needs of all rural women are best expressed. While still in the developing stages, indigenous and rural women's movements seem to be gaining momentum, both in Chile and internationally, and seem to offer the best outlet for political activism for Chilote women.

Chapter III presented the case study itself: why rural Chilote women do not participate politically and what activities they do engage in. It was established that the women fail to participate politically because they do not have the time, resources or interest. This is not to suggest that the women do not engage in activities outside of the home. On the contrary, most women were found to participate either in community-based organizations such as the local school or church, or in efforts to receive a community good, such as potable water or better roads, and/or in small economic associations. In Chiloe, these usually come in the form of fishing (algae-collecting) cooperatives or artisanal collectives. With the notable exception of the Caipulli cooperative, most are minor, informal and very local, with the sole objective of increasing earnings. While they may be technically defined as part of civil society, they offer very limited avenues from which to promote activism and political interest.

The fourth chapter considered democracy, both as a theory and as practiced in Latin America. Democracy, like any political theory, is never perfect, even in the best of circumstances. But even its imperfect implementation tends to provide better



representation to larger and more diverse groups of citizens than any other system practised by humankind.

Democracy, however, faces huge hurdles in Latin America. By definition, democracy as a system requires equality, both political and economic. Neither of these have been attained in the region, and in fact Latin America ranks last in the world in terms of social equality. Governments in the region have long been run by cadres of elites, and profound racial tensions have prevented the formation of a truly equitable society. While severe economic inequalities have existed since colonial times, the region's near unanimous adoption of neo-liberalism has served only to exacerbate them, despite occasional periods of growth. Democratic institutions, particularly regular elections, are vigilantly observed in almost all Latin American countries. A few, such as Costa Rica and Uruguay, rank among the world's most secure democracies. But widespread achievement of consolidated democracy continues to elude the continent, and will continue to do so until fundamental problems are addressed.

The development of civil society has been offered by many in development circles as a type of panacea to the social and political problems that plague Latin America. The idea is that by including the majority of citizens, not just the elite, in debates surrounding the best ways to develop the region, more equitable, palatable and long-term solutions can be found. Influential political theorists such as Robert Putnam have argued that any civic association, regardless of type, will ultimately assist in producing conditions conducive for democratization. It is unlikely however, that given rural Chilote women's lack of education, resources and relative poverty, and Chilean

society's political apathy, that their brand of organization will contribute to the consolidation of Chilean democracy.

What insights can the case study at the centre of this thesis bring to the study of democratic consolidation? While it is true that very little political consciousness exists among the rural Chilote women, they are not idle citizens. They have long worked as a part of their community to obtain public goods, have been concerned for the quality of their children's education and been committed to their church. But more recently, they have begun to form organizations - not as part of a larger, abstract movement or alongside their husbands, but in organizations for their own profit and motivations. It is true that the organizations are economically based and serve no public good, but if one accepts Putnam's analysis, the type of organization matters not, because they all contribute to a sense of community and efficacy.

Most of the rural women's cooperatives in Chiloe are too small and informal to read much into, and I would argue that they contribute little to the development of a vibrant civil society. But Cultimar, the Caipulli cooperative, offers a glimpse at the potential that would be unleashed if some education and a few resources were provided.

The solution to consolidating democracy seems self-evident. If you can provide poor rural women, or any other marginalized group, with a little bit of education and enough resources that they can participate politically, they will. This boon to democracy would probably reinforce itself; for it follows logically that if marginalized sectors of society have their demands heard and met, inequalities will decrease and representation will be genuine.

So how do we go about providing greater access to education and additional resources? A commitment to reducing those kinds of social inequalities will have to begin at the very top - the international community. We are all in favour of democracy and applaud the ousting of dictators and despots. But a commitment to democracy cannot stop at elections. If it seems reasonable that democracy cannot flourish amidst gross inequality, then the west should be promoting its reduction, not economic policies which it knows to exacerbate such disparities. NGOs and international aid agencies attempt to fill the vacancy, and their work has produced success stories such as Cultimar all around the world. But the efforts of NGOs are too uncoordinated to result in anything but piecemeal successes. For every Cultimar there are dozens of other struggling cooperatives and thousands of women still working independently.

The CIDA/MUN/UACH project that supports the Caipulli cooperative has additionally provided funds for scientific research to improve the aquaculture capabilities of the entire province; aiming to improve the economic standing of the communities of the region is a constructive objective indeed. However when it has become clear that the system seizes every opportunity to exploit the work of Chilotes and other poor Chileans, it is short sighted to not aim to increase the levels of participation and thus political clout in order to help those same communities protect their interests. So long as the power imbalance that exists in Chile and the rest of Latin America persists, no amount of economic aid from foreign organizations will contribute to a lasting solution.

Ultimately, it is the nations themselves that need to provide a political atmosphere conducive to democratic practices. Chile has failed to do this on a variety of

counts. Political and economic power is concentrated in the hands of the elites, grassroots organizations are ignored, government is heavily centralized and nothing is being done to facilitate activism. Any resources that are directed towards rural women go invariably towards alleviating material demands. What is particularly distressing is the fact that Chile is one of the relatively wealthier and stabler countries in the region and within the Third World. If it cannot find the will or resources to improve democracy, what are the chances for more destitute countries?

During the research and fieldwork for this thesis, I became convinced at times that democracy is an inappropriate system of government for a country such as Chile. Inequalities are too severe and social cleavages are too deep for the formation of a credible version of democracy, and in this imperfect stage it is too easy for political elites to take advantage of the situation for their own profit. If we are not serious about a commitment to democracy then we should at least be honest about it and match the institutions to the practice.

But there is something to be said for citizenship. There can hardly be anything more rewarding or purer in its pleasure than achieving something on behalf of the common good. For the women of Cultimar to have been chosen to represent 30,000 of their counterparts at a conference and express their demands as concerns privatization and the environment is an opportunity found only in democracy, and one that should not be taken away. It is only hoped that the opportunity be afforded to more women, more often.

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