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Chile's Agrarian Reform:  
The Laws and The Opposition

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Richard H. Nolte, Executive Director  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
366 Madison Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Just a decade ago, "agrarian reform" was anathema. Only soothsayers, radical revolutionaries and some few international agencies paid it any heed. Latin American governments spurned it, and the U.S. government shunned it as beyond its purview.

Then Castro galvanized the hemisphere. The U.S. moved to counteract his disrupting impact throughout the two continents and, at a pleni-potentiary conference in 1960, the Act of Bogotá was constituted, incorporating the call for reform and the promise of U.S. funds. At that assembly Raúl Roa of Cuba played the prosecutor---deriding the U.S. for acting not in belief but in expediency and responding with "too little, too late".

The same year a government of the Democratic Left in Venezuela pushed through an agrarian reform law and pressed its application. The Mexican and Bolivian programs, previously of peripheral interest, became pertinent to the region's politics. Pope John XXIII sanctified the renovations with Mater e Magistra.

The watershed for the general acceptance of agrarian reform was Punta del Este in August 1961. The declaration resulting from that conference contained the following statement---one of the most difficult for the chary delegates to forge:

"To encourage, in accordance with the characteristics of each country, programs of comprehensive agrarian reform leading to the effective transformation, where required, of unjust structures and systems of land tenure and use, with a view to replacing latifundia and dwarf holdings by an equitable system of land tenure so that, with the help of timely and adequate credit, technical assistance and facilities for the marketing and distribution of products, the land will become for the man who works it the basis of his economic stability, the foundation of his increasing welfare and the guarantee of his freedom and dignity."

With this, agrarian reform as a concept gained legitimacy. In fact, it has taken on something of the sanctity of motherhood. No one dares oppose it, even right-wing conservatives giving it lip service. But, the issue is---what is agrarian reform?

In Bolivia, the 1952 Revolution brought on a rash agrarian reform which wiped out the latifundia system in one fell swoop---a coup de grâce

carried out by the peasants themselves before the new government could initiate an agricultural program. It was seizure of the land, pure and simple.

When the large landowner lauds "agrarian reform", he is certainly not sanctioning the expropriation of property. If challenged, he is likely to qualify the term with the word "technical", by which he means more and cheaper fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides---a favorable pricing system---mechanization---more liberal credits---adequate agricultural research and extension service---mild taxation, etc. In other words, leave the tenure structure as it is, but adopt governmental measures to encourage inputs and capitalization contributing to increasing agricultural production.

However, "technical" as a qualifying adjective becomes a matter of interpretation. Here in Chile the Christian Democrats and the Left, in general, protest that the central technical problem, the very crux of the agrarian reform, is the land tenure structure. To them the rationalization of the agricultural sector is a technical problem which demands, as priority, an equalization in the size of landholdings in order to correct the underutilization of latifundia and the inefficiency of minifundia. To them such an apparently social measure as improving peasants' salaries is, in fact, "technical" because it augurs an increase in production. They also claim increased agricultural production as a primary aim, but they hold that mere tinkering with the agricultural policy of the government is not sufficient to achieve that aim; that in order to reach the "technical" goal of higher production, broader social and economic measures must be adopted.

Another version of agrarian reform, alluring in Latin America which ---unlike Asia---has vast unused tracts, features colonization. Countries such as Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil have long had colonization schemes conceived as "steam valves" to relieve the pressure on the land in overpopulated terrains. Resettlement is proposed as surrogate for redistribution. In theory such an "agrarian reform" is to serve social and economic purposes by making landowners of peasants and bringing uncultivated land into production. In fact, too often it is successful on neither score because colonizers are generally transported to inaccessible parts, marooned from the national polity and economy.

According to zealous reformers, the primary aim of agrarian reform is not economic or technical but social and political. Only by shattering the superannated agrarian structure can huge sectors of the society be brought into the national arena. Transfer of property is deemed the most effective method to shift economic and political power and so reconstitute the society; the desirability of such a transformation warrants sacrifices---destruction of the former power elite and reduction in the agricultural production---in the expectation that a fecund and egalitarian society will arise from the rubble.

In the professional corps of technicians and theoreticians ser-

ving agricultural programs throughout Latin America, three criteria are considered basic to an authentic agrarian reform: that it contributes to greater social equality, the redistribution of political power and the growth of the economy. The Chilean mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development speaks of "agrarian reform" when referring to the all-inclusive program of action and to "land reform" when referring to the particular aspect of redistribution. In general, agrarian reform is an umbrella term, covering all measures aimed at improving the economic, social and political conditions of the countryside, most definitely implying some restructuring of the land tenure system.

The 1961 Punta del Este conference and its reform-minded offspring, the Alliance for Progress, pressured Latin American governments to make some show of intent. Most proceeded to adopt agrarian reform laws in the early 60's though with considerable congressional reluctance due to the omnipresent clique of landholding legislators. As is common in the region, the laws were protracted and high-sounding, effective in deluding the innocent into expecting significant results. An agrarian reform institute might be created, but endowed with a pauper's budget. Conditions for expropriation might be set in such a way as to stymie effective action. Legal recourse allowed the threatened party might delay a judgment for years in the overworked, slow-moving courts. In the words of one realistic Colombian economist:

"The degree of interest of the public officials in the application of the reform is important because the general context of the law is permissive and not restrictive, and there are no fixed limits for its application. In other words, the implementation of the law depends upon the capacity and the political and administrative decisions of those who control the government."

Some Latin American nations, such as Brazil and Argentina, have given little attention to land reform, in the redistribution sense. Others, such as Mexico, Bolivia and Venezuela initiated programs earlier which have now slowed their pace. Guatemala's was aborted, and Cuba's is the product of decree. Chile's, however, is now in full spate, a legitimate reform experiment implanted in an open society. It embodies the three criteria—social, political and economic—set forth by professionals, and it gives rise to rousing debate as to the order of importance of the three aims and the speed with which they should be pursued.

To arrive at this stage, the country promulgated two agrarian reform laws, the first in November 1962 under President Jorge Alessandri (Ley 15.020), and second in July 1967 under President Eduardo Frei (Ley 161640). That these laws be constitutional, it was necessary to amend the country's 1925 Constitution. The wording of the original charter set against that of the amendments reveals the evolution of social thought which made possible the present agrarian reform program. The theoretical keystone supporting property ownership has been changed. Whereas formerly it was "the inviolability of property", it is now "the social function of property."

At the time of its adoption, the 1925 Constitution was considered progressive because, even though Art. 10 (10) guaranteed "all inhabitants of the Republic...the inviolability of all property without exception", it did state that "the exercise of the right of property is subject to the limitations of regulations required for the maintenance of the social order." However, reference to the social aspect was general, and the property owner was guaranteed ample juridical recourse and full prior indemnity.

Both the 1963 and 1967 amendments exalted "social function" as the prime consideration governing property ownership. Article 10 of 1967 carefully spells out the limitations on the exercise of the right of private property with notable deletion of the word "inviolability":

"The Constitution guarantees to all inhabitants of the Republic:

"The right of property in its various forms.

"The law will establish the mode of acquiring property, its use, enjoyment and disposition, and the limitations and obligations which will assure its social function and make it available to all. The social function of property is understood to include the demands of the general interests of the State, public utility and health, the best use of the productive resources and energies in the service of all and the improvement of the common living conditions of the people."

It proceeds for another five paragraphs studded with such phrases as "favor the proper distribution of property", "right of indemnization... taking into consideration both the social interests and those of the individual". The sacrosanct aura of private property is expunged, and in its stead is the legitimation of expropriation, even of lands well utilized, if it serves the public good.

The 1963 Alessandri Law was radical in that it allowed state action against a variety of private properties. However, it incorporated a number of cumbersome provisions which limited the operative agency from moving either fast or far.

To begin with, the Agrarian Reform Corporation (CORA) was required by the law to precede action with considerable technical investigation and planning. Regional development plans were to be elaborated for the consideration and coordination of the several government agencies concerned with agriculture. Planning within reason is advisable, but Latin America has demonstrated its use as a ploy which mires a program in charts and prospectuses.

Effecting an expropriation was laborious and expensive. Compensation, based upon commercial value, consisted of a 20% immediate cash payment with the balance in 10 annual payments, earning 4% interest and adjustable to the inflationary rate; this deferred payment became possible only after the constitutional amendment of 1963, referred to above. Faced by bullish

land prices, CORA was impeded by the high costs of acquisition. In a country of over 200,000 landless peasant families, the agency proposed settling 10,000 in the first two years, and succeeded in benefitting 1,160 as of June 1964—largely on land held by government agencies or offered by its owners. In many cases, payment equalled or exceeded that of the open market.

Conditions permitting expropriation would never have freed a sufficient area to meet the social needs of the rural society. The reserve retainable by a large landowner was set in terms of a rather ambiguous "economic unit", one of which should permit a family to live and prosper by cultivating it with their own labor. The size of the "economic unit" would obviously vary according to soil, climate, topography, irrigation, etc., thus opening its determination to political as well as economic considerations. In one of the more critical articles of the law which implied some threat to lands reasonably cultivated, the owner was guaranteed the right to reserve, as a minimum, 10 economic units plus another for each child "legitimate or natural". In fact, no provision of Law 15,020 fixed a limit on the size of landholdings.

Another key provision of the 1962 law set forth who would qualify to receive the land to be distributed. This would be determined by a point system which did not favor the average peasant, but rather those who were part of the traditional system: mayordomos, administrators, overseers, etc. By the Alessandri government's own evaluation after the law had been in effect some two years, 30% of those benefitted were overseers, herdsmen and mayordomos, 25% resident peasants and 9% sharecroppers and truck farmers. The other 36% were not identified.

When CORA declared a landholding expropriable, its owner could contest this decision in the courts. Because most proposed expropriations came up for adjudication, the judicial system labored under an excessive burden, and judgments followed prolonged delays. Functioning under the Alessandri law, during the period 1965-1967 CORA expropriated 468 farms but was able to distribute the lands of only 148; 200 were ensnared in disagreements regarding terms of settlement and another 120 were in litigation. In the meantime, threatened owners generally siphoned off chattel from the fundo, and the resident laborers were left to fend for themselves.

Against the background of this law, the 1964 presidential campaign was waged with the agricultural situation as one of its chief issues. Frei, seeking the support of the urban middle class, played up agrarian reform as the means to bring more and cheaper foodstuffs to the city market. The leftist candidate, Salvador Allende, likewise adopted agrarian reform as one of his major planks, and the two egged each other on, outpromising the other's offer in the battle for votes.

On 22 November 1965, Frei took a major step pursuant to his campaign pledge by submitting a strong agrarian reform bill to the National Congress. He set forth three fundamental reasons for the proposal:

"First, to grant land to thousands of peasant families who, capable of cultivating, can fulfill the long-standing desire to own the land they work in order to better themselves and their family, and to contribute to the national community.

"Second, to improve substantially the productive situation of our agriculture...

"Third...to realize an effective and authentic promotion of peasants and their families, so that they may become a part...of the social, cultural, civic and political life of our country."

Since the bill implied a frontal attack on the traditional concept of property rights, Frei suggested that said concept was not being abrogated, but, rather, broadened and strengthened:

"In this way the right of property will be extended and perfected, imbued with the social sense which its full exercise implies...

"This law does not intend to ignore, suppress or damage the right of property; to the contrary, it is intended to extend, reinforce and perfect it; in place of an individualistic and exclusive concept which does not allow the full utilization of the natural resources and the social development of the peasants is substituted a property right with a social sense which guarantees the use of the resources with dignity and justice, with the fulfillment of the common good."

Some of the more controversial proposals were the following:

\*Outright expropriation was decreed for holdings exceeding 80 has. (approximately 200 acres) of productive, irrigated land or its equivalent; size alone was sufficient cause for taking the land, regardless of the quality of its cultivation. Other, less controversial grounds for expropriation were also listed, these applicable to units of any size: abandoned or badly exploited lands, lands in the hands of corporations, lands needed for improvements in the irrigation system, etc. All privately-held water rights were likewise transferred to the Government, without exception.

\*Indemnization would relate to the cause of expropriation, with down-payment of 1, 5 or 10% in cash and the balance in 25- or 30-year bonds, earning 3% interest and 70% readjustable to the inflation rate; value of the land would be based on the tax assessment, in Chile usually representing from 50 to 80% of the real value. The reduced property value, the inflationary rise in excess of the adjustment, the low interest rate, the denial of alternate capital uses, etc., would result in a very considerable loss for a fundo owner due to the terms of remuneration for expropriation. Economists of the landowners' association (SNA, Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura), using average, not extreme, estimates of property value/inflationary rate/capital costs, have determined that an owner would recover as little as 30 to 50% of the worth of his land.

\*When CORA moved to expropriate a fundo, it could take possession as soon as it advanced the downpayment; if the owner disputed the seizure, he could appeal to special agrarian courts, but only if the judgment were in his favor could he repossess the property. CORA, not the owner, would decide what area of 80 has. or its equivalent he might retain. Unilateral division of property (i.e., without CORA's consent) by its owner after 27 November 1962 would be nullified, and the holding would be considered for expropriation as it was in its original form:

\*In addition, a new institution would be created. Called "asentamiento" (settlement), it would provide a transitory period of three years (extendable to five in exceptional cases) after the expropriation and before a fundo was divided and turned over to the peasants as private property. During this span, CORA would supervise the peasants, preparing them for their new responsibilities. Preference as to beneficiaries would go to the workers already resident on the fundos; outside campesinos would be brought in only when the land could support more people.

Agrarian reform no longer was of concern only to the disinterested proprietor of a neglected fundo hoping to unload it on CORA for a good price, or the urbanite speculating in land as a hedge against inflation; nor did it emphasize prior distribution of government lands before private lands were scrutinized. Now, the heartland in the Central Zone, held largely by a few families of the landed aristocracy, became a potential object of the reformers' knife. Chile had before it a law which, if passed, would be the most effective and far-reaching of any in non-communist Latin America.

The agricultural elite girded for battle. The agrarian reform proposal was debated, censored, praised and compromised in the legislature for a year and eight months before it was finally passed in July 1967. So, too, was it derided, defended and discussed in public and private, with the rightist forces spearheading repeated attacks in mass media and assembly hall. The changing emphasis of their arguments and the gradual retrenchment in their stand reflect a significant shift in the Chilean political scene.

Soon after introduction of the bill, 50 fundo owners launched a defense of the traditional concept of private property rights. The argument refuted the cornerstone of the proposed reform: the legality of expropriation in consideration of social function.

The treatise was aimed at establishing a symbiosis between general public and fundo owners by suggesting that fundamental social values would be undermined by the agrarian reform. The sequential theory proceeded from the premise that the inviolable right to private property is God-given, that it rests upon natural law, that it is the pillar of the family, and the keystone of the civilization. The disquisition refutes Article 10 (10) as constituting "no constitutional reform whatsoever" since it concedes an indiscriminate sovereignty to the State over a principle, rooted in nature, which preceded the State itself and society in general. Furthermore, the

absolute right of private property is not divisible: denying it for agricultural lands, it can also be denied in the city, in commerce, in industry and in organs such as press and radio.

About a year later, in December 1965, a full-page review of the landowners' battleline at that time appeared in the newspaper El Mercurio. Referring to the Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura (SNA), the major association of agriculturalists, the article was entitled "The SNA Approves Agrarian Reform and the Redistribution of the Land". The deck headline, however, qualified the banner: "it objects, nevertheless, to the basic orientation and to many of the dispositions. Don Luis Larrain (president of the SNA) offers this press conference to point out the dangers of such a measure that discourages production and digresses from the constitutional text."

After voicing strong objections to the whole idea of the constitutional amendment, Larrain proceeded to argue that, if it must be, it should contain unequivocal guarantee to protect efficiently-operated farms from expropriation, this to correct the "confused situation of today in which no one knows who will be affected and who will not". He objected vehemently to the proposal that only agricultural property should be subject to the amendment; such discrimination would make "second-class citizens" of Chilean farmers in comparison with other groups such as foreign mining interests.

A major concern of the SNA sprung from the considerable powers vested in CORA to supervise and direct the asentamientos and to hold veto power over division of the land, form of inheritance, right of encumbrance, etc., after title was granted. The influence of the reform agency during the transitional stage could result in various decisions by the campesinos which would favor prolonged State control. For instance, the campesinos could opt for one of three types of titles upon terminating the asentamiento tutelage: one of these would be cooperative with no individual ownership. Larrain pointed out that, according to the bill, if such a cooperative were dissolved, the land would revert to the State. In addition, in certain circumstances, the State could revoke titles and repossess the land. Therefore, "we must conclude that...with this law it is possible to carry out an agrarian reform such as that promised by the President of the Republic with free citizens, possessing their own land, and also it is possible to make a collectivist order where the new subjects are slaves of the State."

Objection is made to a number of provisions considered unjust. That CORA, not the owner, may determine which 80 has. shall continue in private ownership threatens the loss of home and all major improvements made upon the land. Because of the possibility of such an act, the immediate effect would be to impede investment for fear of the consequences of expropriation.

The cutoff date for division of property, November 1962, is also disputed since an act that was legal under the laws then in effect could become illegal due to subsequent decree. Since such a law, granting retroactive powers to the State, could set a precedent for the future, "it is perhaps the most damaging disposition of the project, introducing an odious factor hitherto unknown in Chilean law."



Larraín laments that the bill contemplates no benefits to campesinos other than the inquilinos, that is, those resident laborers already established on the fundos who would compose the bulk of the assignees to the asentamientos. According to SNA figures, a far larger number of the agricultural population is excluded from reform benefits---49% are minifundistas (holders of dwarf units) and 27% are day laborers. In addition, "the agrarian middle class, perhaps the most qualified---composed of sharecroppers, mayordomos and tenants---is ignored."

"The country is in the antechamber of a place we do not know," concluded Larraín.

Although this 1965 statement by SNA's president consists of many strong arguments against specifics of the bill, what it does not dispute is significant as it implies acceptance. Whereas a 1957 position was predicated on the "certainty that in this country...the system of land tenure does not need any reform whatsoever", the leadership of the landed elite by the mid-60's accepted the idea of redistribution as long as the efficient producer was protected; tacit consent was given to the fundamental concept of "social function" for property, and compensation by deferred payment rather than full and immediate cash settlement marked another radical departure from the original stand.

In 1966, SNA's defense became more querulous than cogent, blaming the Government for failing to assist the agricultural sector, deliberately oppressing them with its agricultural policies and now sponsoring a drastic social change aimed at dislodging all the present proprietors. The agrarian reform was not what the President had promised originally---neither a technical nor economic program but, rather, a political maneuver.

When the law was finally passed in July 1967, the SNA tallied up its score in the long struggle to ameliorate the effects of the reform: a firm definition of "badly exploited" better assured that this condition for expropriation would not be too broadly applied; the proprietor, not CORA, could designate the reserve to be left to him; the cut-off date of 27 November 1962 was advanced to 4 November 1964; the terms of payment were made slightly more favorable for the expropriated; fight of recourse to the courts was strengthened, with the Supreme Court emplaced as final arbiter over the special agrarian courts.

The listing is, however, one of minor revisions, small comfort considering the revolutionary scope of the final law. The SNA directorate, essentially, disavowed the statute as a useless mechanism for improving agriculture, and they resolved to go their own way with renewed effort to improve their techniques and their production.

A synthesis of SNA argument runs along the following lines: as early as 1962 the Council of the organization resolved to support an agrarian reform as long as it had, as its first objective, an increase in production. The principal propellant of any enterprise is economic and for years governments have refused to take actions aimed at improving that aspect, while expecting workers conditions to improve and production to increase. Prices

have been restrained, but the costs of inputs have risen. Because of constant social agitation in the last years, the State has obligated the agriculturalists to raise the level of salaries often in excess of their capabilities; it is irrational and damaging to allow the campesinos to obtain raises as a result of social pressure, quite aside from any increase in productivity. It is indicative of agriculture's poor earnings that foreign capital, always present where there are high profits, is totally absent from Chilean agriculture. One cannot take seriously an agrarian reform law which is predicated on the theory that all medium and large agricultural operations are exploitive, unjust and archaic in their methods. Chilean agriculture is and was normal: there are good, regular and bad farmers, be they small or large. The Government should move to protect and assist the efficient producer, regardless of his size.

In April of this year, 1968, all the major components of the private sector convened in a National Convention of Production and Commerce with the objective of wielding a countervailing force to governmental policies. Agriculture's case, as presented by the SNA, was couched in terms of the public's misunderstanding and/or indifference and/or ignorance of the sector's tribulations and contributions. Urban attitudes toward agriculture were lamented and appraised as significant in determining the fate of the rural areas.

This evocation of public opinion, particularly that of the urban sector, probably emanated from a poll which was taken a year ago in Greater Santiago to determine "What image does the country have of the agriculturalists?" The findings were overwhelmingly unfavorable to the SNA position.

When asked where they placed the blame for the low agricultural production, 34.5% indicated "extensive tracts of land without cultivation or badly exploited", 2.2% named the price policy, and 0.3% the lack of adequate legislation.

Is an agrarian reform necessary? For 80.1% the answer was "yes"; 11.9% thought "some other method" would be preferable.

As to their opinion of the agriculturalists, 42.2% were negative, 13% positive, and 11.9% neutral.

An interesting sidelight: 63.5% did not know if any other country had an agrarian reform; 18.1% named Cuba, and 3.5% Mexico. As to who should control agricultural lands, 46.3% favored private ownership—40.3% governmental ownership.

Commenting on this poll, SNA observed: "all political decisions in our country are increasingly based upon what the public thinks...the truth is harsh and it must be faced: public opinion is against the agriculturalist. But, why?"

"The modern world, with its amazing technical progress, has created thousands of marvellous attractions for the human being...to feed oneself today is disagreeable. The urban dweller wants to save as much as possible

to buy the alluring products, and he criticizes the agriculturalist because he does not give food as a gift in the mouth."

This brief self-vindication diagnoses the malaise of traditional agriculture. Urbanization and public opinion have struck it down. The 1967 agrarian reform did not descend deus ex machina upon Chile. It became possible only after a process of political, social and economic evolution which gradually shifted power away from the landed elite to modern social and economic groups.

Some three decades earlier, Chile was governed by a Popular Front (1938-1941) which included Communist and Socialist parties. Its two principal objectives were to democratize the educational system and to implement an effective agrarian reform. However, not even a bill was formulated to present to Congress. Later, a Communist leader explained: "Agrarian reform was not even attempted in 1938 because the conditions were not favorable: the latifundia system was too strong and the peasant organizations too weak." The same situation prevailed in 1946 when the Minister of Agriculture was a Communist.

Even as recently as the 50's the power base of the landed oligarchy seemed secure. Constitution and law favored the status quo. Though reforms and advances were taking place under urban impetus, an implicit understanding among the political forces left the rural environment untouched---this a gentlemen's agreement often existing in Latin American countries.

In a previous voting system tolerant of manipulation, a semi-illiterate peasant was delivered to the door of the polls, an envelope containing the list of the party preference of his patron in his pocket. He went through the routine of choosing from among the candidates, but dropped the predetermined selection in the box, under the vigil of the patron's henchman. If lucky, he got a glass of wine and an empanada before he was returned to the fundo.

Reforms in 1958 and 1962 corrected several blemishes of the electoral system, including the balloting procedure. In 1958 the rightist candidate, Jorge Alessandri, barely triumphed over the coalition of leftist parties. The deterioration of the conservative power base was revealed beyond doubt with the congressional elections of 1961 when, for the first time in Chilean history, the parties of the Right lost the vital one-third of the votes in Congress which had always assured them a veto over any measure.

This serious setback forced them to seek allies with more liberal elements, and a three-party coalition was forged with the center Radical Party. Concerned to keep the Radicals on their side, the conservatives began to make concessions---a pattern of political action which they were doomed to follow from then on. Thus, came the first breach in the stronghold of the inviolability of private property.

Furthermore, the Right began to question its political viability in a society where the growth of other sectors ineluctably resulted in the diminution of their minority. Policy now dictated that they change their image as "the bulwark of the economic right," and court trade unionists, peasants

and the urban middle class. It was even contemplated that an agrarian reform might accrue to their benefit by creating a rural middle class of conservative tendencies. The politicians of the Right increasingly pressed for positions not based upon traditional principles but on vote-getting appeal.

But if the 1961 vote was a defeat, the special congressional election in 1964 was a debacle for the Right. Curicó province, 90% rural and a putative conservative stronghold, gave the leftist coalition a victory and cut the support of the rightist coalition by 17%. So shattering was the upset that the latter group disbanded and, in the presidential election of that year, another precedent was broken as conservatives gave their vote to a left-of-center candidate, Eduardo Frei, whose campaign featured reforms and particularly attacked the agrarian structure.

The conservatives retrenched again and merged their two parties into one in a continuing quest to find their place in an alien world. There has been some tendency to refute the younger, progressive elements who are blamed for compromises which brought gains neither in election or in legislation. Also, the moderate course of the present administration has won over some conservative elements who either see no future for the Right or must consider the expediency of associating with the power center to protect their own interests.

The loss of control at the top has far-reaching amplifications in a system which has the cuñado relationship as its operative element. Literally, the Spanish word means brother-in-law, but applied generally as it is to the political modus vivendi, it implies that "to get something done", influence derived from personal contact is far more important than the logic or justice of the cause. As recently as the previous administration, the SNA, in its prime role of lobbyist, still had considerable entree at the decision-making level—President Alessandri, the Minister of Agriculture, etc. Today SNA enters these inner sanctums not as cuñado but as supplicant. On the provincial and municipal levels, others have first claim to favors.

The agrarian reform law is not cause but result of the waning power of the Chilean Right. There will be important congressional elections again in 1969 and the presidential election in 1970. It is yet early to measure the degree of disillusionment among the urban middle class and the peasantry with the course of the Christian Democratic government. But the Right is unlikely to allow itself to fall into the trap of the 1964 election when, having no candidate of its own, it was forced to vote left; it can be assured of its own stalwarts and can make a strong appeal to those impatient with progress under a reform government and unwilling to turn further left. Its days of dominion are passed, but it can hope to prove its political viability, fortify its effective power, and slow the pace of expropriation and of organization of peasant syndicates.

Sincerely yours,



Frances M. Foland

Received in New York July 8, 1968.