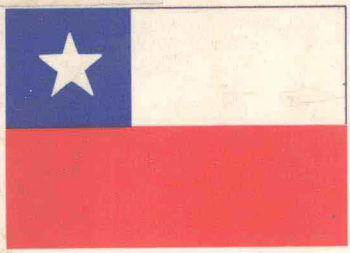

Second Edition

Chile

The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism

Brian Loveman

Chile

THE LEGACY OF HISPANIC CAPITALISM

SECOND EDITION

BRIAN LOVEMAN

New York • Oxford University Press

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Petaling Jaya Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland

and associated companies in
Beirut Berlin Ibadan Nicosia

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Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.,
200 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Loveman, Brian.
Chile: The legacy of Hispanic capitalism / Brian Loveman. — 2nd ed.
p. cm.
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-19-505218-8
ISBN 0-19-505219-6 (pbk.)
1. Chile—History. I. Title.
F3081.L68 1988 983'.064—dc19 87-34891

9 8 7 6 5 4 3

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

Chile is a nation where historians and social theorists have participated actively in public life as well as in scholarship. Presidents, ministers of state, legislators, and party leaders have contributed to Chile's historical tradition, to its literature, and to its art. No historian, Chilean or foreign, can undertake a new look at Chilean history without returning, first, to the great intellectual contributions of Chile's national writers. While this book departs in some important ways from conventional interpretations of Chile's past, it owes much to the insight and thorough research of generations of Chilean writers.

To the intellectual debt I owe to Chilean writers must be added the use I have made of the studies of hundreds of non-Chilean "Chileanists" who have dedicated their attention to Chilean history. As the format of this book generally precluded systematic footnote citations, I have attempted to note appropriately those works upon which I relied extensively in the selective bibliography at the end of this volume.

As I wrote this study, my friend, teacher, and general editor of Oxford University Press's Latin American Histories Series, James Scobie, offered his advice, encouragement, and critical reviews of the manuscript for which I am extremely grateful. The manuscript has also benefitted from the comments and suggestions made by Jacques Barbier, Harold Blakemore, Simon Collier, Thomas M. Davies, Jr., Philip Flemion, Henry Landsberger, Sharon Loveman, Vincent

Padgett, William Sater, William Sherman, and John Whaley. Larry Stickell generously allowed me to read chapter drafts of his doctoral dissertation on the development of the nitrate industry in Chile and to use data from his research in the present volume. While the insights of these scholars have greatly improved the present book, I am, of course, responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation that remain in the volume.

I have been fortunate to have help from a number of people in the preparation of the manuscript. Special thanks go to Veva Link, Helen Triller, Jeri Haddon and Paula Forrester, and to Phoebe Hoss for her careful copy-editing. Nancy Ferris provided invaluable assistance in preparation of the bibliography as did Michael Arguello in construction of the index.

A final thank you must also go to my friends in Trovolhue who taught me the political meaning of life's daily struggle against the legacy of four centuries of Hispanic Capitalism.

San Diego B.L.
August 1978

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Preface to the Second Edition

I have completed the second edition of this book at a time when Chileans are in their fourteenth year under an authoritarian, military-dominated dictatorship. This dictatorship, led by General Augusto Pinochet, has effected radical changes in many aspects of Chilean life.

Unlike the military-dominated governments in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Peru during the 1970s and early 1980s, the Chilean government came to be identified ever more closely with the personalist control of one officer rather than the institutional control of the country by the armed forces. For this reason, an appropriate conclusion to the last chapter of this edition of the book would have been the departure of General Pinochet and the transition to another sort of political leadership. Unfortunately, while the passage of time and the many changes that have transpired in Chile made a second edition essential, the proper conclusion of the last chapter still has not occurred—though it is inevitable.

As in preparation of the first edition of this book I have had the advantage of relying upon the important research and historical analysis of a number of Chilean writers and intellectuals too numerous to identify individually. In addition, conversations and discussions with Alejandro Foxley, Manuel Antonio Garretón, Sol Serrano, Gonzalo Tapia, Francisco Tomic, Maria Elena Valenzuela, and Augusto Varas have assisted me greatly in understanding the last fourteen years. Luis Ortega's valuable published critique of parts of the first edition and

suggestions offered by him for improvement have also proved useful in making revisions. Likewise, an extensive set of suggestions for revision by Michael Monteón assisted me in preparing the second edition.

Thomas M. Davies Jr., Paul Drake, Iván Jaksić, Sharon Loveman, Frederick Nunn, Michael Stanfield, and Augusto Varas have all struggled through drafts of new material for the second edition, and spared me errors of fact or interpretation. Naturally, the errors that remain are my responsibility.

I have also been fortunate to have the assistance of Iliana Sonntag in revising and updating the bibliography, Melinda Wedgewood in preparing new maps, Kirsten Mulvey and Cecilia Ubilla in copyediting, and Helen Kanavel in preparation of the new tables. Michael Arguello once again constructed the index.

San Diego B.L.
July 1987

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Chile

Introduction

Harsh exploitation of the labor force in mines, farms, and industry has been the most persistent characteristic of Chilean society since the arrival of European conquerors in the sixteenth century. Despite the recurrent efforts by progressive Church officials or government reformers to improve the lot, first, of Chile's indigenous population and, then, of the ethnically mixed working classes, the Chilean economy continued to rely upon forced labor, agricultural service tenants, and then a highly mobile but miserable wage proletariat. From the first years of conquest and into the 1980s Chilean society and culture reflected the tensions between attempts to better the living and working conditions of the majority of the Chilean people and the realities of an economic and political order resting upon the foundation of conquest, subjugation, and coercion of labor.

In 1620, more than eighty years after the first Spanish expedition to Chile, the king of Spain ordered Chilean encomenderos and settlers to end compulsory labor and to pay farm workers a minimum daily wage. Resistance by the propertied classes and lack of enforcement efforts by public officials prevented implementation of this legislation. More than three centuries later (1953) a Chilean national government enacted a minimum wage for agricultural workers and sought to regulate rural labor conditions. Landowners successfully resisted the feeble enforcement efforts of the Ministry of Labor.

In 1620 Indian and mestizo laborers living on the haciendas of Spaniards were required to work 160 days a year. In 1953 Chilean

rural tenants and laborers typically worked well over 200 days a year and provided landowners not only their own labor but also that of family members or other hired hands.

The quest for liberty, justice, and human dignity is a recurrent theme in Chilean history. But in the era of the conquistadors as in modern Chile, the quest has been subordinated inevitably to the requirements of order and material gain for a small privileged minority. Whether the conflict joined Jesuits and encomenderos, or Marxists, reformers, and conservatives, the outcome has repeatedly been a return to pragmatic repression to uphold the economic, social, and political foundations of the Chilean version of Hispanic capitalism—a complex adaptation of neofeudal political and economic institutions to the New World. Relying initially upon slave or forced labor, Hispanic capitalism represented a unique response of the Spanish colonial elite to the expansion of European capitalism.

Some Spaniards called out for social justice almost from the outset of colonization. Clerical and secular precursors of twentieth-century reformers and revolutionaries opposed decimation and abuse of the native population. If the conqueror Pedro de Valdivia came to subjugate and exploit the Indians, the Jesuit Luis de Valdivia urged peaceful conquest and abolition of slavery and compulsory labor. But in a frontier region at perpetual war, efforts by the crown and some churchmen to ameliorate the conditions of the Indians through protective legislation met consistent failure. Governors, soldiers, encomenderos, and even some religious leaders built a Chilean economy from venturesome private initiative and the sweat and suffering of the Indian work force.

For the conquistadors Chile was not the prize of Mexico or Peru. Instead of the vast wealth of the Aztecs and Incas, the Chilean conquerors encountered a people with little more to defend than their land and liberty. Between 1598 and 1612, after more than half a century of warfare and settlement, the Araucanians forced the Spanish to abandon the principal towns south of the Bío Bío River. In 1655 another Indian uprising again destroyed almost all the new and re-established Spanish outposts in Araucania. To survive, to establish a semblance of order, and to achieve some economic returns the Spaniards adopted a de facto policy of pragmatic repression. Ignoring or circumventing royal edicts or colonial legislation designed to protect the Indians, the colonial bureaucracy, soldiers, and encomenderos prevailed. In the words of an Indian cacique: "The King is good and he legislates justly, but your governors and captains do not comply and there is no justice for the Indians."

Thus the struggle between parchment justice and the realities of Chilean society offers a permanent tension in the historical development of the Chilean nation. A war for independence against Spain carried out in the name of liberty, culminated in the establishment of an autocratic order inspired by a merchant deprived of his government-authorized tobacco monopoly. In the tradition of the Spanish governors and captains, Diego Portales used fear and repression to establish political order.

The creation of the Portalian state after 1830 spared Chile the destructive anarchy experienced by most of South America in the first half of the nineteenth century. Portales accomplished this task through harsh, authoritarian treatment of any political opposition. An aphorism attributed to Portales set the tone for the struggle between liberty and autocracy that characterized Chilean development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: "The stick and the cake, justly and opportunely administered, are the remedies with which any nation can be cured, however inveterate its bad habits may be." As Portales observed, the social order in Chile was preserved by the "weight of the night . . . the masses' near universal tendency to repose was the guarantee of public tranquility." In case the "weight of the night" should lighten, Portales and his successors never hesitated to use "the stick" to secure that tranquility.

The second half of the nineteenth century brought modernization to Chile as it did in varying degrees to most of Latin America. The steamship, telegraph, railroad, increased labor mobility, and urbanization, as well as expansion of commerce and industry, altered the socio-economic institutions of the nation. Political parties played the game of liberal democracy and mouthed the rhetoric of social justice. Eloquent speeches in the Chilean congress promised relief to the working classes, while laborers and rural workers organized to challenge the propertied interests. New laws guaranteed justice and equality. By the end of the nineteenth century the old order seemed to be coming apart. Growing awareness by the working classes of alternatives to their poverty and misery threatened to end the era of the stick and the cake.

Then in the period 1924-31, in the name of order and justice, a new class of conquistador sought to re-establish authority and to reimpose the "weight of the night" on the Chilean masses. In the tradition of Portales, government-stimulated economic growth accompanied repression of all who voiced opposition to the incumbent regime.

A few years later Chile nevertheless was acclaimed a democracy. Along with Uruguay and Costa Rica, Chile escaped the coups, re-

bellions, and revolutions that afflicted most of Latin America after the Great Depression. Until 1973 the military did not overtly intervene in Chilean politics. Elections took place as scheduled, and votes were fairly counted. Freedom of the press brought a wide range of viewpoints to the Chilean population and spared the incumbent government no criticism. In contrast to the authoritarian pattern of the Portalian state, Chilean presidents failed to control their own political parties, let alone congressional elections or deliberations. No Chilean president in the period 1932-70 could name his own successor. Great legislative strides were made in the direction of popular participation, social justice, and democratization. But the tension persisted between legislative proclamations and the traditional foundations of Chilean society—autocracy, social stratification, and repression of popular activism. The tension gave a special character to Chilean democracy.

In the early 1960s a Chilean president initiated a "revolution in liberty." Priority was given to increased participation of the popular classes, to removing social and economic inequality, and to stimulating the Chilean economy. It soon became evident that removing the "weight of the night" from the Chilean working classes could not be reconciled with maintenance of the existing socio-economic order. Chilean democracy had concealed but not eliminated the conflicts between liberty and participation and the authoritarian tenets of conquerors and twentieth-century capitalists.

By 1970 the struggle was explicit. Revolutionaries and reformers joined in an effort to destroy the institutions and values of the old order. Ironically, but not surprisingly, the principal vehicle they chose to carry out this radical transformation of Chilean society was an updated model of that employed by conquistadors and Portales: a centralized bureaucracy imbued with the prejudices and defects of Hispanic viceroys, governors, and notaries. The attempt did not prosper. Landlords, capitalists, bureaucrats, and soldiers stifled the "revolution" as they had implementation of the king's mandate in 1620.

In 1973 a military coup terminated a three-year effort to restructure Chilean society. Again owing to pragmatic repression in support of an updated version of Hispanic capitalism, opponents of the incumbent regime lived in an atmosphere of fear. The new military government proclaimed: "In every soldier there is a Chilean; in every Chilean a soldier." In answer to this apparent return to the spirit of conquest, a Christian Democratic politician seemed to echo the Jesuit Luis de Valdivia: "We are convinced that it is not possible to build a lasting order on repression."

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