Transitions from Authoritarian Rule

Southern Europe

edited by
Guillermo O'Donnell,
Philippe C. Schmitter, and
Laurence Whitehead

with a foreword by Abraham F. Lowenthal

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The Johns Hopkins University Press
Baltimore and London

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper
03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96 95 94 7 6 5 4 3

The Johns Hopkins University Press,
2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4319
The Johns Hopkins Press Ltd., London

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publications Data

Transitions from authoritarian rule. Southern Europe.

Papers originally commissioned for a conference sponsored by the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars between 1979 and 1981.

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

Contents: An introduction to southern European transitions from authoritarian rule: Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey / Philippe C. Schmitter—Political economy, legitimation, and the state in southern Europe / Salvador Giner—The demise of the first Fascist regime and Italy's transition to democracy, 1943–1948 / Gianfranco Pasquino—[etc.]

1. Representative government and representation—Europe, Southern—Case studies. 2. Authoritarianism—Europe, Southern—Case studies. 3. Democracy—Case studies. I. O'Donnell, Guillermo A. II. Schmitter, Philippe C. III. Whitehead, Laurence. IV. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Latin American Program.
JN12.T73 1986 321.09'094 86-2713
ISBN 0-8018-3190-3 (pbk. : alk. paper)

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Foreword

Abraham F. Lowenthal

The three coeditors of *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* have kindly invited me to introduce this effort because it resulted from the Woodrow Wilson Center's project on "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe."

The "Transitions" project was the most significant undertaking of the Wilson Center's Latin American Program during the seven years I had the privilege of directing its activities. The resulting four-volume book contributes substantially on a topic of vital scholarly and political importance. I want to highlight both these points, to underline some of its strengths, and finally to say a bit about what is still left to be done.

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars was created by an act of the United States Congress in 1968 as a "living memorial" to the twentieth president of the United States, a man remembered for his idealism and for his commitment to democracy, for his scholarship, for his political leadership, and for his international vision, but also for his interventionist attitudes and actions toward Latin America and the Caribbean. The Center supports advanced research and systematic discussion on national and international issues by scholars and practitioners from all over the world. It aims to bring together the realms of academic and public affairs, as Wilson himself did.

The Latin American Program was established early in 1977, within the Center's overall framework, to focus attention on the Western Hemisphere. The Program has tried, from the start, to serve as a bridge between Latin Americans and North Americans of diverse backgrounds, to facilitate comparative research that draws on the Center's special capacity to bring people together, to emphasize the highest standards of scholarship, to stress privileged topics that merit intense cooperative efforts, and to help assure that opinion leaders in the United States and Latin America focus more attentively and more sensitively on Latin America and the Caribbean and on their relation with the United States.

In all its undertakings, the Program has been striving to assure that diverse viewpoints—from men and women with varying national, professional, disciplinary, methodological, and political perspectives—are presented, and that complex issues are illuminated through the confrontation of different analyses. But the Program's orientation has never been value-free; it has stood for

vigorous exchange among persons who disagree about many things but who fundamentally respect the academic enterprise and who share a commitment to the core values all the nations of the Americas profess. The Program has sought diversity of many kinds, but not artificial balance. It awarded fellowships in the same semester to writers exiled because of their convictions from Argentina and from Cuba, for example, but it has never invited their censors on an equal basis. It has sponsored research on human rights from many different standpoints, but never from the perspective of the torturers. And it sponsored the project on "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule" with a frank bias for democracy, for the restoration in Latin America of the fundamental rights of political participation.

The "Transitions" project was begun in 1979 on the initiative of two charter members of the Latin American Program's nine-person Academic Council: Guillermo O'Donnell (then of CEDES in Buenos Aires) and Philippe Schmitter (then of the University of Chicago), with the active encouragement and support of the Council's chairman, Albert O. Hirschman, and of Council member Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil. During the project's first phase, I served as its coordinator. As the project grew in scope and complexity, it became clear that another Center-based person was needed to focus more fully on it; we were fortunate to recruit Laurence Whitehead of Oxford University, a former Wilson Center fellow, who then worked closely with O'Donnell and Schmitter and became coeditor of the project volume.

The "Transitions" project illustrates the Wilson Center's aspirations in several respects:

Its leaders are recognized as among the world's foremost academic authorities in Latin America, the United States, and Europe.

It attracted the participation of other top-flight scholars from all three continents and encouraged them to work closely together in a structured and linked series of workshops and conferences.

It emphasized comparative analysis, and sharpened the focus on Latin American cases by putting them into a broader perspective.

In its various workshops, the project drew on the perspective not only of scholars but of several persons—from Latin America and from among former U.S. government officials—experienced in politics and public affairs.

Its findings have been made available to opinion leaders from different sectors through specially organized discussion sessions in Washington.

It maintained a creative tension between its normative bias, its theoretical ambitions, and its empirical and case-oriented approach. The project's animus, as I had occasion to say at its first meeting, was never wishful thinking but rather "thoughtful wishing," that is, it was guided by a normative orientation that was rigorous and deliberate in its method.

Finally, the project illustrated a point the Wilson Center's director, Dr. James H. Billington, has often emphasized: to seek tentative answers to

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fundamental questions rather than definitive responses to trivial ones. All the project's participants know that the complex issues involved in transitions to democracy have not been dealt with conclusively in this volume, but they can take great satisfaction in what they have contributed.

Transitions from Authoritarian Rule

Ultimate evaluations of this book's import, obviously, will have to come from analysts less involved in the project's inception and management than I. I would like, however, to suggest some of the reasons why I think *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* is important.

It is the first book in any language that systematically and comparatively focuses on the process of transition from authoritarian regimes, making this the central question of scholarship as it is today in Latin American politics.

Its analytic and normative focus on the prospects of building democratic or polyarchic politics in the wake of an authoritarian transition provides a vantage point that organizes the materials in ways useful not only to scholars and observers but to political actors as well.

Its comparisons of cases in Latin America and in Southern Europe and of cases of transition from bureaucratic authoritarianism, military populism, and sultanistic despotism allow for considering several different variables.

Transitions from Authoritarian Rule is rich in nuanced, contextually sensitive analysis, and each of the case studies is written by a leading authority. Although the methods, perspectives, and styles of the various authors understandably differ, their agreement on shared assumptions makes this a coherent volume. The book is filled with subtleties, complexity, and a keen sense of paradox.

Throughout, disaggregation is emphasized. All authoritarian regimes are not equated with each other. No authoritarian regime is regarded as monolithic, nor are the forces pushing for democratization so regarded. Distinctions are drawn between "democracy" and "polyarchy"; between "democratization" and "liberalization"; between "transition" and "consolidation"; between "hard-liners" and "soft-liners" or accommodationists within the authoritarian coalition; and among "maximalists," "moderates," and "opportunists" in the coalition supporting *abertura* (liberalization).

From the various cases, several points emerge that deserve special mention here. These cases show that, although international factors, direct and indirect, may condition and affect the course of transition, the major participants and the dominant influences in every case have been national. They demonstrate the importance of institutions, of mediating procedures and forums that help make the rules of political discourse legitimate and credible in a period of change. They illustrate the vital significance of political leadership and judgment, of the role of single individuals in complex historical processes. They

point out, again and again, the importance of timing, the complexity of interactive processes carried out over extensive periods, the various ways in which transitions produce surprises, and some of the ironies and paradoxes that result.

Above all, the cases analyze the ways in which transitions from authoritarian rule are conditioned and shaped by historical circumstances, unique in each country but patterned in predictable ways, by the way in which a previous democratic regime broke down, by the nature and duration of the authoritarian period, by the means the authoritarian regime uses to obtain legitimacy and to handle threats to its grip on power, by the initiative and the timing of experimental moves toward *abertura*, by the degree of security and self-confidence of the regime's elites and by the confidence and competence of those pushing for opening the political process, by the presence or absence of financial resources, by the counseling of outsiders, and by the prevailing international *fashions* that provide legitimacy to certain forms of transition.

The Tasks Ahead

I do not wish to detain the reader longer before he or she enters the reading of *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*. It remains only to concede, as all the authors would, that this book is incomplete, and that much remains to be done. The cases of transition are still few in number, and each one merits a much more detailed and sustained analysis. The processes of consolidation, so important if these transitions are to be meaningful, are barely considered in this volume, and require separate treatment. The sensitivity that the authors in their chapters show to the dilemmas and choices faced by opposition groups pressing for *abertura* needs to be matched by equally empathetic and well-informed assessments of the choices made by those within authoritarian regimes who permit *abertura* to occur and push for its extension. Some of the categories of analysis—of hard-liners (*duros*) and soft-liners (*blandos*), for example—need to be further specified and refined.

All this and more needs to be done. No doubt the editors and authors of *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* will be among the leaders in carrying out this research. Some of them will be leaders, as well, in the very processes of building democracies. They, and many others, will go much further than this volume can, but they will build upon a solid foundation.

Preface

Between 1979 and 1981 the Latin American Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in Washington, D.C., sponsored a series of meetings and conferences entitled "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe." As this project grew in scope and complexity, Abraham Lowenthal, program secretary from 1977 to 1983, provided indispensable encouragement that enabled us to turn it into the present four-volume study. We wish to acknowledge our special debt of gratitude to him, and also to thank the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Study, the Inter-American Foundation, the Helen Kellogg Institute of the University of Notre Dame, the European University Institute in Florence, and Nuffield College, Oxford, for their financial and logistical support. Louis Goodman, acting secretary of the Latin American Program in 1983–84, also gave us much-needed assistance. Needless to add, only those named in the table of contents are responsible for the views expressed here.

All of the papers published in these four volumes were originally commissioned for a Woodrow Wilson Center conference or were circulated, discussed, and revised in the course of the "Transitions" project. They have, therefore, some commonality of approach and outlook, but it was never our intention to impose a uniformity of interpretation and terminology. On the contrary, we deliberately set out to widen the range of serious discussion about regime transitions in general, and to promote informed debate comparing specific cases. In Volume 4, O'Donnell and Schmitter present the lessons they have drawn from this experience of collaboration among scholars working on Latin America and Southern Europe. Volume 3 contains a series of discussion papers analyzing common themes from different perspectives. Volume 1 (on Southern Europe) and Volume 2 (on Latin America) contain country studies, some of which were written during or immediately after the launching of a democratic transition, and some even before it had begun. Two cases (Uruguay and Turkey) were added to our sample at a later stage in the project as developments in these countries called for their inclusion, whereas the chapter on Italy refers to a transition completed more than thirty years earlier. Because of these differences in timing, and the delay in publication, readers should be warned that not all chapters carry the analysis right up to date (end of 1984).

Although the three editors are listed alphabetically in volumes 1, 2, and 3, they, of course, established some division of labor among themselves. Primary responsibility for Volume 1 rests with Philippe C. Schmitter; Laurence White-

head took the lead in editing Volume 2; and Guillermo O'Donnell had first responsibility for Volume 3. This has been very much a collective endeavor, however, and all three of us share credit or blame for the overall result.

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Southern Europe

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An Introduction to Southern European Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey

Philippe C. Schmitter

The countries on the northern rim of the Mediterranean have long been the "stepchildren" of the study of Western European politics and society. With the notable exception of Italy (and then only since its democratization after World War II), they have been routinely placed outside the mainstream of inquiry and generalization about political developments in that part of the world. Scholars shied away from studying them. Textbooks simply ignored their existence. Classification systems assigned them the status of "exceptions," or simply placed them in the ignominious category of "other." In the crosstabs, factor analyses, and scatterplots that sought the socioeconomic correlates of political democracy, the Southern European countries kept popping up in the off-cell, adhering to the wrong cluster, or outlying with a whopping negative residual.

The conviction grew that they somehow did not belong in Western Europe. Spain and Portugal were placed on the other side of the Pyrenees, "in Africa." Greece, when it fell to the despotism of the colonels, became Balkan. Turkey, despite all its efforts at Western secularization and modernization, was exiled to the Middle East.

Explicitly, the chapters in this volume deal with the demise of authoritarian rule in Southern Europe and the struggle to establish political democracy in its stead. Implicitly, they argue that these countries—Italy some time ago; Portugal, Spain, and Greece more recently; and Turkey more ambiguously—have entered into, and can be expected to remain within, the range of institutional variation and patterns of political conflict characteristic of Western Europe as a whole.

Perhaps more than anything else, this conclusion marks the strongest contrast with the Latin American cases which have also been a part of this project. The authors of these studies—with the notable exception of the Sunar-Sayari chapter on Turkey—are relatively confident that a regime transition has indeed occurred in Southern Europe and that, despite persistent uncertainties

and unresolved problems, the political democracies that have emerged to replace authoritarian rule stand a reasonable chance of surviving. Their Latin American colleagues exhibit no such optimism. Some of them doubt whether a transition has even begun; others are uncertain about what mode of political domination is going to replace the defunct autocracies; still others are hesitant in assuming that fledgling successor democracies will be able to consolidate themselves in the near future.

There is a measure of irony in this difference in evaluation, for compared to Latin America, the Southern European countries have not only experienced bureaucratic-authoritarian rule more continuously and for a longer period of time but its presence has had a more pervasive effect upon their social and economic structures, political and civic institutions, and, perhaps, individual values and group aspirations. Only Greece in this subset has followed a "Latin American" pattern of oligarchic democracy, personal dictatorship, populist pressures, military-bureaucratic autocracy, and liberal democracy in varying sequence and combination. In Portugal and Spain, and to a lesser extent, Italy, consolidated authoritarian rule lasted so long that a whole generation or more grew up without any direct experience of democratic processes or rights. Substantial social and economic transformations, not to mention major political events, occurred under its aegis. In Latin America, such a regime has been a more recent and episodic phenomenon. Its leaders have not had the time, the will, or the capacity to intervene as extensively and protractedly in the social, economic, and political institutions of the societies they were attempting to govern. Indeed, they were compelled to expend a great deal of their scarce resources just on protecting their tenure in office. Turkey and Mexico stand out as roughly analogous exceptions in that, as the regime successors to successful nationalist revolutions, their rulers were able to preside over a relatively continuous project of institutional and cultural transformation of their respective societies.

Why, then, have the liberalizations/democratizations of Southern Europe got off to what seems to be a better and more reassuring start? A partial explanation is that the international context in that part of the world and at this point in time is more supportive of such an outcome. Italy earlier and Greece, Portugal, and Spain later—the Turkish case is more ambiguous—have become enmeshed in a complex network of regional institutions, commercial exchanges, political pressures, party linkages, treaty obligations, citizen contacts, and normative expectations that reward conformity to democracy and punish transgressions from it. Extraregional powers have also played a significant role. The United States, whose policies toward democratization in Latin America have been ambiguous and variant from one case to another, has consistently supported it in Southern Europe—at least once it became evident that protecting or reinstating former authoritarian allies was no longer a viable option. Not only has the geostrategic location of these countries given them important assets with which to bargain, but the presence of a plausible threat to their national security from the Soviet Union, as well as the negative

example furnished by the practices of "real existing socialism," has provided additional motives for their reaching domestic political compromises and not pushing momentary partisan conflicts or even longstanding social cleavages too far.

But such international factors cannot be made to bear the entire explanatory burden. Indeed, one of the firmest conclusions that emerged from our Working Group was that transitions from authoritarian rule and immediate prospects for political democracy were largely to be explained in terms of national forces and calculations. External actors tended to play an indirect and usually marginal role, with the obvious exception of those instances in which a foreign occupying power was present.

One enormous advantage enjoyed by at least three of the Southern European cases was the relatively modest, not to say minor, role played by the armed forces in the defunct regime. As Gianfranco Pasquino demonstrates, the Italian military may have facilitated the advent to power of Mussolini, but it was hardly a predominant or even an integral element in the ensuing Fascist regime. Indeed, high-ranking officers were part of the conspiracy that forced Mussolini out of power and surrendered the country to the Allies in 1943. In any case, subsequent military defeat and occupation by a foreign army effectively removed the armed forces as a power contender during the transition to democracy. In Spain, by the time Franco died, the military were securely, if not shabbily, confined to barracks. This demobilization has not precluded their playing a threatening role—witness the events of February 1981—but it is perhaps relevant that the leading elements in that conspiracy to arrest democratization came from the Guardia Civil, not the regular armed forces. Portugal, of course, followed a quite different course in which the transition was triggered by a rebellion from within the ranks of the army itself. Here the problem, discussed at some length in Kenneth Maxwell's chapter, was not the usual one of getting a conservative military to stay out of power, but of getting a radicalized military to hand over power. Even in the Greek case, perhaps the closest in Southern Europe to the Latin American "model," the relatively narrow and isolated status of the clique of colonels who ran the outgoing regime greatly reduced the subsequent danger they could pose to civilian rule.

Perhaps of even greater significance than the general pattern of civil-military relations has been the absence of direct responsibility in these countries—again with the notable exception of Greece under the colonels—of the armed forces as such for acts of official and unofficial violence against the civilian population. Indeed, by comparative standards, the levels of repression in the period preceding regime change were low. Even in countries where they had been high in the past, for example, in the savagery that accompanied and followed the Spanish Civil War, the memory of repressive acts had faded and few of the victims were still around to demand restitution and justice. Consequently these countries are free of one of the central issues that is plaguing the current transition in Argentina and that will certainly affect the one yet to occur in Chile. Only in the Greek case was this issue a significant problem and

the Karamanlis government proceeded cautiously and selectively in dealing with it.

But a more favorable geostrategic location and international context, even coupled with a lesser responsibility of the military for policy-making and repression, do not suffice in my view to explain the interregional differences explicitly and implicitly raised in these chapters. Much was said—however inconclusively—about the possibility that the "civil societies" of Southern Europe and Latin America might be differently configured and differentially viable. The root hypothesis is that for an effective and enduring challenge to authoritarian rule to be mounted, and for political democracy to become and remain an alternative mode of political domination, a country must possess a civil society in which certain community and group identities exist independent of the state and in which certain types of self-constituted units are capable of acting autonomously in defense of their own interests and ideals. Moreover, these identities and interests must not only be dispersed throughout the country, they must also be capable of being concentrated when the occasion demands, that is, they must be organized for coherent collective action. In democracies, such participation is accomplished in large part consensually through political parties which compete to win electoral majorities, ally with others in dominant coalitions, or enter into consociational arrangements. Underneath these "superstructural" expressions of territorial and partisan representation lies a particular social configuration—"a historical bloc" to use Antonio Gramsci's expression—that orients the direction of change, provides the dominant ideology, and organizes the distribution of benefits.

Could it be that the countries of Southern Europe, or at least some of them, possess more viable civil societies and hegemonic blocs than those of Latin America? This observation is obviously not something that can be proven. In any case, transition from authoritarian rule is clearly not merely a matter of economic development or societal complexity, as the earlier literature on the "social requisites of democracy" put it. Italy and Spain may be demonstrably more economically developed and diverse than any country in Latin America, but Portugal, Greece, and certainly Turkey are not. What is relevant to an understanding of these differences are the obscure historical conditions that have given rise to independent territorial communities, especially towns and cities, and to distinctive functional identities, especially of social classes, economic sectors, and professions. Ethnic and linguistic groups, religions and sects, voluntary associations and social service organizations, gender and generational groupings have also prominently contributed to the institutionalized social pluralism that supports a strong civil society. What is particularly important about these groups, as opposed to the families, clans, cliques, cabals, and clienteles that predominate in other social formations, is that they have a public status, a *bürgerliche* quality about them. They not only acquire, often through lengthy struggle, a recognized right to exist, but they also can openly deliberate about their common affairs and publicly act in defense of justifiable interests. This public status constitutes their "civicness" and gives

them the capacity to escape subordination to state authority or governmental manipulation and, hence, to contribute to eventual democratization.

Within the study of Western Europe, it is a commonplace to observe that the countries on its southern flank lack these qualities of "civicness." Salvador Giner in his carefully balanced chapter in this volume assesses these alleged peculiarities. In less skillful hands, these societies have been frequently depicted as awash in "amoral familism," "clientelism," and "personalism," supposedly to explain their deviance from normal, that is, Northern and Central European, patterns of citizen behavior and public authority. Not only is this North-South contrast within Europe frequently exaggerated, but it ignores the substantial social, economic, and even normative transformations that have taken place in recent decades behind the facade of authoritarian immobilism. Spain is certainly the clearest case, and the Maravall-Santamaría chapter stresses the extent to which that country has "caught up" with the region, not just in terms of productive capacity, distribution of income, and availability of services, but also in terms of individual values, group identities, and collective aspirations. Admittedly, Portugal and Greece have not moved so far or so fast to close the gap. Turkey, with its strong and persistent "statist tradition," seems a different case altogether.

Nevertheless, we have a potential explanation for some of the contrasts observed in these chapters if we assume that certain historical factors produced—in very different mixes from one country to another—more resilient and viable civil societies in Southern Europe than in Latin America.[1] The potential list of historical factors seems endless: greater population density, more compact settlement patterns, lesser internal mobility, frequent warfare, religious nonconformity, emigration flows, dispersed land ownership, less ethnic stratification, greater diversity in languages and dialects, more widely distributed and specialized occupational skills, higher levels of preindustrial literacy, less central city predominance and greater provincial city autonomy, more deeply rooted traditions of guild organization, and so forth. The authors on Southern Europe more than those writing on Latin America stress the extent to which mobilization and pressure from below were factors leading to a liberalization of authoritarian rule, although most would probably agree with the generalization that calculations and conflicts within the dominant group and among its privileged supporters/beneficiaries provide the major motivation for beginning a regime transformation. Even more striking, however, is their emphasis on the revival of civil society that almost immediately ensues upon liberalization and makes it virtually impossible for the process to stop short of a more thoroughgoing democratization. "Franco-ism without Franco," "Spinolismo" in Portugal, or monarchic oligarchy without the colonels in Greece were simply not viable options.

Another possible "unobtrusive" indicator of the greater strength of civil societies in Southern Europe compared with Latin America can be seen in the parties and factions that have emerged to fill the new spaces for political action. They tend to be associated closely (organically?) with class and status

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