DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA

THE BREAKDOWN OF DEMOCRATIC REGIMES. Edited by JUAN J. LINZ and ALFRED STEPAN. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. Pp. 718.) *PART I. CRISIS, BREAKDOWN, AND REEQUILIBRATION*. By JUAN J. LINZ. (Pp. 124). *PART II. EUROPE*. Edited by JUAN J. LINZ and ALFRED STEPAN. (Pp. 218). *PART III. LATIN AMERICA*. Edited by JUAN J. LINZ and ALFRED STEPAN. (Pp. 208). *PART IV. CHILE*. By ARTURO VALENZUELA. (Pp. 168).

This massive volume, which is really four short books in one, is innovative in three major ways, particularly as it regards Latin America. In the first place, it takes democracy seriously, in contrast to some recent trends in writing about Latin American politics. Second, it departs from the emphasis in the literature on the conditions that foster democracy (most of it by non-Latin Americanists) to examine instead the clearly related, though analytically distinct, question of what causes democratic regimes to break down. A third notable feature is its heavy stress, again contrary to the predominant strains in the contemporary analysis of Latin America, on the role of leadership and political choice in accounting for political outcomes.

As late as the early 1960s, most Latin Americanists in the United States seemed to assume that constitutional democracy, in something like its North American guise, would (or at least should) sooner or later take permanent hold in the majority of Latin American nations. The Cuban Revolution, the guerrilla movements that followed in its wake in many countries, and especially the series of military regimes that succeeded erstwhile democratic governments in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, and Uruguay beginning in the mid-sixties put an end to such expectation. At the same time, scholarly concern with the conditions and failures of democracy in Latin America seemed to fade. A few recent books by Smith (1974) and Levine (1973) and others have begun to revive that concern, while even a work such as Stepan's on the Brazilian military (1971) expressly raised the question of why democracy collapsed in Brazil in 1964. The volume under review continues and expands this revival of interest in the fate of democracy in Latin America. Several of its chapters are, in fact, shorter versions of work published elsewhere.

Fortunately, the authors by no means seek to reinstate democracy as either the inevitable or dominant trend of Latin America's future. But by implication, at least, their work serves to caution us against the premature adoption of yet another paradigm, that of corporatist- or bureaucratic-authoritarianism, thereby ignoring the factors that argue against the permanent reign of unmitigated authoritarianism or any other form of government in the region. As Douglas Chalmers has put it, "The enduring quality of Latin American politics in this century may not be a particular form of regime, but rather the fact of change and the quality of politics in any regime which has only a short history and the prospect of a brief future" (Chalmers 1977, p. 23).

Though it can trace its lineage back to Aristotle, scholarly concern for the "conditions of democracy" took real hold with the rise of fascism and communism, and with the postwar emergence of Third World countries, many of whose leaders aspired to democracy but in the absence of those conditions heretofore presumed necessary to sustain it. From the first, the "conditions of democracy" literature tended to focus on European cases and examples. Yet also from the first, Latin America was often included in the analysis, especially when it was a matter of cross-national comparisons and a broader data base was needed (e.g., Cnudde and Neubauer 1969, chaps. 7, 8, 10). Among Latin Americanists, concern with the "pathology" of democracy in the region (although some would consider democracy itself as the pathology) has a long history of its own, with explanations ranging from the racial and cultural to various social, economic, and historical circumstances (Christensen 1951, chaps. 7, 12, 17, 18). And Russell Fitzgibbon, in a series of quinquennial articles begun in 1951 and later continued by Kenneth Johnson, sought to rank-order the Latin American nations according to their degree of democracy, as subjectively assessed by a panel of "experts" (Fitzgibbon 1951, 1956, 1967; Fitzgibbon and Johnson 1961; Johnson 1976).

So far, however, and despite the early prominence of the case of the Weimar Republic, there has been little explicit systematic or comparative consideration of the *breakdown* of democracy on the part either of Latin Americanists or the scholarly community in general. This gap the authors of the current volume on the breakdown of democratic regimes seek to fill. Each segment of the volume has its own pagination, and each is offered separately in paperback by the publisher in order to make the individual sections affordable to those whose interest in the subject is narrower than the $35 whole. Included are a 100-page plus introductory essay by Juan Linz, a Yale political sociologist, that outlines a kind of loose model of the breakdown process; a group (book) of European case studies, analyzing the collapse or near-collapse of democracy between the wars in the wake of the rise of fascism and Nazism; another group (book) of Latin American case studies; and a separate, longer study of Chile under Allende by Arturo Valenzuela.

The countries included in the Latin American section of the volume—Argentina, 1916–30 (Peter Smith); Colombia (Alexander Wilde); Venezuela (Daniel Levine); Brazil (Alfred Stepan); Argentina, 1955–66 (Guillermo O'Donnell); and Peru (Julio Cotler)—make it clear that the term democracy is employed loosely, and that it often refers primarily to the existence of more or less open political competition rather than to the extent or quality of popular participation. Too, one country study in particular—that of Venezuela—is more concerned with what Linz terms the "reequilibration" of an open regime following a previous breakdown (and in explicit contrast with earlier failure) than it is with breakdown per se. Nonetheless, each case study throughout the entire volume provides a narrative history of the process of breakdown (or reequilibration) combined with at least some effort at using Linz's analytical categories in the interest of possible comparison.

Analyses of the conditions of democracy have severally stressed such

factors as levels of education and of economic development (Cnudde and Neubauer 1969, chaps. 7, 18, 10), political culture (Almond and Verba 1963), and aspects of historical development (Rustow 1970, Moore 1967) among others. Most of the earlier scholarship was relatively deterministic and afforded little leeway for the role of leadership or, in short, for politics itself. Subsequently, however, there has developed a new emphasis on the role of elites and leaders in the making of democratic choices, and especially to help explain the presence of democracy in certain countries where other conditions would predict its absence (or, conversely, as in Argentina, where they might argue for its likely presence (Lijphart 1968, 1977; Nordlinger 1972; Dahl 1971, chap. 8). Linz, Stepan, and their colleagues share this new emphasis which, despite the past attention paid to *personalismo* in the study of Latin American politics, is not the kind of variable that is accorded much importance in current analyses of dependency or of bureaucratic-authoritarianism.

Indeed, if there is a principal theme that courses through Linz's theoretical section, as well as most of the case studies in *Breakdown*—both European and Latin American—it is the central role of political leadership in accounting for the breakdown of democracy or its avoidance. Social and economic factors are by no means neglected, but it is ultimately the actions of the incumbents, and of the loyal, and especially the "semi-loyal," opposition that ultimately decide whether those opposed in any case to democracy will succeed in destroying it. Structural explanations are thereby downplayed. The principal exception is Cotler's chapter on Peru, where class and dependency analysis has a more prominent place.

That democratic breakdown is nonetheless not merely a matter of ineffective leadership response to crisis, and goes more deeply to the response of various parties and groups to political and social change, is evident especially from several of the Latin American cases. Thus Smith argues that democracy failed in Argentina during the 1920s because, in the wake of the Sáenz-Peña law of 1912, political mobilization under the Radicals came to virtually preclude Conservative victory and thus to threaten the interests defended by that party. Colombia's oligarchical democracy broke down in the 1940s, according to Wilde, when both the actions of Liberal governments (including padding of the electoral rolls), as well as inexorable demographic trends that enhanced the overwhelmingly Liberal urban vote, made it appear to Conservatives as though they would become a permanent minority. Again, as Levine sees it, new rules of the political game, which put a premium on mass organization in post-1945 Venezuela, threatened key groups ill-equipped to defend themselves under those new rules. The success of democracy in Venezuela in the years after 1958 is by the same token due to the recognition on the part of Acción Democrática, in particular, of precisely this problem, and the attendant guarantees given to such groups as the military, the Church, the business community, and the political opposition. Similarly, O'Donnell points to Argentina after 1955, when democracy was only tolerated by the military as long as the "wrong" party (i.e., the Peronists) didn't win elections. Chile, too, was a case which saw many sectors waver in their support for democratic procedures when the implicit rules of the game that

had earlier guaranteed their vital interests were changed by Allende's policies, while still others placed revolution before commitment to democratic processes.

Interestingly enough, Valenzuela, in his fine separate section on Chile, places his emphasis on the failure of the Christian Democrats to play a more effective "center" role in the Chilean system by being ideological and exclusivist, rather than pragmatic, and on Allende's over-submissiveness to the left-wing of his own Socialist party which was helping, in effect, to undermine his government. To this reviewer's mind, the fundamental conflict between democracy and the policy goals of many of the actors in the Chilean game are not sufficiently stressed. Still, Valenzuela's study is as thorough and balanced an analysis of the breakdown of the Allende regime as we are likely to get within a relatively brief compass (100 or so pages).

In the end, it would seem that we are dealing in the Latin American case—and in some of the interwar European instances as well, notably that of Spain—with democratic regimes that are "tentative," in the sense that many of their founders and supporters owe them allegiance only as long as certain "rules" that protect their interests are preserved (cf. Anderson 1967, chap. 4). This means that democracy's legitimacy tends to be low, and its roots in the popular consciousness weak. This does not mean that some form of democracy is necessarily impossible or irrelevant in Latin America, merely that it may be even more dependent than in the more stable democracies on the exercise of leadership and on the political imagination (Lijphart 1977).

Even such arguments, let alone those focussed more narrowly on leadership behavior, will not of course convince those who would look to even more deep-seated structural factors to account for the breakdown of democracy, or for its very absence to begin with. Thus Cotler, among the authors under review, clearly argues counter to the main thesis of the entire volume in stressing the fundamental impossibility of democracy under conditions of dependence and the concomitant failure to develop a genuine national bourgeoisie. At the least, it would seem that any general analytical model of the breakdown of democratic regimes would have to take such factors into account. I do not wish to overstate the case. In this reviewer's judgment, this volume is part of a recent healthy trend in political science to reinstate leadership choice as an important variable in affecting political outcomes. What is at issue is the effort to build a model, or at least a scheme of analysis, which fails—though this is a matter more of emphasis than of ignoring such factors altogether—to fully integrate the leadership variables with more structural considerations. As a matter of fact, the individual Latin American case studies prove more satisfactory in this respect than does Linz's theoretical essay. Stepan's chapter on Brazil, in particular, is quite explicit in relating the macro-level factors of social and economic change (though still, for the most part, not structural in the full sense) to the ultimately decisive (for Stepan) role of Goulart's leadership in the explanation of the breakdown of Brazil's quasi-democracy in 1964.

Moreover, while Linz's essay highlights elements that are subsequently picked up by the authors of the case studies, the European chapters appear to

follow the theoretical essay more closely; in turn, the introductory essay appears to be based on a deeper understanding of the European than of the Latin American materials. What this reviewer missed was a systematic attempt (perhaps in a concluding essay based explicitly on all the cases in the book) to state which of Linz's proferred aspects of breakdown manifested themselves, how often, and under what circumstances. We could then raise more directly the question of whether, or to what degree, breakdowns of democratic regimes under conditions of the interwar fascist threat differed from the kinds of problems faced by contemporary Latin American efforts at democratic governance. One obvious difference: The relatively higher salience in most Latin American cases of breakdown of such actors as the military and various *gremios*, as opposed to the role of explicitly antidemocratic (i.e., fascist) mass movements in most of the European cases.

What we have, then, is a series of case studies, pursuing common themes and concerns and informed by an introductory theoretical essay, but hardly a volume of systematic comparison, let alone a theory of democratic breakdwon. The Latin American portions of the work nonetheless perform a signal service. Apart from being of high individual quality, they help to warn us against undue reliance on deterministic explanations of political phenomena and, implicitly, against an over-hasty acceptance of yet another paradigm for Latin American politics.

ROBERT H. DIX
Rice University

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