

External Support for Democratization in Latin America: European Political Parties and the Southern Cone

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Many aspects of the post-Cold War international system remain yet to be fully delineated — the nature of the relationship between big powers, the role of transnational bodies, the place of supra-national organizations in the system, North-South relations, to name but a few. However, one key topic on the international agenda is that of global democratization. This is not to suggest that all political systems are moving towards a kind of homogeneity, since the operation of democracy varies from country to country and region to region, reflecting political cultures and power structures as much, if not more, than the norms formally written down in the constitution.

In fact, the trend towards democratization can be traced back to the 1970s, with the transformation of Southern Europe. Since that time, and partly in response to changes in Southern Europe, partly in response to the military coups in the Southern Cone of Latin America, especially Chile, some political groups inside Western Europe have incorporated a concern for democracy and the promotion of human rights into their foreign policy agenda. Consciously structuring foreign policies in order to promote democratization, however, did not emerge fully fledged until the 1980s. By this time, an interest in the subject was evinced on both sides of the Atlantic, from Washington and from Western Europe, both the European Community and the governments of the member-states. Through the 1980s, until the changes in Eastern Europe attendant on the collapse of the Soviet Union, both the US and Western Europe concentrated their efforts in Latin America, in particular in Central America and in the Southern Cone.

However, US reasons for wanting to secure democracy in the area varied considerably from European reasons for doing so. The US is primarily interested in securing order and stability, and the possibility of establishing patterns of economic growth in the area which are complementary to the US economy, and sees democratization today as the best means to achieve this. Europe, by contrast, is more interested in expanding its influence within the region and within the international system, and is tied to Latin America through

cultural and political party contacts which prioritize the articulation of demands for democracy, human rights and development.

The importance of external factors in democratization in the Southern Cone rests on the idea that the political systems of the region are 'penetrated' systems, vulnerable to the influence of international actors. They are especially open to influence from outside in key moments -regime change, economic crisis, etc. This is what has enabled external actors to play a significant role in the domestic politics of the region. We should note that Latin America was particularly vulnerable to external influence in the 1980s, as the military regimes collapsed alongside an economic crisis on an unprecedented scale. Latin America became an object of international policies at this time in a way previously unimagined.

Pressure on authoritarian governments in Latin America and assistance and encouragement in democratization was brought to bear by a variety of actors involved in the foreign policy process in Europe through the 1970s and 1980s. In this article, we shall concentrate on the contribution of European political parties which, as we shall see, have played a unique and pivotal linkage role between Europe and Latin America. Our examples are drawn from the transitions in Chile and Argentina, the two most important cases through which European solidarity was expressed. Chile became a symbol of the militarization of the region's politics after the brutal coup of 1973, and the fragile transition to democracy in Argentina after the South Atlantic War and the inauguration of Raul Alfonsín's Radical government in 1983 was taken as a sign of hope of a return to civilian politics throughout the continent. Pierre Mauroy, Prime Minister of France, commented shortly after Alfonsín's victory, that it was "el aliento mismo de la historia", and compared it with the liberation of Paris from the Nazis (*Clarín*, 10/12/1983, in Wilhelmy, 1985). We shall look particularly at the responses of the Spanish, Italian, German and British political parties to the struggle to establish democracy in the Southern Cone.

European Political Parties and Latin America

Contemporary European-Latin American relations can be dated from the beginning of the 1970s. It is from this time on that we can trace an intensification of contacts, between governments, the European Community and non-governmental organizations, including political parties and Latin America. Ties between European political parties and Latin America, however, predate the decade of the 1970s. Political parties constituted an essential building block in the construction and institutionalization of the relationship, and were in the vanguard of Europe's interest in events in Latin America.

The reasons for European political parties' interest in the area are several. First of all, the promotion of a strategy of internationalization outside Europe allowed the parties some room for influence and manoeuvre, even during the

years of US hegemony over European affairs during the 1950s and 1960s. It offered the possibility of an independent voice in an essentially bipolar system. Secondly, Latin America constituted a 'natural' area for European expansion, especially the Southern Cone, the area where European immigration had been greatest and where European political and cultural norms were thought to be most deeply embedded. Cultural proximity, then, explains why the European parties chose Latin America as an important area for developing an extensive network of external contacts. These contacts deepened in the 1970s, partly as a consequence of the militarization of Latin America, with the result that many Latin Americans, including leading politicians, sought exile in Europe. All this occurred in the context of an international system in the 1970s dominated by detente and the relative decline of US hegemony, leading to a series of debates in which European parties played an important role around the potential international role of the European Community.

The two most important kinds of parties with contacts in Latin America were the Christian Democratic Parties, especially the German and, to a lesser extent, the Italians, and the Social Democratic Parties, the most important of which were the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), followed especially in the 1980s by the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE). The British Labour Party also broke with its tendency to relative ignorance on Latin America in this period. From outside the EC, the Swedish Social Democratic Party was also to prove extremely interested in Latin American events in the 1970s and 1980s, and particularly developments in Chile. The framework for party contacts was generally through the party Internationals. The *Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América* (ODCA) was formed as early as 1947, with the Venezuelan Christian Democratic Party (COPEI) later especially influential alongside the German party (Grabendorff 1991). The Social Democrats were slightly later in organizing in the region, but a Secretariat was established in 1955 in Montevideo, a Liaison Bureau was created in 1967, and a Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean of the IS finally emerged in 1976, in Madrid. The work of the Internationals was important in promoting contacts between the two regions and in putting issues concerning Latin America on the agenda of European-Latin American relations. The concern with democratization in Europe, then, was in part a direct consequence of party activity and of party lobbying.

Apart from the two 'big' Internationals, we should add the Liberal International, grouping the Liberal parties and the most recent European Democratic Union, the international organization of conservative parties. Neither of these organizations have the resources or the tradition of interest in Latin America to make them more than echoes of the bigger Internationals in pushing for a European commitment of the region. The only exception is the central importance of the Spanish party UCD, later the CDS, the party of Adolfo Suárez. Because Suárez came to represent abroad the Spanish transition

to democracy, his personal standing in Latin America was considerable. He was a funding member of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, a pluriparty organization which observed, monitored and encouraged democratization processes in Korea, the Philippines and Chile. And, finally, we should also add to the list of European parties with Latin American interests the Italian Communist Party, that later became the party of the Democratic Left (PDS), which has counted on a series of important bilateral contacts with Communist and Socialist parties in the region, relatively significant financial resources and a consistent commitment to the cause of democracy, in Chile in particular. In 1992, the PDS entered the Socialist International, bringing with it an interest and commitment to Latin American affairs abroad to rival the prestige of some of the European Socialist parties there.

Political Parties: Important Actors in European-Latin American Relations?

Foreign policy is, of course, the competence of national governments. Even in the European Community, where we can see external initiatives increasingly taking place in trade policies, development cooperation, and moves to coordinate foreign policies through European Political Cooperation, this remains true. Can parties, therefore, affect external policies, and in particular policies towards Latin America, in any meaningful way?

Undoubtedly, the parties' possibilities for directly influencing foreign policy in Western Europe is limited, especially where major issues of security are at stake, or even where economic concerns are uppermost. This is so even when the government of the day is composed of members of a particular party; there is no guarantee that the party's executive or foreign affairs department will be consulted on international issues. But outside the big questions, affecting security in particular, the opinions of the parties are important. Political parties have a key function in democracy of articulating and channelling public opinion. Their importance, though difficult to measure, is potentially substantial. Olaf Palme, the Swedish Social Democratic leader and Prime Minister in the 1970s and 1980s, argued that "no se debe nunca subvalorar el poder que tiene la creación de la opinión pública a nivel internacional" (Goñi, 1987: 47).

Secondly, the parties can count on a number of resources to increase their influence abroad. Some parties have considerable financial resources at their disposal. The German parties, for example, who have created foundations, or *stiftungen*, which operate in Latin America. Others have employed their international skills, connections, negotiating aptitudes or prestige; what has been described as their 'profesionalidad democrática' (Di Santo, personal interview, 1993). And thirdly, the parties can use their transnational linkages and contacts to influence, advise and guide how their Latin American counterparts think and act during a transition. The influence of political parties

in the transitions in Latin America is not constant. That is, though the parties may express consistent interest and concern about developments in the region, their capacity to help shape political outcomes is not permanent. Following Whitehead, we can identify three stages of external activity in a transition to democracy: pressure on undemocratic governments; support for a fledgling democracy; and policies to assist democratic consolidation (Whitehead, 1991). It is our contention that the parties may play an important role in the first stage, in drawing attention to human rights abuses and assisting at times, in individual cases, in supporting Latin American party activity in exile, and at times in assisting the domestic opposition. It is in the second stage, however, of '*abertura*' to the establishment of democratic norms, where the parties can influence outcomes. In the third stage, their importance declines as the 'informal diplomacy' of parties is superseded by bilateral relations and government-to-government contacts.

Latin American-European Relations in the 1980s: the Importance of Democracy

The European-Latin American subsystem could be characterized from the first as asymmetrical: that is, contacts and cooperation were fruitful on political rather than economic issues. It has been consistently criticized for its weak economic base.² Instead, one theme in particular came to be of essential importance: democratization and the related issue of human rights. Indeed, democratization could be said to have dominated the agenda in the 1980s. In 1991, for example, of the 19 declarations issued that year within the framework of European Political Cooperation, 18 referred to democratization, elections and human rights (Grugel, 1994).

One reason why democracy became such an important issue on the agenda was because deeper economic contacts have proved impossible, principally on account of EC protectionism, which has impeded Latin America expanding its export quota in Europe. Europe's policy of protecting its temperate agricultural production through the Common Agricultural Policy has been particularly negative for Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, important partners for Europe in the past. At the same time, access for finished products into the European market, through the General System of Preferences, is slow and bureaucratic. Fears of Latin America's exclusion from Europe have only increased with the passing of the Single European Act, coming into force in 1993 (Izam, 1991). It is in this context that political concerns, especially that of democracy, have to be understood. Support for democratization became the cornerstone of the European-Latin American relationship, and assistance in democratization the main way Europe has demonstrated its interest in Latin America. The President of the European Parliament in the late 1980s, Enrique Barón, commented very

frankly that “resulta más fácil aprobar una resolución parlamentaria de condena sobre una cuestión de violación de los derechos humanos en América Latina, que aprobar la importación de una partida de carne de Uruguay” (Heine, 1990: 49).

Through the 1970s and 1980s, the European political parties were particularly influential in determining the agenda in the biregional relationship, though this is now in a period of change. For the parties, the promotion of democracy in the Southern Cone was more than simply a substitute for economic activity. Political parties tend to express a commitment to democracy for its own sake, and a wish to see the system adopted elsewhere. Additionally, European political parties have tended to stress the existence of a democratic culture in Latin America. For them, it was not a case of creating democratic institutions in Latin America, but rather of supporting their restitution. At the same time, they stressed their own experiences in managing transitions from authoritarian governments to democracy. And, finally, they have drawn attention in the medium to long term to the importance of creating a stable socio-economic environment in which to complete the transition. As a result, in parties' discourse on democratization, a persistent link has been established between development and democracy. Belief that there is a relationship between economic progress, reform and democracy is a characteristic running through the speeches of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and later Liberals and Conservatives, with reference to Latin America.

A word of caution is necessary here before proceeding to a fuller discussion of the role of European parties in Southern Cone democratization: we should note that it is not possible to quantify the impact of Europe's external policies. It is clear that we are, in any case, talking about an indirect and cumulative policy impact and that the dynamic of the transition comes from domestic factors. European political parties' activities start from the common presumption that their role is one of external and logistic support for an essentially internal process. Geoffrey Pridham has wisely warned against attempting the task of determining how important external factors are: “the absence of adequate analytical tools and also problems of evidence deriving from the confidential nature of some political activity ‘crossing the boundary’ between countries limits our capacity to document empirically the impact of policies” (Pridham, 1991: 2). The importance of external policies lies in the fact that they create an international climate favouring democratic change and offer assistance to domestic actors at key moments in the transition.

European Political Parties and Democratization in Chile

The brutality of the 1973 coup placed Chile, a country with a history of democracy, at the centre of world attention. Despite the length of time the Pinochet regime survived, from 1973-1989, it was unable to draw up a

satisfactory and stable network of diplomatic relations. Chilean relations with Western Europe were particularly critical as the EC was to become a major trading partner in the 1980s. Western Europe's closest relations were, nonetheless, with the democratic opposition.

Reverberations from the coup in Europe were perhaps greatest in those countries which were thought to be similar in political structures and culture to Chile; in Italy in particular, where Chilean political leaders in exile found support, and later in Spain, after the death of Franco. However, the Chilean coup also provoked important reactions from political parties in Britain, Germany and Sweden. Party solidarity with the exiled democratic parties took a variety of forms (Angell, 1989).

In Britain, although the solidarity campaigns were in the hands of non-governmental organizations such as *Chile Solidarity* or the *Chile Committee for Human Rights*, and the trade union movement, the Labour Party chose to use the parliamentary arena to express support for Chilean democracy. Using information supplied by the solidarity groups and Amnesty International, Labour MPs expressed concern for individual Chileans who had been arrested and demanded that the British Embassy in Chile put pressure on the Pinochet government to improve its record on human rights (Carstairs & Wade, 1991). During the Labour Administration, 1974-1979, arms sales to Chile were banned and the Ambassador was recalled from Santiago after a British doctor was tortured. During the Conservative Party administrations through the 1980s, the Labour Party criticized the improvement in bilateral relations between Britain and Chile, raising questions about arms sales — Britain supplied around 11% of arms sold to Chile in the 1980s-, and requested that the government incorporate into its policy on Chile, which became a strategic British ally in the region during the South Atlantic War in 1982, a policy on human rights and democratization.

The Conservative Party only joined the Labour Party in its concern to promote democratization in Chile after 1989. At this time, the transition to democracy had begun following the plebiscite in 1988, and the global trend was firmly established towards democratization after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. As a result, for the first time, Chile was taken up, albeit in a relatively marginal way, in a bipartisan consensus. An All-Party Parliamentary Committee was created to monitor progress in the country, and both the major parties expressed support for the government's policy of favouring collective action on Chile through the EC.

In the annual debate on Latin America in 1992, there was all-party consensus on the theme of democratization, with the Conservative spokesperson, Ray Whitney, linking it to the spread of liberal economics and George Foulkes, for the Labour Party, stressing the need for structural reforms and national reconciliation. Chile was praised as an exemplary case of democratic reconstruction: "...its government takes the most positive attitude of all Latin American countries to human rights. They are facing up to the unhappy legacies,

instead of sweeping them under the carpet” (Hansard, 1992: 585-603). And all parties are currently collaborating in the Westminster Foundation, set up in 1992 to promote democracy abroad, which has some projects in the Southern Cone. The Labour Party has been provided with funds to visit Chile in 1993 as part of a program of support for the democratic parties there; and the British Foreign Office has begun a cooperation programme with the Chilean *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, with the aim of modernizing Chilean diplomacy.

Compared to policies adopted by the parties in Italy and more so in Germany, however, the British contribution to democratization in Chile is small. According to Christian Democrat politician and Ambassador to Argentina through the 1980s, Ludovico Incisa, the Italians “han vivido la historia latinoamericana con una participación excepcional, como si fuera...su propia historia” (Incisa, 1987: 37). The Italian parties, especially the Communist Party (later PDS) and the Christian Democrats, which have important links with their counterpart parties inside the country, expressed support for democratization in Chile on two levels. Firstly, they were prominent in organizing multiparty solidarity for the Chilean exile community. For example, the most important pluriparty journal of the democratic forces in exile, *Chile Democrático*, was edited in Rome at the expense of local political parties. And secondly, the Italian parties have used the funds allocated to them by parliament for development cooperation to support the democratic forces inside Chile, although Argentina was a more important country for Italian development cooperation. Argentina ranked as the fifth most important recipient of Italian assistance between 1980-1989, as a result of Christian Democratic-assisted NGOs which operated there (*L'Espresso* 29/11/1992).

The Italian Communist Party's most important external activities centred on Chile. Given the size of the Chilean Communist Party, this was inevitable. The PCI was in permanent contact with the party in exile, though ideological debates were heated in view of the Chileans' traditional pro-Moscow positions. Nonetheless, the PCI campaigned consistently on the Chilean question, promoting multiparty alliances in Europe on the issue. One of the party's most important contributions was during the plebiscite in 1988, in Chile. The PCI assisted with the preparatory work, the campaigning and, in particular, with the polling office in Santiago in the months running up to the vote. The Communist trade union federation, the CGIL, also concentrated its efforts in Chile, funding publications, grants for study abroad for Chilean trade unionists, and humanitarian aid. With the transition, the CGIL has backed the creation of a Centre for Trade Union Studies in Santiago, due to open in 1994-95. Like the PCI/PDS, the CGIL sees democratization as a process of negotiation and pact-making with other groups in society, and has tried to encourage the dissemination of that view within its contacts in Chile.

Despite its cultural separation from the Hispanic world, the importance of the German parties was central in providing external support for Latin American

democratization, and in creating a framework for European activity in the area, as indeed had been the case earlier in Southern Europe (Pridham, 1991). The German parties have financed the most influential foundations (*stiftungen*) which operate in the region and are therefore one of the most important sources of external funding. For this reason, and for the weight the German parties carry inside their respective party internationals, they have become key reference points for almost all Latin American political parties, research organizations and trade unions.

While German party activity in Central America, especially for the German Christian Democrats, was circumscribed by worrying about the danger of offending the US and damaging German-US bilateral relations, the parties' room for manoeuvre was greater in the Southern Cone, where the transitions to democracy were occurring in a context removed from East-West tensions. For the German Social Democrats, the architects of a more dynamic German foreign policy in the 1970s which opened Germany up to the underdeveloped world and to Eastern Europe, the fear of upsetting Washington was always rather less, and their allies in Latin America were often organizations with poor relations with the US administration.

The most important source of support for democratization in Chile from Germany was channelled through the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of the SPD, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, controlled by the Christian Democratic Party. Their funds are public monies approved by the Bundestag, and development projects run by the Foundations are overseen by the Ministry of Overseas Development. Over 40% of the Foundations' overseas budgets was allocated to Latin America through the 1980s (Goldman, 1988: 111). According to Pinto-Duschinsky, in 1988 the budget of all the German party Foundations together reached \$170 million, far more resources than any other European non-governmental organization had at its disposal (Pinto-Duschinsky, 1991: 35).

In the 1980s, both the Konrad Adenauer and the Friedrich Ebert concentrated their Southern Cone operations in Chile. Pinto-Duschinsky suggests that a total of 38,878,000 marks were spent supporting the transition in Chile between 1984-1988. Of this, 24,599,999 came from the Konrad Adenauer and 9,502,000 from the Friedrich Ebert (Pinto-Duschinsky, 1991: 40). While the Friedrich Ebert Foundation concentrated on working with the Socialist and Radical Parties, fellow members of the Socialist International, the trade unions, especially the CUT, and some self-help groups, the Konrad Adenauer, with more resources at its disposal, spent money on projects to support the Christian Democratic Party directly or indirectly. The money was directed towards research, aid to rural development projects, cooperatives, neighbourhood associations, etc., as well as assistance for trade union activity, this time directed at the CNT. Both the Christian Democrats and the SPD were active, through their Foundations, in providing logistic and practical support for the plebiscite

by supplying funds for electoral registration and training election observers. In general, the presence of the German Foundations, not just on the day of the plebiscite but in the months running up to it, constituted an important source of support for the 'No' campaign.

For Spanish political parties, and perhaps especially the PSOE, Latin America constitutes an unconsciously 'reserved domain' for Spanish diplomacy. On issues such as democratization, this is notably so. Spanish political parties argue that they have a greater understanding of events in Latin America compared to parties elsewhere in Europe. Clearly, the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Spain, followed by Spain's spectacularly successful reinsertion into the international system, underlies this assumption (Grugel & Alegre, 1991). However, Spanish support for Latin America does not find easy institutional channels for expression. The parties can count on little external financing for their operations abroad. Instead, Spanish parties have relied on élite diplomacy; that is, visits to Latin America by high-ranking party members or the reception of Latin American leaders in Spain – or, in the case of the PSOE, claiming for the party the successes of Spanish governmental activity. Financial limitations on party activity has meant, for the PSOE and UCD/CDS in particular, the development of policies in which the leaders of the party have come to stand for the party itself. It is party diplomacy based upon personal contacts. The PSOE and UCD/CDS have come into repeated contact with the most important politicians of the Southern Cone, those who have negotiated the pacts and deals of the transitions. In this way, they have exercised an important indirect influence over domestic actors in the transitions.

The PSOE's position on the transition in Chile varied over time. From simply condemning the dictatorship in the 1970s, with the changes in the dictatorship after 1983 –the virtual end of exile, for example–, the PSOE encouraged the Chilean left to enter into negotiations with other democratic forces inside the country. The PSOE's policy was to encourage the moderation of the leftward-leaning political élites. In this sense, the PSOE applauded the formation of the opposition *Concertación* (González, 1991). The PSOE's policy of encouraging inter-party deals was supported by other political parties. For example, Adolfo Suárez, of the CDS, argued that only "la unión fuerte y sincera" and "una acción coordinada" of the opposition parties could contribute to the transition (*El País* 12/12/1986).

The Spanish Communist Party, and in particular the Communist-dominated trade union federation *Comisiones Obreras*, understood democracy in Chile to be best served from outside by supporting trade unionists inside Chile. To this end, *Comisiones Obreras* remained in touch with the trade union movement in Chile, especially the CUT, though its resources for external activities are not extensive. Spanish Communist representatives in the European Parliament, especially Javier Pérez Royo, have regularly spoken in debates on South America, in order to draw attention to the situation in Chile. In a debate in

January 1989, Pérez Royo urged the Parliament to build on its work in Chile during the plebiscite and to continue to watch for human rights abuses. In the same debate, Manuel Medina, for the Socialist Group, urged the EC to make use of mechanisms afforded by European Political Cooperation to oppose violations of human rights in Chile (16/1/1989 - No 2-373/10).

European Parties and the Transition in Argentina

European political parties reacted very differently to the dictatorship and the struggle for democracy in Argentina. First of all, finding interlocutors inside Argentina during the dictatorship was difficult because of the unique party system. The Peronist trade union movement, characterized by powerful nationalist rather than internationalist sentiment, was also regarded cautiously from Europe. And the Argentinian Communist Party, a potential partner for European parties on the left, was deemed to be an ally of the military regime. As a result, European party solidarity with Argentine democracy was weak during the military dictatorship. By contrast, however, the transitional government of Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) was to find its most important allies in Western Europe. We should note, though, that the European parties assisted and supported Alfonsín's government and collaborators rather than the Radical Party as such. This is understandable in view of party structures in Argentina, but unfortunate from the point of the European parties, because it allowed for little continuity of influence once Alfonsín was out of office.

Although the British government, supported overwhelmingly by all political parties, played the most decisive role in stimulating the transition in Argentina by inflicting military defeat on the Argentine Armed Forces, British political parties were unable to play any part in democratic reconstruction thereafter, because of the tense and difficult bilateral relations which followed on the war. Alfonsín found important sources of support, instead, from the Spanish and French Socialist Parties, from the Christian Democratic Parties, and sectors of the Argentinian Radical Party also found the Italian Communist Party prepared to offer programmes of cooperation.

According to Wilhelmy, in the first years of the Alfonsín government, "las mayores coincidencias en Europa se [lograron] con España" (Wilhelmy, 1985: 327). Throughout the 1980s, the transition in Argentina excited most interest within the parties, and indeed among the Spanish public in general. The interest of the Socialist government on the one hand, and of the PSOE and CDS on the other, meant that throughout the mid-1980s, after Nicaragua, Argentina was the country to which the Spanish press devoted most attention (*La Prensa* 14/12/1987). It is not hard to find reasons: the size of the Argentine community in Spain, in conjunction with the general interest and solidarity which the Falklands/Malvinas conflict excited in Spain - as a result of the long-running

Spanish-British conflict over Gibraltar- and a horror at the brutality of the dictatorship which was made public in the period 1983-1984. For the PSOE, Raul Alfonsín's Radical administration appeared an interlocutor perfectly attuned to European cultural and political traditions, and desirous of emulating them in Argentina after years of Peronist-Armed Forces domination of politics.

The PSOE, like other parties of the IS, expressed solidarity with Argentina's fledgling democracy through support for the new democratic institutions and through regular political dialogue with the new democratic leaders, which enhanced their legitimation abroad and, to a lesser extent, inside their respective countries. Throughout the mid-to-late 1980s, there were regular seminars held in Spain and Argentina, the subject of which was democratization. The *Fundación Pablo Iglesias*, run by the PSOE, played an important role in coordinating these seminars. One such seminar, organized by the *Fundación Pablo Iglesias* in conjunction with the Argentinian *Fundación para el Cambio en Democracia*, held in Buenos Aires, called upon Europe to collaborate in the democratization of the region, and added:

“Considerando que la democracia abre nuevas posibilidades de concertación nacional e internacional, [se propone] promover la realización de programas... que hagan de la reducción de la pobreza y la satisfacción de las necesidades básicas de la población una prioridad de sus opciones de desarrollo; la responsabilización colectiva de la población acrecienta la ciudadanía social y ésta fortalece los sistemas democráticos” (Recomendaciones del Seminario *Europa-América Latina: Las Relaciones Políticas y de Cooperación al Desarrollo*, Buenos Aires, November 1986).

The PSOE linked strengthening democracy in Argentina to solving development problems in the region which were particularly acute in the 1980s. The PSOE, like the IS, saw the 'sustained economic crisis' in the Southern Cone lasting at least until 1991-1992, as “uno de las mayores obstáculos para el fortalecimiento de la democracia” (IS, 1992). Following the tradition of the IS parties from the 1970s, the PSOE called for a reshaping of North-South relations, especially in relation to the external debt and to trade. The party appealed to the Spanish government to urge the European Community towards a less protectionist attitude to Latin American trade with the European Community and a more cooperative approach to the GATT negotiations in the Uruguay Round. In this, the PSOE echoes the main criticism of Western Europe's policy on Latin America heard in Argentina: the failure to respond to demands for a fairer international trading system, especially in agricultural products. Partly in response to the fact that the PSOE identified the economic crisis as a threat to democratization, the party encouraged the formation and funding of a variety of NGOs through the 1980s, which operated in the Southern

Cone, though Central America was to prove the more important area for funding (IRELA 1987).

The Italian Christian Democrats have cooperated substantially with the two democratic governments in Argentina. Unlike the Spanish Socialists, the Italian Christian Democrats have not been deterred by the Peronists, for whom they feel a certain affinity, ideologically speaking, in view of the Christian overtones of Peronist discourse. The Italians have played an important role in bringing the Peronists into closer contact with Christian Democratic parties in the rest of Latin America, and in Europe. The most significant contribution which the party made to democratic stability was the *tratado de amistad* signed between the two countries in 1987, when the Christian Democratic party held the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, under Andreotti, and the Embassy in Buenos Aires, with Ludovico Incisa. This was the first of the treaties between European countries or the EC to include a *cláusula democrática*, that is, to be binding only between democratic governments. In the treaty, the Christian Democrats pushed for particular attention to be paid to small and medium-sized businesses, in accordance with the party philosophy and the Italian model of industrial development.

The PCI has fewer interlocutors, refusing to enter into contact with the local Communist Party and preferring to deal, instead, with sectors of the Radical Party (around Fredy Storani and Alfonsín) and independent groups. One area in which the PCI/PDS have collaborated, however, is in pushing for human rights abuses to be redressed in Argentina. The party had assisted the *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo*, in an advisory capacity, in winning assistance from the Italian government for identifying children kidnapped during the dictatorship. Undoubtedly, however, Argentina was less important than Chile. In Argentina, the long tradition of nationalism in politics made it difficult for an internationalist party like the PCI to exercise any influence at all.

We have to question, however, how successful European policies in support of Alfonsín were in the long run. Despite the important initiatives outlined here, and diplomatic gestures of important symbolic weight, such as Spain's granting Alfonsín the *Premio Príncipe de Asturias* in 1985, Alfonsín's administration ended in economic chaos, unpopularity and an early handing over of power. Neither the PSOE nor the Spanish government, nor the Italian Christian Democrats, carried sufficient weight inside Europe to promote external support where Alfonsín most needed it -in the economic field, in relation to the external debt and to EC protectionism. The result was that Alfonsín's excellent image abroad could not save him from political defeat at home.

Conclusions: Transitions and European External Support

What conclusions can we draw about the role of political parties in the construction of (1) an international environment favouring democratization in

Chile and Argentina; and (2) external policies of support for the transitions to democracy there?

First, European political parties have contributed to the development of a European interest in events in the area and have operated, at certain times, as pressure on government and the EC. Parties play a pivotal and essential role in democratic states; their voice on issues of democratization becomes important. It is clear from our research here that some parties have been more active than others. While we can identify substantial inputs from both the two major parties in Germany for example, in Spain, the role exercised by the PSOE far outweighs those of other parties, and the relative importance of the CDS is surprising given its increasing marginalization in domestic politics during the same period. In Britain, most interest in the question was expressed by the Labour Party, though the Conservative Party became more concerned after 1989, as democratization became an internationally significant issue. In Italy, interest was always consistently greater among Communists and the ex-Communists of the PDS, and the Christian Democrats.

Secondly, parties have in some cases been able to lend material assistance to the struggle for democracy in the region by supporting the activities of the Latin American political parties, the trade union movements, and other kinds of social organizations. European political parties, especially on the left, have also indirectly contributed to the rethinking of strategy and tactics which took place in the 1980s within Latin American socialist parties in particular, which in turn led to a shift towards social democratic ideologies on the left, and a greater possibility of consensus among the opposition.

Thirdly, party influence has not always been consistent; that is, it varies over time. Our contention is that it is greatest at what we have termed the second stage in transitions: *'apertura'* and the beginning of the transition. Before that stage, parties may be very active and their contribution in individual cases may be great, but their influence over regional or national politics is poor. And the third stage, democratic consolidation, requires government-to-government or regional initiatives.

Fourthly, it should be obvious from this research that not all of Latin America excited the same interest and response in Europe. We have concentrated on Chile and Argentina here because, with the exception of Central America, these countries merited most attention in Europe. It is not difficult to imagine why. The coup in Chile in 1973 was taken in Europe as a symbol of the militarization of regional politics and, in addition, the Chilean party system most closely conforms to European models. The parties, therefore, found easy interlocutors there. Argentina, by contrast, with a party system difficult to compare with European politics, nonetheless came to symbolize in Europe the struggle to create a political system based on democratic culture under Alfonsín. Moreover, as the first of the region's transitions, it became a flagship for change in the area.

Finally, what of the future? Does this convergence in democracy between

Europe and Latin America herald the start of a deeper relationship, with a solid economic base at last? That is extremely doubtful. Latin American interests in the new world order of the post-Cold War, trade embargoes and economic competition are very different from the interests of Europe. Once democracy has been established in Latin America, those differences in perceptions and interests may increase. And, of course, European party interest, while unlikely to disappear in Latin America altogether, is likely to decrease as Latin America emerges from the recession of the 1980s, while Europe is forced to turn itself to the problems on its borders. The German parties, which are the key parties for financing European activities in Latin America, may find themselves overstretched. "Germany will likely seek to strengthen political ties selectively in...Latin America...provided that the financial costs are moderate and ...offer Germany the opportunity to take a more prominent role on political issues where it sees itself as uniquely qualified to speak out on issues such as the environment, trade and transition from planned to market economies" (Botet, 1993). So, rather than ushering a new phase of biregional cooperation, external support for democratization may herald a new stage in the European-Latin American subsystem, dominated, instead, by difference and potential conflicts in the economic sphere.

NOTES

1. This article is part of a larger project on European and US support for democratization in Latin America coordinated by Christian Freres and Alberto Van Klaveren of AIETI, Spain. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of AIETI and CICYT in carrying out research on aspects of European support for Latin American democratization, and to thank Christian Freres for discussing some of the ideas in this article with me. I would also like to thank those people who gave me interviews for the project, especially Donato Di Santo of the PDS in Rome.
2. See Silvia Canela, "Por qué no comerciamos más con Europa. Proteccionismo y discriminación de la Comunidad", *Nueva Sociedad*, No 85, 1986. For the point of view of the Chilean President, Patricio Aylwin, see the article in *El País*, 10/4/1991, "Aylwin se queja del desinterés de la Comunidad Europea por América Latina".

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