

BASE MANEUVERS

The Games Congress Plays with the Military Pork Barrel

REPRESENTATIVE DICK ARMEY

Loring Air Force Base was built in the middle of the pine forest wilderness of northern Maine. In an average year, 105 inches of snow will fall on its runways, temperatures will plunge to 30 or 40 degrees below zero, and snowdrifts will pile high enough to clip the wingtips of the B-52s. In short, "Boring Loring," as the snowbound airmen call it, is one of the most inhospitable places to put an air base in the continental United States—and yet it remains the home of the 42nd Bomb Wing, maintained and operated by a reluctant Strategic Air Command (SAC) at twice the cost of airfields in warmer climes.

Back in 1946, when the Air Force bulldozers first arrived in Aroostook County, Loring made eminent sense as a simple matter of military necessity. SAC's first bombers, the old B-47s, were able to reach the Soviet Union from few domestic locations, and our ballistic missile fleet was still nothing but a glimmer in Wernher von Braun's imagination. The only solution was to select the northeasternmost point of the United States and carve an air base out of virgin wilderness, and if that meant having to operate bombers and tankers in near-arctic conditions for much of the year, so be it. As the Air Force explained at the time, "Loring is SAC's right hand covering a direct path to an aggressor over the polar regions or across the Atlantic. It is 300 miles closer to targets in Communist Europe than any other base in the United States. At present speeds, 300 miles nearer the target means the target can be obliterated thirty minutes earlier. . . . thirty minutes that may decide our fate."

The Air Force has been insisting for more than 10 years now that this strategic rationale no longer exists. Fully loaded B-52s and B-1s, along with almost any other bomber worth having, can reach the Soviet Union from bases as far south as Arkansas. With the advent of nuclear missiles that can reach the Kremlin in a matter of minutes, the bomber flight time from Loring is irrelevant. Most important, the Soviets now have an arsenal of submarine launched ballistic- and cruise-missiles that make Loring—one hundred miles from the Atlantic coast—particularly vulnerable.

So why is Loring still there? Because of the clout of Senator William S. Cohen and the rest of Maine's represen-

tatives in Congress.

When a military installation is needed, we support it regardless of the cost. It takes a small fortune to maintain Diego Garcia, our supply depot in the Indian Ocean, but since the alternative may be Soviet occupation of the Mid-east oilfields, we gladly pay it. Tragically, however, necessity is not the reason we maintain all of our 5,000 domestic military installations. The other reason is politics—the politics of the congressional pork barrel.

Military bases mean big federal money for many communities. They directly employ hundreds of civilians, and they indirectly pump millions of dollars into local economies in the form of GI paychecks, which are spent nearby. This leads congressmen and senators to fight to keep bases open in their districts long after changes in the threat, technology, or the force structure have rendered them obsolete.

Loring is not an isolated case. Fort Douglas, Utah, was originally built to guard stagecoach routes to the Wild West, and today serves little purpose whatsoever. Fort Monroe, Virginia, was built to fend off an invasion of Redcoats in 1812, and is now a redundant administrative facility surrounded by an 18th century moat. Fort Sheridan occupies prime real estate north of Chicago, but has little value other than to provide Army officers a 150-acre golf course and two beaches. All these remain on the Pentagon's dole largely because of parochial congressional interests. A federal statute protects even the dairy farm at the Naval Academy from budget cuts.

According to the Grace Commission, as much as \$2 billion a year could be saved by realigning our domestic military bases. Past OMB estimates are as high as \$5 billion annually. Even the Pentagon—ever reluctant to admit that it can return some of its money to the Treasury—concedes that its installations experts could find at least \$1 billion in excess base capacity. These savings could be realized annually for years to come.

The parochial interests defending these obsolete bases would have been overridden long ago, but for one major

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Snow Job: Thanks to the Maine delegation, Loring Air Force Base remains open at twice the expense of air fields in warmer climes.

problem. In the effort to save Loring, the Maine delegation not only succeeded in sparing one outmoded air base, it also sold Congress on a law that has frozen our entire major base structure in place. Today, under a towering federal deficit, the Department of Defense is unable to close even the most wasteful base boondoggles.

Turning Doves Into Hawks

Pork-barreling is, of course, a time-honored congressional tradition. Ever since Andrew Jackson put us into the business of using federal money for "internal improvements," the most influential members of Congress have naturally sought to ensure that their home districts are more internally improved than others. Water projects, roads, and eventually electric dams and power stations became valuable political capital.

Since World War II, though, the pork game has changed. While the Public Works Committees still dole out goodies to their members and friends (a half-billion dollars worth in the recent highway bill), the real action today is in defense money. Each year's Defense Authorization bill contains over \$200 billion worth of mouth-watering capital contracts—everything from military bases to missile systems to multimillion-pair orders of combat boots. Naturally, many members look on the Defense bill the way Jimmy Dean looks at a hog, as a giant piece of pork to be carved up and sent to the folks back home.

Little things like ideological scruples and military necessity often get lost in the feast that follows.

Indeed, one of the more amusing spectacles on Capitol Hill is the sight of committed anti-Pentagon liberals becoming converts to major weapons systems when they're built in their districts. Take virtually the entire New England delegation, for example. Although New England is liberal-leaning and generally skeptical of high defense budgets, the region has also been charged with building John Lehman's 600-ship navy—a formula that adds up to big money and legislative schizophrenia. It turns doves into superhawks.

In 1986, for instance, Connecticut's Representative Sam Gejdenson, who usually votes the straight liberal line on everything from the nuclear freeze to chemical weapons, suddenly became a crusader for the Trident submarine. Only hours after voting to cut funds for the D-5 missile that will be put inside the Trident, he offered an amendment to spend an extra \$1.5 billion on the submarine itself. Any mystery may be cleared up when we look at where the Trident is built. General Dynamics assembles them at the Electric Boat shipyard in Groton, Connecticut—which happens to be in Gejdenson's congressional backyard. (Gejdenson defends his Trident vote by arguing that the invulnerable submarine is a stabilizing weapon as long as it is not loaded with the highly accurate D-5s).

Gejdenson's willing ally is Connecticut Senator Chris

Dodd, a dove on nearly every other defense and foreign policy issue. When his Senate colleagues, worried about such questionable General Dynamics' practices as bribing Admiral Hyman Rickover, suggested that a little competition may be necessary to break up General Dynamics' "sole source" monopoly on the Trident, Dodd went ballistic. "It is illogical," he said, "to think you're going to be able to build the Tridents cheaper or better" anywhere outside his homestate—a comment that led the journalist Gregg Easterbrook to suggest that "maybe Reagan could get Dodd to support Contra aid, too—just make sure the supplies are manufactured in Connecticut."

Since O'Neill-Cohen became law, not a single major base has been closed or consolidated—a failure that has cost U.S. taxpayers as much as \$2 billion a year.

This is certainly not a purely liberal phenomenon. The only reason liberals are famous for it is that their votes for defense pork stand out as glaring ideological lapses, while conservatives' motivations are often neatly camouflaged by their general support for a strong defense—except, of course, on those embarrassing occasions when a pro-defense member finds himself having to force the Pentagon to buy a system that it doesn't even want (a short list, to be sure). New York's Senator Alfonse D'Amato waged days of parliamentary warfare in 1986 for the T-46, a trainer plane for which the Air Force has repeatedly said it has little need. Coincidentally or not, the T-46 was built by Fairchild Industries on New York's Long Island.

Fortunately for our nation's security (and the taxpayers' dollars), the system has one built-in check that prevents this method of military pork barreling from getting out of hand: Namely, a member has to sell his district's pork to the rest of us. If he cannot justify his home town's defense contract on solid military grounds, his amendment will often be unceremoniously dispatched.

In Gejdenson's case, he found himself on the wrong end of an indignant Bill Dickinson, the ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee. "The idea that we would be so gullible and think we are so obtuse here that we cannot see what is going on really sort of blows my mind," Dickinson thundered. "This is ludicrous, this is ridiculous, that we would on Friday cut \$7 billion [worth of weapons systems] because we cannot afford it and then come in here and say, 'It's different if it is built in Connecticut'.... I really would be embarrassed to offer this if it were my amendment." Gejdenson's money for General Dynamics was rejected 211-188.

The reason that obsolete military bases remain such an entrenched form of pork-barreling, however, is that this traditional check does not apply to them. They rarely must

be considered on their merits alone. If the good Senators from Maine had to stand before their colleagues and argue that maintaining the cold-weather base at Loring made economic sense, they likely would have been voted down. Arguing that we need a stagecoach rest stop in Utah or a military golf course in Chicago probably would have fallen flat even in the House. But the supporters of obsolete bases almost never have to do this. Instead, by enacting an array of environmental study mandates, advance notice requirements, and gratuitous red tape, they have simply ground base closings to a halt.

Environmental Red Tape

Any bald-faced attempt by the supporters of obsolete bases to usurp the Defense Department's power to close bases would probably be unconstitutional, and when it was attempted in 1976, the legislation fell victim to President Ford's 50th veto. A law to prohibit all major base closings without express congressional permission, Ford said, was an assault on executive branch prerogatives—a position that certainly would have been upheld by the federal courts. Instead, Congress enacted legislation that, though in another guise, has had virtually the same effect.

The same year that Loring Air Force Base was first mentioned as a candidate for closure, Maine Congressman (now Senator) William Cohen stood with then-Majority Leader Tip O'Neill and placed a giant bureaucratic obstacle in the way of the Defense Department's ability to close a base: a requirement that DOD must first carry out comprehensive and costly environmental impact studies before a base could be shut down or even reduced. When base closing opponents had tried to stall closings earlier by attempting to invoke such environmental laws as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the courts usually ruled against them. The O'Neill-Cohen legislation, however, specifically required that NEPA must be applied whenever the Pentagon desires to consolidate a base. As benign as it may sound, this legislation has prevented any major base closing since it was signed by Jimmy Carter in 1977.

An environmental impact statement (EIS) can take as long as two years and cost over \$1 million to complete. Once completed, any congressman or well-organized citizens' group can take the military to court and insist that it be redone to consider some previously unnoticed aspect. After that, the second statement can be found wanting, and a third can be ordered. By this time, several years after the base closing was first announced (a move that by itself has already hurt the local economy), the local citizenry and members of Congress are thoroughly aroused, and the political pressures to cancel the closing order are all but insurmountable.

In Loring's case, the Air Force produced the initial EIS about six months after the closure was originally announced, and submitted it for public comment. With the help of a well-heeled Washington lobbying firm, it got plenty of it. Eventually, the Air Force was forced to concede that while the report was correct in judging the impact on the entire county, it understated the effect on the area immediately around the base. The Air Force then went to work on a second EIS, which agreed with the

lobbyists that the impact on the surrounding area would be serious. Nevertheless, the Air Force felt that the military case for the closing was so compelling that it should proceed anyway. That led the Maine delegation to draw their ultimate weapon: a line item in an authorization bill. Buried in the Defense bill for fiscal 1980 were the words: "No funds authorized to be appropriated by this or any other Act shall be obligated or expended for the purpose of the realignment of SAC's Loring Air Force Base." The Pentagon had no choice but to cancel the closing order. As the coup de grace, the Maine delegation ultimately required the Air Force to *expand* the Loring facility, appropriating money that Assistant Defense Secretary Lawrence Korb said "was shoved down our throats." Loring Air Force Base is no longer a candidate for closure, nor will it be after the passage of any new base closing legislation.

The O'Neill-Cohen legislation had the same effect on every other major base that had been slated for closure. Between 1961-1978, before O'Neill-Cohen was enacted, the Defense Department realigned 3,600 installations of various sizes, producing an annual savings of \$5.6 billion in operating costs. Since O'Neill-Cohen became law, not a single major base has been closed or consolidated—a failure that has *cost* the U.S. taxpayer as much as \$2 billion a year.

At a glance, it seems odd that anyone would need a formal study to determine the affect of a base closing on the environment in the first place. Environmental studies are usually used to explore how major federal construction projects will affect the natural surroundings. If the Army Corps of Engineers is contemplating building another Hoover Dam, all of us naturally expect an EIS to see how that will affect the fauna and flora nearby. But closing a base would seem to be a self-evident boon to the natural environment. Obviously, if you tear down a base's power plant, close the airfield, move the nuclear weapons, and send the troops packing, the environment can only benefit. It's true that the environmental laws require that the effects on the human environment should be considered as well, but the federal courts have concluded that purpose of the law is only secondary. It was only after O'Neill and Cohen passed a bill saying that the environmental statutes should apply to base closings anyway that DOD became mired in the environmental red tape.

One can't help but conclude that the real purpose of the O'Neill-Cohen legislation—if not in the minds of its sponsors, at least in the minds of many who voted for it—was to stop base closings, pure and simple. As Senator Carl Levin said in 1985, "The fear of the exercise of untrammelled executive power is what led or what continues to fuel the support for the protections against base closings."

Levin hit the point that is at the root of the whole base closing deadlock. One can speculate on whether or not the Maine delegation had parochial motives in stopping base closings with red tape, but they never would have been able to sell it to the Congress as a purely parochial concern. Instead, they were able to appeal to the "fear of untrammelled executive power." As then-Congressman Cohen put it, "The issues raised by this amendment transcend the parochial interests of any one region of the country or political party."

Fear of Political Retaliation

At issue is who will have control of the pork. Any congressional veteran will tell you that pork is power—both the ability to distribute it and the ability to deny it. If the executive branch has unrestricted freedom to close bases, the argument runs, it would have a potent political weapon in its hands to retaliate against anyone who defies the president on key legislation. Congress has an institutional interest in insuring that the executive branch does not have it. And while parochial interests can be defeated as Sam Gejdenson was, institutional interests cannot.

This argument may not be pure paranoia. Texans tell the

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story of Lyndon Johnson's personal war against the Amarillo Air Force Base. When he was up for reelection, Johnson supposedly told the elders of Amarillo, Texas, that if he did not carry their town, he might decide that their air base should be shut down. Amarillo went for his opponent anyway, and in due course, the air base was deemed "uneconomical" and eliminated. More recently, many thought it suspicious that the Nixon administration chose to close two bases in Massachusetts shortly after Massachusetts became the only state to support George McGovern.

Another variation of this fear is the idea that the Defense Department will decline to cut bases in the districts of a powerful Southern committee chairman, whose region has been favored by Pentagon spending in the past.

In the 1970s, many recall, the Army wanted to eliminate one of its three main recruit training centers, arguing that it would be more efficient to have only two. The choice came down to Fort Dix, New Jersey, or Fort Jackson, South Carolina. While lesser Pentagon officials wanted to close Fort Jackson, Fort Dix was chosen after higher-ups intervened—to many, clear evidence of the Pentagon's southern bias. (During South Carolina Democrat L. Mendel Rivers' reign as Armed Services Committee chairman, one congressman remarked that, "If you build one more military installation in Charleston, it's going to sink into the harbor.")

This fear of political retaliation and favoritism is just as strong today. Aside from unfounded but widely believed rumors that Caspar Weinberger once threatened to close bases in the districts of MX missile opponents, virtually every attempt to close bases during the Reagan administration has been branded a political move. Representative Amo Houghton of New York ran into such charges last

summer when he tried to eliminate money for new construction at bases the Pentagon had said *might* be scaled down.

The list of 22 bases he was using was put together in 1985 at Senator Goldwater's request. It didn't sell well on the House floor. "The list is entirely political," said an outraged Bill Alexander (D-AK), who represents Blythesville AFB (number 22 on the list). Another member ventured, "I bet that if you went down [the list] we would find facilities that could not possibly be closed, but exist in the districts and states of members and senators who simply were not known as strong supporters of the DOD authorization or appropriation." Finally Democrat Ron Dellums of Berkeley, California, whose distrust of the Pentagon is rarely lost in subtlety, claimed, "This is hardball politics aimed at insuring unquestioned support for a larger

that could safely be shut down. While this would eliminate any fear of the administration using base closings as a weapon against unfavored members of Congress, it would still leave the Pentagon hamstrung by the O'Neill-Cohen law. It would be powerless to act on the commission's recommendations.

I have sponsored a bill that marries the two approaches. It provides that candidates for closings would be selected by a nonpartisan commission, and then waives O'Neill-Cohen and the rest of the red tape for those bases only. Since any base closures recommended by a nonpartisan commission could not be politically motivated, the O'Neill-Cohen safeguards would not be necessary, at least for those bases.

Once O'Neill-Cohen is waived—either by my approach or the one authored by Senator Gramm and others—Congress can still stop a base closing, but it must do so by majority vote—unlike the current situation in which a base closing can effectively be stopped by a single member. This would expose obsolete bases to the same majority sentiment that killed the Gejdenson Amendment and other pieces of defense pork. As Gramm put it, arguing for his bill, which gives Congress 60 days to stop a base closing:

The beauty of this proposal is that: If you have a military base in your district—God forbid one should be closed in Texas, but it could happen—under this proposal, I have 60 days. So, I come up here and I say, "God have mercy. Don't close this base in Texas. We can get attacked from the south. The Russians are going to go after our leadership and you know they are going to attack Texas. We need this base."

Then I can go out and lie down in the street and the bulldozers are coming and I have a trusty aide there just as it gets there to drag me out of the way. All the people in Muleshoe, or wherever this base is, will say, "You know, Phil Gramm got whipped, but it was like the Alamo. He was with us until the last second."

The only outstanding issue is how to finance base closures. Some money will be required up front to move the troops and make accommodations for them elsewhere. A sound base closing proposal must contain a mechanism to provide the necessary funds.

This up front cost alone has often been used as an argument against closing bases. The "stagecoach base" at Fort Douglas, for instance, is said to be more expensive to close than to move—a dubious assertion based in part on the assumption that it would have to be converted to a National Historic Sight. The one-time costs of closing bases, however, are meaningless compared to the savings that might be achieved. It would have cost \$7 million to disperse Loring's bombers to other bases had the realignment gone forward in the 1970s, but once that investment was made, we would have saved \$25 million each year and every year from then on. A one-time cost of \$7 million is nothing compared to the hundreds of millions that would be saved over time. Few corporations would turn down an investment that offered such a huge return.

In any case, there are easy solutions to the finance prob-

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military budget." Houghton eventually withdrew his amendment, saying, "I feel like I have been through a buzz saw."

Actually, it was not a political list at all. More Republican senators were affected than Democratic senators, and more Democratic House members were affected than Republicans—which simply reflects that there were more Republican senators and more Democratic House members at the time.

Real or imagined, this fear is at the heart of the political problem we have today. The safeguards against "untrammeled executive power," thanks to O'Neill and Cohen, are now so extensive that not even Congress itself can easily close a base that one member wishes to keep open. As Senator Phil Gramm of Texas explained, "Any congressman or senator who is ingenious or hardworking can prevent a military base from being closed in his district or state," simply by tying the matter up in the courts.

The trick to solving the politics of base closing is, first, to waive the environmental laws and other red tape, and second, to ensure that no base will be closed for political reasons—the concern that inspired the red tape in the first place.

Simply trying to waive the red tape is not enough. Barry Goldwater and Phil Gramm in the Senate and Denny Smith and Del Latta in the House have tried that approach without success. That step alone would make it easy for DOD to close bases, but it does nothing to assuage the fear of "untrammeled executive power."

Another approach, first suggested by the Grace Commission and supported since by Representative Patricia Schroeder of Colorado and others, is to set up, on a bipartisan basis, a nonpartisan commission to select the bases

lem. One possibility is to have base closures finance themselves. We could close part of a base and then use the money saved to pay for closing the rest of it. The substantial money left could then be put in the Treasury. Another possibility is to "reprogram" funds from elsewhere in the \$8 billion military construction budget. "Seed money" of \$100 million or so could be borrowed from other projects to begin closing bases and paid back a short time later when the savings are realized.

New Jobs from Old Bases

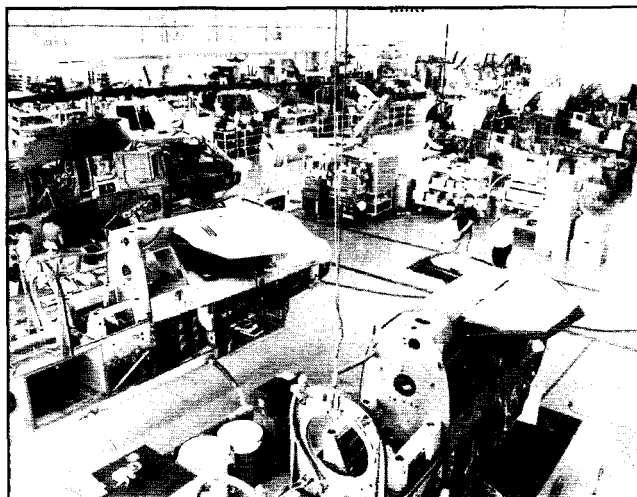
The irony in all this is that base closings almost never turn out to be the economic catastrophes that congressmen and their constituents fear. A base closing can be an economic bonanza for a community. Typically when the military pulls out, a community is offered a ready-made industrial park, airport, residential area, schools and recreational facilities. New industries occupy the old base, a new source of city tax revenue develops along with new jobs. Lyndon Johnson may have thought that closing the air base was a way to punish the good people of Amarillo, but today the former Amarillo AFB is now the thriving home of Textron's Bell helicopter division and the community is better off than before.

Amarillo's experience is not unique. When Brookley Air Force Base in Mobile, Alabama, was closed in 1969, the city turned it into an industrial-aviation-educational complex, making the city far more diverse and independent. "Many leaders in this city would not have Brookley back even if the government came begging," according to a *New York Times* article.

The same is true of Salina, Kansas, which also lost an Air Force Base. "We're recovering quite nicely, thank you," says John Schmiedeler, assistant managing editor of the local newspaper. "Now we're more closely tied to national economic trends. Before, we kind of sat back and got fat. This has created a new, aggressive spirit in Salina."

Senator John Chafee, whose state of Rhode Island was affected by several closures, had a similar verdict. He told a business magazine that "The departure of the floating Navy rallied the Rhode Island business community around a common theme: What's done is done. Now let's grow from here. And that's just what the state has been doing, growing in directions it never considered before."

The "what's done is done" attitude is vital to a community's successful readjustment. One problem with Congress' requiring extensive public studies before a base can be closed is that it leaves communities unprepared if the closure ultimately occurs. The Defense Department will announce its desire to close the base, pending the outcome of the environmental studies, and the community leaders immediately devote themselves to preventing it rather than preparing for it. If the base is finally closed anyway, no one will have done the work necessary for an easy transition. Officials at the Pentagon's Office of Economic Readjustment, which devotes considerable skill and resources to helping communities deal with the effect of base closures, say that community leaders must know from the beginning—with certainty—whether or not a closure will occur 12 to 18 months hence. If they have that advance notice and are not encouraged to attempt to avert the closure, the



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result can be very successful.

The Office of Economic Adjustment's study of the effects of 100 base closings since 1961 found that:

- A total of 138,138 civilian jobs are now located on former defense facilities, replacing 93,424 jobs lost when the military left.


- Twelve four-year colleges, 32 postsecondary vocational schools or community colleges, and 14 high school vo-tech programs have been established on former bases.

- There are 53,744 college and postsecondary students, 7,864 high school vo-tech students, and 8,110 trainees now being educated on the old bases.

- Office-industrial parks or plants have been established at 75 of the former bases.

- Forty-two of the former bases are being used as municipal or general aviation airports.

A sampling of newspaper clippings tells the same story. "Cities Find Conversion of Old Bases A Boon to Economies" (the *New York Times*); "Base Closings Benefit Towns" (the *Atlanta Journal*); "When the Military Moves Out, Business Can Move In and Make a Town Proper" (the *Nation's Business*); "Finding New Uses for Bases that the Military Closes: Model Apartments in Massachusetts, Airports in Texas and Pennsylvania" (the *Christian Science Monitor*).

One almost hates to invoke the overused buzzword "competitiveness," but we must ask which is better for the economy, a dead end investment in an obsolete military base or schools and new industry? The moral of the above statistics is that no one benefits from waste. If we wanted to directly use federal money to create jobs, it would make as much sense for us to pay workers to build pyramids in the desert as it does to maintain unnecessary bases. While the initial disruption caused by a base closing is undeniable, once the base is gone, the resources that supported it are devoted to new and often better uses, ultimately creating jobs and new production. The alternative is to continue deploying our troops to guard stagecoach routes, refight the War of 1812, and support primitive bombers at a cost to the taxpayer of \$2 billion a year. 

PINOCHET'S REVOLUTION

Will Popular Capitalism Lead to Democratization?

JAMES R. WHELAN

Sometime this year, Chile will hold a plebiscite to determine whether General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, leader of his nation since 1973, shall continue as president until 1997. The three most likely outcomes all suggest that it is time for lovers of freedom and democracy to stop regarding Chile as an international pariah.

One possible outcome is that Pinochet will be asked by his fellow military leaders not to run. The constitution of 1980 stipulates that at least 90 days before Pinochet's present term of office ends on March 11, 1989, the four-man military junta must meet and decide—unanimously and within 48 hours—on a candidate to serve as president from 1989 to 1997. If they fail to agree on a candidate, then the National Security Council must do so, by simple majority vote. (The NSC is made up of Pinochet, the junta members, the president of the Supreme Court, and the president of the Council of State, a broad-based representational advisory body.)

Voters would say yes or no to that candidate in the plebiscite. If they vote no, then Pinochet would stay on one more year as president, during which time new and open elections for president would have to be called. At this writing, there is no certainty that Pinochet will be the junta's choice for the plebiscite. Last June, three of the four service chiefs on the junta went on record as saying they preferred not only a civilian, but a man considerably younger than the 71-year-old Pinochet. None of them has spoken since on that subject.

Pinochet Might Lose

A second possible outcome is that Chileans will vote no to Pinochet (or an alternative candidate put forth by the military), and thus bring free elections in 1989. There is little doubt that under such circumstances the Chilean military would relinquish power, just as the military did in recent years in Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay. (In Uruguay, the military put before the electorate in 1980 an authoritarian constitution similar to the one the Chilean military was putting before their voters at about the same time. In Uruguay, the vote was no; in Chile, overwhelmingly yes. The Uruguayan military not only accepted that verdict, but in 1985, gave way to civilian government.)

Opponents of Pinochet certainly have the opportunity to make their case against him. Although formally legalized only last year, political parties—including the constitutionally banned Marxist-Leninist parties—have been visibly and vocally active since 1982. Most of the 20,000 Chileans who fled after the overthrow of Salvador Allende in 1973 have returned to the country, and last year all but about 600 of 3,800 opponents of the regime still barred from reentry were cleared for return. Reports of torture by the Pinochet government still continue and a number of prominent literary and theatrical figures opposed to the regime say they have received death threats. Nevertheless, political debate in Chile is as spirited and raucous as in most other Latin American countries.

Vigorous opposition newspapers and radio stations, while occasionally hampered, daily hurl invective against Pinochet. Widespread publicity was given, for example, to an attack last June by the then Christian Democratic Party leader Gabriel Valdes: "Augusto Pinochet will go down in history as a Hitler, Stalin, Trujillo, Somoza and others like him. He [stalks] the country like some kind of phantom, preaching hatred and violence." Even publications friendly to Pinochet routinely refer to the "military dictatorship" and report past and present allegations of human rights violations.

It is unclear, however, whether opposition parties will be able to unite around a "no" vote in the plebiscite. At last count, Chile had 25 parties, including eight Marxist-Leninist ones that are technically illegal but nevertheless operate openly. With the hard left excluded from the electoral process, the role of the Christian Democratic party (PDC) acquires crucial importance.

One of the obdurate myths of Chile is that the PDC is a "centrist" party. For that to be true, the party would have to be as willing to make alliances with the right as it has been with the left. Historically, except when the Allende

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