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"DEMOCRACY IN THE COUNTRY AND IN THE  
HOME". THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN CHILE.

Alicia Frohmann  
Teresa Valdés

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## R E S U M E N

Este artículo recorre sintéticamente el proceso vivido por el movimiento social de mujeres de Chile desde su rearticulación en los años 70 hasta hoy. Entrega antecedentes históricos de los años del sufragismo y describe el proceso vivido bajo la dictadura militar para detenerse en el período de transición a la democracia y su situación actual.

Tras caracterizar las distintas vertientes del movimiento y los logros alcanzados al iniciarse la transición, analiza los cambios que ha sufrido en el contexto democrático a partir de las exigencias de esta nueva situación. Si bien evalúa críticamente los avances alcanzados en las esferas de toma de decisiones, da cuenta y valora la incorporación de temas y demandas del movimiento en algunas políticas públicas, particularmente a través del SERNAM y muy especialmente en el debate público y los medios de comunicación.

Al interior del movimiento analiza los cambios en sus niveles de institucionalización, la variedad de temáticas abordadas, la capacidad de formular propuestas de políticas, la ampliación a regiones y sus grados y formas de articulación.

Concluye que, si bien ha habido una clara disminución de la visibilidad en los medios de comunicación del movimiento de mujeres como actor social y tiene deficiencias en su capacidad de articulación, éste ha florecido en estos años ganando en extensión, diversidad, profesionalización y grados de institucionalización.



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## Introduction

The cultural, social and political forces determining the discrimination of women in Chilean society have been pervasive ever since the Hispanic Colonial period. In addition to the heritage of the Marianismo cultural ethos<sup>2</sup> -which both enshrined and excluded women, the peculiar development of democratic institutions in the nineteenth and twentieth century created a system based on the politics of negotiation and compromise ("acuerdos de caballeros" or "gentlemen's agreements") of tightly-knit political elites, which only marginally considered other social sectors, and definitely excluded women.

The process of urbanization and early industrialization of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affected the lives of women, many of whom shifted from subsistence economies in the countryside to informal labor in the urban areas. Very soon, however, working-class women were pushed into low-paying service and manufacturing jobs. Urbanization and work-force participation did not automatically help to change the condition of women. Upper and middle class women enjoyed a higher standard of living, but were also discriminated against socially and politically.

Female suffrage, which was obtained in 1949 after decades of struggle, did not alter this situation significantly. It has taken much longer to modify the traditional and patriarchal

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1. Today, the total population of Chile is 13,2 million. Its 1992 GDP was almost US\$ 38 billion. The yearly per capita GDP is just under US\$ 3,000; the highest income fifth of the population receives over 55 per cent of the national income, and the lowest fifth less than 5 per cent.

2. See Sonia Montecino et al., "Identidad femenina y modelo mariano en Chile", in Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, Mundo de mujer. Continuidad y cambio, CEM, Santiago, Chile, 1988; and Evelyn Stevens, "Marianismo, the other face of Machismo", in A. Pescatello (ed.) Female and Male in Latin America, University of Pittsburg Press, Pittsburg, 1977.

aspects of Chilean society which have molded the status of women. When higher levels of participation and democratization were sought and achieved in the 1960s and early 1970s, the specific needs and demands of women were subsumed within those of Chilean society as a whole. It was taken for granted that whatever was the driving force of the political system at that moment - modernization, economic growth or the transition to Socialism - would also redefine and improve the status of women.

The military coup of 1973 and the 17-year long dictatorship that followed put an abrupt end to those expectations. The women's struggle for survival and against human rights abuses, together with a new consciousness regarding the patriarchal and authoritarian traits not only of the military regime, but also of society and family life in Chile, gave a strong impulse to the women's movement.

The women's movement<sup>3</sup> grew and flourished in the context of the struggle against the dictatorship. This explains some of the specific characteristics of the Chilean movement, such as its very political nature and considerable level of political mobilization, the participation in the movement of women both from the popular sectors and the middle class, and the close - although often troubled - links with the political parties of the left and center-left.

The role of the women's movement in the process to transition to democracy in the late eighties was significant and encouraged considerable expectations regarding the empowerment of women within a democratic regime after 1990. However, even if some gender based public policies and legislative inroads were

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<sup>3</sup> We define the women's movement as a comprehensive and heterogeneous social process, which includes individual as well as collective actors, and which defines itself through a shared identity, the awareness of conflict, and the will to transform the social condition of women.

made, women and the women's movement have been largely absent in politics and government in the new democratic context.

What has happened? The women's movement has not disappeared, but it has had difficulties adjusting to the rules of the new political context, where political parties and organic structures prevail. A political women's movement still exists in a state of latency (and may organize articulately in a moment of crisis), but women's issues and politics today have a stronger presence in the cultural sphere than in the political arena.

Today, women's groups are thriving everywhere (in the workplace, neighborhoods, universities, unions, NGO's), there is a women's radio station and a women's newspaper. Gender issues are discussed in the media and there is an increased public awareness of gender discrimination and its implications. The women's movement has become very diverse, loose and dispersed, and, even if its impact on the political system is only indirect today, its medium and long-term impact on prevailing social and cultural mores and patterns seems to have more potential than ever.

### The Early Stages of the Women's Movement

The origins of the women's movement can be traced in Chile, as in many other Latin American countries, to the early twentieth century efforts by the working class to organize, unionize and struggle for better wages and working conditions. In the nitrate mining towns of the north of Chile, women workers began organizing around both class and gender issues around 1910.

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4 See Julieta Kirkwood, Ser política en Chile. Las feministas y los partidos, FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1986; and Elizabeth Hutchinson, "El feminismo en el movimiento obrero chileno: la emancipación de la mujer en la prensa obrera feminista, 1905-1908", Contribuciones Nº80, FLACSO,

That initial impulse -which resulted in a number of women's associations, lecture groups and newspapers- first put women's issues on the agenda of the emerging progressive parties and labor unions. The Spanish free-thinking lecturer Belén de Zárraga traveled through the nitrate North, spreading the new ideas about women's emancipation. At the time, the predominant belief was that the discrimination of women was just part of a more general system of social injustice and that overall social change would also bring about equality for women.

Another impulse to the movement was the women's increased access to education. The Decreto Amunátegui of 1877, allowing women to enter the universities, initiated a tradition of professional women -educators, doctors, lawyers- interested in improving the condition of women. Other impulses came from the development of a lay and free-thinking movement in the early twentieth century, and from the influence of European writers such as Stuart Mill, Marx and Engels.

With the crisis of the nitrate economy and the increased political and ideological polarization of the period following the Russian Revolution, the relative importance of women and women's issues within the social struggle decreased. By then, quite a large number of women were participating in the new forms of political participation and organization - the labor unions and political parties.

The most visible women's groups were middle and upper-class charities or cultural associations. However, there were also a number of groups demanding civil and political rights for women: the first bill advocating female suffrage was introduced in 1917

by the Conservative Party, and the two first women's political parties were created in the twenties<sup>5</sup>.

Nevertheless, by the early 1930s, women still lacked the most elemental political rights, and they only began to vote in municipal elections in 1934. The political system did not favor women's suffrage: the conservative parties were content with limiting women to their traditional roles in the home and in the family and the progressive parties feared that the women's vote would be very conservative and only benefit their adversaries.

The second big impulse to the women's movement in Chile came in the late thirties and in the forties with the struggle for women's suffrage. The creation of the Movimiento pro Emancipación de Mujeres de Chile (MEMCh) in 1935, the Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas (FECHIF) in 1944, and the Partido Femenino de Chile in 1947 highlighted a long period of mobilization around women's issues -mostly suffrage but also other issues related to the status of women- which culminated in 1949 when Chilean women were finally granted the right to vote (and present themselves as candidates) in legislative and presidential elections<sup>6</sup>.

At the time, the lack of political rights had seemed the major impediment to the emancipation and increased participation of women in the political sphere. Common sense seemed to dictate that once this hurdle was overcome and given the increasing participation of women in the educational system and in the labor force, and with birth control beginning to be available on a more massive scale, the status of women in Chilean society would definitely change. Apparently, incremental rather than radical

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5 See Edda Caviola et al., Queremos votar en las próximas elecciones. La Morada-Fempress, La Lila-Penci/CEM, Santiago, Chile, 1986.

6 See E. Caviola et al., op.cit.

change was needed to complete the emancipation of women, and many of the women who had mobilized in the suffrage movement in the forties, joined political parties and trade unions during the fifties and sixties, and participated in the more general political struggle.

WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION RATE, 1976-1990

	1976	1978	1980	1982	1984	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Total	47.1	48.6	48.4	47.2	48.2	50.9	51.1	52.5	53.0	52.8
Women	25.2	27.2	27.6	27.4	28.8	29.6	29.7	31.2	31.7	31.8
Men	70.2	71.2	70.3	68.3	68.9	73.6	73.9	75.2	75.8	75.1

Source : INE, Encuestas Nacionales de Empleo, 1976-1990.

FERTILITY RATE, 1950-1995

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995
Number of children per woman (1)		5,1	5,3	3,6	2,9
				2,9	2,7

Note : (1) Global fertility rate

Source : CELADE, Boletín Demográfico, Año XXVI No 51, Santiago, Chile, 1993.

Gender issues were only seldom raised during the period of social and political turmoil of the sixties and early seventies. Even though during this period Chilean society experienced higher levels of social democratization and political participation than it had ever before (or since), the status of women remained basically the same. The centros de madres (CEMAs, mothers' centers) were first created in the forties, parallel to the movement for women's suffrage, but they became institutionalized

in the sixties, especially with the Christian Democratic government, which advocated the communal organization of both urban and rural poor women. These "mothers centers" focused on a slightly modernized version of the traditional female role; they were very effective in engaging women in community affairs, but also acted as a mechanism of social control<sup>7</sup>. There were about one million women enrolled in the CEMAs in 1973, and many of them participated actively in the existing social and political organizations. Although their gender-specific concerns were scarce at the time, this organizational experience helped to mold the grass-roots women's movement of later years.

Women did not mobilize as political actors by themselves during the early seventies, except for the right-wing women -El Poder Femenino- who organized against the Allende regime with their pots and pans during 1971-1973, before the military coup. These women organized as women, but not so much for themselves, as against Socialism and for their families and the "patria" (fatherland).

### The Women's Movement and the Struggle against the Dictatorship

The Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990) was a period of hardship, repression and misery for most Chileans, and more so for Chilean women, who were especially active in the struggle for survival -defending human rights and organizing for their own and their families subsistence<sup>8</sup>. During the first decade of the

7 See E.Gaviola et al., "Chile, Centro de Madres: ¿La mujer popular en movimiento?", in Isis Internacional, Nuestra Memoria, Nuestro Futuro. Mujeres e Historia, Ediciones de las Mujeres No10, Santiago, Chile, 1988.

8 For a general overview of the role of women during the Pinochet dictatorship, see María Elena Valenzuela, "The Evolving Roles of Women under Military Rule", in P. Drake and I. Jaksic (eds), The Struggle for

military regime, unemployment and poverty deeply affected the Chilean people, and the women suffered additionally through the feminization of poverty. It was only after the mid eighties, that the process of economic restructuring and modernization began to bring about economic growth and increasing employment and wage levels.

The Pinochet government developed special organizations and a discourse to discipline and depoliticize women, building on the "motherhood and fatherland" ideals and activism of the right-wing women who had mobilized against Allende. Thus a network of female support for the military regime was structured through the CEMAs (headed by Pinochet's wife, Lucía Hiriart), the Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer (the National Women's Agency), and voluntary and charity organizations<sup>9</sup>.

The roots of the present women's movement can be found in the first years of the military dictatorship, in the mid and late 1970s. The Chilean movement is almost a textbook case of the three groups which have contributed to the formation of the modern women's movement in Latin America<sup>10</sup> -i.e. women from

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Democracy in Chile, 1982-1990, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NB, 1991.

9 See P.Chuchryk, Protest, Politics and Personal Life: The Emergence of Feminism in a Military Dictatorship, Chile 1973-1983, Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, Canada, 1984; N. Lechner and S.Levy, "Notas sobre la vida cotidiana III: el disciplinamiento de la mujer", Material de Discusión N°57, FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1984; G. Munizaga and L. Letelier, "Mujer y régimen militar", in CEM, Mundo de mujer. Continuidad y cambio, CEM, Santiago, Chile, 1988; M.E. Valenzuela, La mujer en el Chile militar. Todas íbamos a ser reinas, CESOC-ACHIP, Santiago, Chile, 1987; T. Valdés et al., "Centros de Madres 1973-1989. ¿Sólo disciplinamiento?", Documento de Trabajo N°416, FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1989.

10 See Jane Jaquette, "Introduction", in J.Jaquette, The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy, Westview Press, Boulder, Co., 1991.

human rights organizations, urban poor women and feminists. However, the links with the political parties, although troubled, were also strong, at least until the end of the military regime.

Shortly after the coup of 1973, women began to organize for survival and in defense of human rights. Initially they sought the protection of the churches, and parish work multiplied and diversified resulting in soup-kitchens, handicrafts workshops, child-care centers and health groups. The women whose families had suffered directly from human rights abuses joined in organizations such as the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos, Agrupación de Familiares de Presos Políticos, Agrupación de Familiares de Ejecutados Políticos, etc., in order to engage in solidarity work with the victims of political repression. A support organization, the Agrupación de Mujeres Democráticas, was created to collect funds and help give visibility to the initiatives of the human rights groups. It has been stressed by a feminist scholar that "it was precisely women's traditional public invisibility which allowed them to become political actors at a time when it was extremely dangerous for anyone to do so"<sup>11</sup>. These groups were not concerned specifically with gender issues, but they initiated the strong presence of women in the struggle against the dictatorship, which would be a central aspect of the process of transition to democracy of the mid and late 1980s.

Another important component of the women's movement which developed in Chile during the military dictatorship were urban poor women, the pobladoras<sup>12</sup>. They were driven to organize by

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11 P. Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics: The Role of Women's Organizations in the Chilean Transition to Democracy", in J. Jaquette (ed.), The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy, p.156.

12 See T. Valdés and M. Weinstein, Mujeres que sueñan. Las organizaciones de pobladoras en Chile: 1973-1989, FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1993.

the economic crisis and the need to provide for themselves and their families. However, once these women left the isolation of their home or workplace to join with other women, many of them learned to recognize and articulate their own oppression as a point of departure for political action.

The third component of the Chilean women's movement were the feminist women; many of them middle class professionals who joined the movement because of specific gender issues and linked the critique of patriarchal oppression to that of the military dictatorship<sup>13</sup>. Some of these women had been active in the parties of the left and had experienced gender discrimination there; others had been in exile in Europe and North America and had been exposed there to the women's movement and feminist thinking. A few of these women joined in the *Círculo de Estudios de la Mujer* in 1977 to discuss their condition as women in consciousness-raising groups. This was the first specifically feminist organization created in contemporary Chile and, even though the women's movement has never been synonymous to the feminist movement, from the early 1980s onward, the qualitative impact of feminist thinking was strong. "Democracy in the country and in the home" became the rallying cry first of feminist women and then of the entire women's movement, combining gender issues and the struggle against the dictatorship.

With these objectives in mind, numerous women's groups and organizations were created in the early eighties, in the wake of the social and political protest movement of 1983-1984. Some of them, like the *Centro de Estudios de la Mujer* (created in 1983 as a successor of the *Círculo*), was oriented toward women's studies and feminist research. Another offspring of the *Círculo*, the *Casa de la Mujer La Morada*, engaged in feminist activism, offered

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13 See Julieta Kirkwood, *Ser política en Chile. Las feministas y los partidos.*

counseling and workshops for women, and became the umbrella for the incipient Movimiento Feminista.

Two other important organizations created during this period were MEMCh'83 (the name honoured the previous organization which had sought women's suffrage in the 1930), and Mujeres por la Vida (Women for Life). The first was established to coordinate all of the women's organizations who opposed the dictatorship, and the second began as a group of 16 well-known political women leaders who joined in order to set an example of unity to the rest of the political anti-Pinochet establishment. Both groups included feminist and non-feminist organizations and individuals, and their histories are interesting examples of how the various components of the Chilean women's movement developed an increasingly feminist perspective. The Movimiento de Mujeres Pobladoras (MOMUPO) is another organization which, beginning as an initiative motivated by the need to discuss and act upon its members' condition as urban poor women, gradually developed into a "popular feminist" organization<sup>14</sup>.

The dialectics of class and gender were an issue debated in groups such as the feminist socialist collective Furia and the Movimiento de Mujeres por el Socialismo, which combined "an analysis of capitalism and the need for major socioeconomic transformation with an analysis of patriarchy and the need for women's autonomy and self-determination in the political process"<sup>15</sup>. Another two women's organizations which grew out of parties of the left, but without a feminist analysis -at least initially- were Mujeres de Chile (MUDECHI) and the Comité de

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14 See P. Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics..."; and T. Valdés and M. Weinstein, Mujeres que sueñan...

15 See P. Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics...".

Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (CODEM). The latter also developed into a feminist socialist organization later on.

Chile has traditionally been a country very open to ideas and influence from abroad, and the women's movement was no exception. Exile and the predominance of women of the left (which also had a strong internationalist tradition) accentuated this tendency. The local debates were at least partly similar to those of other countries. The Chilean movement, as did many others, developed in the wake of the U.N. Woman's Decade (1975-1985). The women's movement of the seventies and eighties was an international movement, and whatever happened concerning women, both in the industrialized and the developing countries, influenced debates and initiatives elsewhere. The Encuentros Feministas (1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1990 and 1993) have served as regular meeting places where Latin American and Caribbean feminists have come to know each other, and exchange ideas and points of view<sup>16</sup>. For Chilean feminists they were also an opportunity to discover their own relative homogeneity vis à vis the great diversity of Latin American feminisms, as well as to confirm the specifically political and anti-authoritarian nature and strong leftist legacy of the Chilean movement.

The mid-eighties are seen in retrospect as the most "heroic" period of the women's movement. Women participated massively in all the social and political protest against the military dictatorship. In fact, March 8, International Women's Day became the annual celebration which inaugurated the political year. In December 1983, Mujeres por la Vida organized a huge women's meeting at the Caupolicán Theatre. About 10.000 people assisted,

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16 For an interesting analytical account of these Encuentros, see Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Marysa Navarro-Aranguren, Patricia Chuchryk, and Sonia E. Alvarez, "Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo", in Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Vol.17, No21, 1992.

showing a degree of unity unknown until then in the opposition forces. It became the largest opposition meeting which had taken place so far, and set a high yardstick for future gatherings.

In 1986, the women's movement as such was for the first time represented within a cross-party body, the Asamblea de la Civilidad, which represented different sectors of Chilean society. The women's demands were included in the organization's public statement, the Pliego de Chile, and the women's representative -María Antonieta Saa- spent several months in jail, together with her male colleagues, after calling for a general strike. This was possibly the highest point in the struggle of the women's movement for political legitimacy: it signified a momentum in the effort to link gender issues to the struggle against the dictatorship, while it was also a moment of very active involvement with the forces engaged in bringing about a regime change in Chile.

The organization and mobilization of women were undoubtedly aided by the creation and the development of a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) oriented towards women, most of which were created by active participants in the women's movement. In addition to those mentioned above, Domos, the Instituto de la Mujer, RIDEM, Casa Social<sup>17</sup> -to name only a few- were all instrumental in giving the women's movement a sense of its own worth and potential. This network also served as a very effective channel of communications and mutual support. For example, in late 1984 and early 1985, after the state of siege and a very strict control of the media had been imposed once

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17 For a comprehensive list of these organizations, see A.M. Arteaga and R. Delsing, Directorio Nacional de Servicios y Recursos para la Mujer, CEDEM, Santiago, Chile, 1992; and for an analysis of the role of the women's NGOs, see A.M. Arteaga and E. Largo, "Los ONG en el área de la mujer y la cooperación al desarrollo", in Taller de Cooperación al Desarrollo, Una puerta que se abre. Los organismos no gubernamentales en la cooperación al desarrollo, Santiago, Chile, 1989.

again, Las Mensajeras -a group composed by members of several women's NGOs- circulated a clandestine news bulletin, La Columna, with articles and interviews by opposition leaders (both male and female), keeping its readers informed about the ongoing political debate. Many of the early publications about gender issues in Chile were also possible due to the joint efforts of the members of this network. Whatever mobilizations were organized during this period, the women's network was the fastest and most effective channel to do so.

An important component of the women's movement were, of course, many women members of political parties (Socialists, Communists, Christian Democrats and others). Some organized specific women's organizations within the party -often with great difficulties-, others were plain party members but saw themselves as part of a wider women's movement. Many women party activists felt the need to explain that even if they were part of the women's movement, they were not feminists; others, however, did not even see themselves as belonging to the women's movement.

Especially during the early eighties, the word "feminist" had a negative connotation for many people -both men and women- whether they were politically engaged or not. Within the more traditional and ideological left, feminists were considered "bourgeois" and elitist, and not sufficiently committed to class struggle and the interests of the working class. Long debates were also waged among socialist feminists (the same as elsewhere in the world), about whether class or gender were the primary contradiction within society. Within other sectors, especially those close to the Catholic Church, feminists were viewed as immoral because of their defense of birth control, divorce and abortion.

However, together with the growth and consolidation of the women's movement, and during the final and more liberal stage of

the military dictatorship, feminism also experienced a process of relative legitimation. By 1990, at the time of the democratic transition, this process was so far advanced that the women's movement was advancing feminist objectives as a condition for the democratization and modernization of Chilean society.

The objectives of the women's movement during the years of anti-authoritarian struggle were very broad. They included, of course, putting an end to the military dictatorship, changing the status of women in Chilean society, justice and equal opportunities for all, and -last but not least- changing the nature of lo político (the political) and of cómo hacer la política (the practice of politics). These last two objectives definitely challenged the modus operandi of the political parties and account for much of their unease and distrust vis á vis the women's movement in general and the feminists in particular.

The attempt at redefining what is political was a success: there was a process of politicization of everyday life and of the private sphere, and the home, the family and the neighborhood also became a "locus of political activity"<sup>18</sup>, in addition to the State, the party, the union and the workplace. In fact, these shifts in the locus of political activity deeply affected the characteristics of the women's movement in the period after the transition to democracy.

In this process, women also became political actors in their own right, and stopped acting exclusively for others -the children, the family, the party, or the fatherland.

The women's movement was not successful, however, in effectively changing the practice of politics. A more democratic style, better suited to an egalitarian social movement, was

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18 See P. Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics...", p.175.

sought but never really achieved. In fact, the strong egalitarian traits of the women's movement conspired against raising women to leadership positions where they could negotiate with their peers in the political parties. Without legitimate and representative women leaders it became increasingly difficult for the women's movement to participate in and affect larger political groupings.

Women leaders who were active both in the women's movement and in a political party found it very difficult to maintain and expand their political legitimacy. Many women opted for their party allegiance, in order to maintain and improve their political visibility. This proved to be a "catch 22": without the support of the women's movement, their leadership positions were almost impossible to maintain; however, if they sought the movement's support, their party loyalty was seriously questioned. Thus, when "politics as usual" returned with the transition to democracy, the women's movement found itself in no(wo)mansland: the days of public protest and mobilizations were apparently over, but there seemed to be no place for the women's movement in an institutional setting.

### The Women's Movement and the Transition to Democracy

The women's movement played a significant role during the period of transition to democracy, from 1988 -the year of the plebiscite which defeated Pinochet- to 1990, when President Patricio Aylwin was inaugurated after almost 17 years of military rule.

Before the October 5, 1988 plebiscite, the women's movement played mostly a mobilizing role, organizing at the grass-roots level and through public demonstrations to bring about the defeat of the apparently invincible and omnipotent dictator. "Somos más" ("we are more") became the rallying cry during this period,

expressing both the quantitative superiority of the opposition to the dictatorship and of women. The network of women's NGOs helped in the process of registration, in order to get people to the ballots to vote against Pinochet. For feminist women, publicizing the No-vote became an excellent opportunity to say "no" also to sexism, gender discrimination, patriarchy and the authoritarianism of Chilean society.

However, it also began to be necessary to overcome the mere description and denunciation of gender discrimination and introduce women's issues in the agenda for democracy<sup>19</sup>. Feminist women organized in mid 1988 and issued the *Demandas de las mujeres a la democracia*<sup>20</sup> ("Women's Demands to Democracy"), presenting women's demands in three different areas: a) women as persons and citizens (civil rights issues), b) women as mothers (reproductive, parental and family issues), and women as workers (labor rights issues). The *Demandas* also proposed the creation of a special executive agency, at the ministerial level, to introduce gender issues in public policies; the ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the elimination of the reproduction of sexism and inequality through the educational system; and an equal rights amendment to the Constitution. This was the first time that feminist organizations presented themselves as legitimate interlocutors of the political parties.

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19 For an excellent study of the different analyses and proposals vis á vis women of the different political parties and women's organizations in the period before the transition to democracy, see Natacha Molina, "Propuestas políticas y orientaciones de cambio en la situación de la mujer", in M.A.Garretón (ed.) Propuestas políticas y demandas sociales, Vol.III, FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1989.

20 This document was issued by 21 colectives belonging to the Movimiento Feminista and a group of well-known women. It was published full-length in the newspaper La Epoca, in Santiago, Chile, on July 1, 1988.

Even though the political establishment which opposed the military disliked this initiative -it was considered excessively ambitious, sectorial and divisive of the opposition forces- and did not pay much attention to it at that time, many of the specific issues presented in the Demandas were taken up by the women's movement and later on included in the Concertación's government program, becoming public policies after March 1990. However, the one demand which did not receive any kind of response during the transition to democracy was that which called for women's empowerment within the state apparatus (30 percent of all government decision-making positions).

Another interesting mobilizing and consciousness-raising effort was the campaign Soy mujer, tengo derechos (I am a woman, I have rights) that the network of urban grass-roots women's organizations -Coordinación de Organizaciones Sociales de Mujeres- developed in 1988<sup>21</sup>. This initiative showed the potential for collaboration between grass-roots women's organizations and NGOs.

While the women found it very hard to organize autonomously in 1988 within the opposition coalition of the Concertación por el No, they did play a more significant role in trying to influence the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia, which campaigned throughout 1989 in order to win the presidential and legislative elections of December of that year.

The Concertación Nacional de Mujeres por la Democracia (CNMD) was created in early 1989 as an autonomous women's coalition in support of the overall Concertación. It was quite a unique experience, for it included political party members, feminists and women from the NGOs (many of them with mixed allegiances), with the explicit aim of preparing a government

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21 See T.Valdés and M.Weinstein, Mujeres que sueñan..., pp.230-232.

program, supporting women candidates, including gender issues in the political agenda of the transition to democracy, and publicizing women's discrimination in all sectors of Chilean society.

Their first objective -preparing a government program- was definitely the greatest success of the CNMD. Women from different political spheres, with great professional expertise, organized in eleven commissions in order to make both a gender-specific diagnostic and policy recommendations in the areas of education, health, family, communications, arts and culture, labor, political participation, rural and urban working-class women, legislation and the National Office for Women.

The effectiveness of the CNMD's programmatic efforts can be observed at different levels:

- The government program of the Concertación de Partidos included a special chapter on women and the need to implement gender-specific public policies<sup>22</sup>. This also forced the parties of the Concertación to include gender issues in their own programs, and even the right-wing presidential candidate, Hernán Büchi - Pinochet's dauphin- had to include equal rights for women into his political discourse.

- The CNMD prepared an elaborate program with the recommendations of the eleven commissions<sup>23</sup>. This was the first time that the women's movement offered Chilean society a proposal for change,

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22 Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia, Programa de Gobierno, p.31, Santiago, Chile, 1989.

23 S. Montecino and J. Rossetti, Tramas para un nuevo destino. Propuestas de la Concertación de Mujeres por la Democracia, Santiago, Chile, 1990.

and it has served as the basis of public policies vis á vis women and for the development of further proposals.

Most of the gender-specific public policies that the democratic government implemented between 1990 and 1994 -creation of the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Service, SERNAM), proposal of an equal rights ammendment to the Constitution, elimination of discriminatory policies regarding employment and education, prevention of violence and abuse against women, special programs for female heads of households- were initially proposed by the CNMD. Many of these issues had already been outlined in the Demandas presented by the feminists in 1988.

Thus, even though regime change did not seem to facilitate the immediate empowerment of women in the political sphere -that is, a substantial increase in the number of women elected or appointed to government office-, at least many of the gender issues raised by the women's movement and the CNMD were in fact included in the public agenda for the transition to democracy.

Another aim of the CNMD -making women and gender issues visible in the political arena during the presidential campaign- was only partially achieved. Possibly the women's greatest achievement in this field was that the Concertación's presidential candidate himself -Patricio Aylwin (a traditional and Catholic Christian Democrat)- made the women's demand for "Democracy in the country and in the home" his own<sup>24</sup>. Not only were "women added to the constituency of social actors to whom

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24 "Discurso de Don Patricio Aylwin", Teatro Caupolicán, August 20, 1989, p.4.

Aylwin's campaign was addressed<sup>25</sup>, but the parallel between oppression in the public and in the private sphere, drawn by feminist thinkers, was implicitly accepted. Although this might, of course, have been mere political campaign discourse, it had never been used in this way in any other presidential campaign in Chile (or in Latin America, for all we know), and it thus did signify an important ideological breakthrough for the women's movement.

What had happened? Did the Chilean political leadership have a sudden revelation regarding women's discrimination and oppression? Not really. What occurred in 1989 -a moment when the political establishment was particularly open to new ideas- was a combination of different factors which the women of the CNMD managed to take advantage from with considerable success:

- There was a certain recognition of the important political and mobilizing role the women's movement had had during the struggle against the military dictatorship.

- Gender discrimination, in its most blatant forms, began to be seen as an anachronism, incompatible with a modern, democratic society.

- Women were perceived as particularly prone to vote conservatively; thus a proposal for change necessarily had to include some elements which especially appealed to women.

- A few women from the CNMD enjoyed a personal relationship with the presidential candidate and were thus able to influence him directly.

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25 See P. Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics...", revised version, prepared for the second edition of J. Jaquette (ed), The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy.

Women within and without the CNMD worked hard to put gender concerns and demands on the political agenda during the election process: op-ed articles on gender issues began to appear regularly in the opposition newspapers; a statistical report on the condition of women in Chile was prepared for all candidates; a special campaign pamphlet called "Mujer, Chile te quiere" ("Woman, Chile wants/loves you"), seeking equal rights for women, was distributed nationwide; and the CNMD developed a special campaign "¿Quién mejor que una mujer?" ("Who could be better than a woman?") to promote women candidates in the media.

The CNMD failed, however, to find adequate channels to negotiate the empowerment of women within the political parties and the Concertación. It paid the price for the women's movement incapacity to develop strong, legitimate and representative leaderships. When the moment came to negotiate and defend the presence of women on the lists of legislative candidates and for government posts, this difficulty proved fatal and the traditional interests of the political parties prevailed.

By 1989, most of the parties of the center and left had included gender concerns and propositions for change in their political platforms, and were at least paying lip-service to the need to promote women in leadership positions. The Socialist Party (PS) and the Party for Democracy (PPD) also included an affirmative action program (20 per cent of all decision-making posts should go to women). The Humanist Party even had a woman president (Laura Rodríguez, who was also the first female presidential candidate) and other parties had women as vice-presidents after the 1990 elections. However, even though women seemed to reach more and more formal leadership positions, the locus of decision-making and political power always shifted to somewhere else, where women were absent. Whenever tough decisions had to be made within the political parties regarding political

power positions, the women were once again absent or shoved into the background.

Nevertheless, the important difference of the 1989 campaign was that political parties appealed to women for the first time as "citizens, as workers and as participants in the creation of the new democracy" and not only in their "traditional roles of wife, mother and guardian of hearth and home", formally and publicly recognizing "the existence of inequality and discrimination of women"<sup>26</sup>. The efforts of the women's movement and of the CNMD had borne fruit. Many of the issues which had previously been only on the agenda of a few feminist groups were about to become State policy. However, some crucial issues, such as divorce and abortion, remained off the mainstream agenda (mainly because of pressures by the Catholic Church), and others, such as the empowerment of women, were taken up only rethorically.

#### The Women's Movement in a Democratic Context

The achievements of the women's movement after the return to democracy<sup>27</sup> in 1990 can be -and, in fact, are- viewed within different perspectives<sup>28</sup>.

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26 See P. Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics...", revised paper.

27 There is disagreement among political analysts about whether the transition has been completed or not, whether the post-1990 period should be qualified as of "consolidation of democracy" or "incomplete democracy" or "semi-democracy". Arguments can be made for one qualification or the other. However, it is certainly true that a regime change did take place in Chile in 1990.

28 Some of these perceptions are very negative and others are extremely positive. The self-perception of the women's movement seems to swing abruptly from one to the other.

On the one hand, on the governmental level, many of the women's issues were included in the agenda of the new democratic government; an executive agency at the ministerial level -the Servicio Nacional de la Mujer (SERNAM)- was created in order to introduce and implement gender-specific public policies; María Antonieta Saa, a feminist-socialist leader of the women's movement, was designated mayor of Conchalí -the largest working-class municipality in the Santiago area; and two out of seven women legislators in the House of Representatives -Adriana Muñoz and Laura Rodríguez<sup>29</sup>- were feminists and had been long-time members of the women's movement. A number of professional women who had been active in the movement were appointed to government posts. Several bills were introduced in the legislative process regarding women's rights (domestic violence, labor rights, divorce, therapeutic abortion, marriage law, adultery, status of children). Many of them, however, have not been passed by Congress, because they do not have sufficient support among the legislators - and women have not been able to organize effectively to lobby for the passage of these bills<sup>30</sup>.

However, all things considered, there has not been much progress in the empowerment of women in the political sphere. In Congress, in 1993, there were only 3 women senators and 6 representatives -only about 6 per cent of the total number of legislators. This is, in fact, less than in 1973, before the military coup, when there were 14 representatives. Women accounted for only 10 per cent of the individuals elected to the local councils in the municipal elections in 1992, and 11 per cent of the parliamentary candidates in 1993. In the new

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29 Laura Rodríguez died in 1992 and was not able to finish her legislative term; Adriana Muñoz stood for reelection in 1993 and lost, due -at least in part- to lack of support within her own party.

30 See also, Instituto de la Mujer, ¿Cómo les ha ido a las mujeres chilenas en la democracia? Balance y propuestas: mirando al 2000, Santiago, Chile, 1993.

Parliament, inaugurated in March 1994, there are 9 women representatives (7.5 per cent) -two of them leaders of the women's movement- and 3 women senators. This is only partly due to the undemocratic nature of the electoral laws<sup>31</sup>; the virtual invisibility of women in the political sphere is once again gender-related.

#### WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT, 1951-1994

Year	Chamber of Deputies			Senate		
	Total	Women	%	Total	Women	%
1951-1953	147	1	0,7	45	0	0,0
1953-1957	147	1	0,7	45	1	2,2
1957-1961	147	3	2,0	45	0	0,0
1961-1965	147	5	3,4	45	0	0,0
1965-1969	147	12	8,2	45	2	4,4
1969-1973	150	9	6,0	50	1	2,0
1973	150	14	9,3	50	1	2,0
1990-1994	120	7	5,8	47	3	6,4
1994-1998	120	9	7,5	47	3	6,4

Source : Servicio Electoral.

The political parties, which after 1990 recuperated their traditional role as mediators between the State and civil society, still discriminate strongly against women candidates. The parties do not only reproduce the gender discrimination which is found in Chilean society at large, but they aggravate and reinforce it<sup>32</sup>. Even though women have gained some leadership positions within the parties, they are still viewed with unease and distrust by their male peers, who are bothered by the women's

31 The peculiar binomial electoral system devised by the Pinochet regime was aimed at securing the representation of the right -a numeric minority- in Congress, well beyond its share of the ballot.

32 For a highly interesting analysis of the dynamics of sexism and political power, see Eugenia HOLA and Gabriela PISCHEDDA, Mujeres, poder y política. Nuevas tensiones para viejas estructuras, CEM, Santiago, Chile, 1993.

"otherness", and will try to avoid and/or push them aside politically whenever they can. Women are not only subject to discrimination, but also to the political control of their male peers in government office, and within the political parties. Often this political control is practiced -implicit or explicitly- by a family member or a spouse. Thus, quite a few women who have been nominated to decision-making posts are directly related to a male political leader. Even though these women certainly have credentials of their own to make them eligible, their family links seem to make them more trustworthy in the eyes of the political establishment.

The political dynamics of the democratic transition have encouraged the resurgence of an elitist, all-male, tightly-knit political establishment, where politics have become once again an "acuerdo de caballeros" ("gentlemen's agreement") as in the period before the 1960s. By 1990, a lot of pressure had accumulated within this elite to regain access to positions of political representation, after 17 years of military rule and suspension of political rights.

However, it is also true that the women's movement -which developed outside the party system- has lacked the internal political cohesion to confront these challenges, and effectively raise women to leadership positions.

The process of acquiring political expertise has not been easy either. The few women leaders who have managed to break through all these barriers have encountered additional difficulties because they lacked experience in the predominant style of political negotiation -tough, to the last consequences-,

and have traditionally not given sufficient attention to the financial aspects of the political campaigns<sup>33</sup>.

The SERNAM itself has been a target for criticism within the women's movement. It is considered too cautious and conservative by some; others think that it is the instrument through which the Government has co-opted the feminist discourse and that it has displaced the movement as the main interlocutor with the State; finally, complaints are made that no fluid and organic links exist between the women's organizations and SERNAM.

It is true that SERNAM has had a difficult time legitimizing itself<sup>34</sup>; that it enjoys only a relative autonomy within the State apparatus, and that it has endured strong direct and indirect mechanisms of political control which have limited its scope of action. However, it has also shown great initiative - even if it lacks the political muscle to implement some of its plans- and it is the only institution which attempts to deal with and articulate most of the great variety of gender-specific issues which concern women. Some examples of SERNAM's work during the Aylwin administration are the campaign against violence in the home, the development of a national policy for female heads of households, the revision of educational policies -including sexuality issues-, the program to prevent cancer of the uterus and cervix, the program to support pregnant teen-agers, training programs on gender-specific issues for public officials, and the creation of a National Network of Women's Rights Information

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33 The institutions within the women's movement have been quick to react in order to overcome these shortcomings, and they have developed numerous leadership training courses for women at different levels of social and political participation, many of them from women's grass-roots organizations.

34 The organizational task SERNAM had to carry out in a short time-span was very large: regional offices were created in 13 regions, and most of the personell had to be especially trained and prepared for their new work.

Centers. The Plan for Gender Equality which SERNAM will probably present to the Frei administration in 1994, is likely to be the most comprehensive agenda for women's rights ever developed in Chile.

The role of SERNAM should not be distorted: it is only a government agency, not the locus of the women's empowerment. It neither represents nor replaces the women's movement within the government. It should, ideally, be a close interlocutor of women's organizations, in order not to lose touch with their demands and aspirations, and because its political clout can only be enhanced and reinforced with the movement's active support. The women's movement, on the other hand, should not expect SERNAM to advance further than it has itself, nor envision a government agency which "represents" the movement. Possibly, a combination of pressure, criticism, support, and active lobbying would be the most effective relationship the movement could develop with the women's agency in the future.

The role of the women's movement in the new democratic context has been quite different from what it had been before. Some analysts and former activists even go so far as to say that there is no women's movement any more and that democracy co-opted the feminist discourse and demobilized the movement. We strongly disagree with this interpretation.

We believe that together with the change in the political context from an authoritarian, repressive dictatorship to a more open, democratic regime, which respects civil rights, the nature of the women's movement (and other social movements) has also changed.

The "heroic" days of barricades and demonstrations seem to be over, at least for the time being. Authoritarianism and patriarchy are not so easily identified and fought against as in

the past. Pinochet has not left the political scene completely, and many "authoritarian enclaves" remain, but most people perceive that democracy is in the process of consolidation. The 1993 renewal of democratically elected authorities was smooth, and President Eduardo Frei's inauguration in March 1994 will mark the continuity of the democratic process.

The way in which women -and society in general- perceive social change has also suffered dramatic transformations. The crisis of Marxism and Socialism has affected feminist thinking world-wide, and it has had a definite impact on the Chilean women's movement which has traditionally had strong links with the left. There is, of course, an agenda of gender-specific issues -which also grows together with the changes achieved in the condition of women- but the more general ideological context (what kind of social change are we seeking?) within which these issues are placed is in a state of flux.

Thus, much of the non gender-specific concerns of the women's movement have either disappeared or become uncertainties, urging a redefinition of the movement. Poverty remains an important concern both because of the movement's roots among urban poor women, and also as a result of the more general problem of the feminization of poverty. Strategies for poverty alleviation have evolved from the subsistence organizations of the Pinochet years into more structured initiatives like cooperatives and micro-businesses, with the support of women's social organizations and NGOs.

The anti-authoritarian struggle and the overall concern for social change also provided links with the political establishment. This absence of a common denominator was worsened by the movement's lack of legitimate and representative leadership, which might have provided adequate channels of

communication and negotiation with the State and the political parties.

In the present context it has become more complex to place a feminist agenda within the conceptual and practical framework of anti-authoritarian struggle and social change. This is one of the great challenges the women's movement is facing in the 90s and which it has not resolved.

In addition to these changes in the political and ideological context, there are basically five dimensions where there have been significant variations in the nature of the women's movement if the developments in the eighties are compared with those of the nineties; the transition period (1988-1989) is a category by itself. These dimensions are: institutionalization, regionalization, variety of issues, policy proposals and articulation -all of which show varying levels (which we categorize as low or high) of development.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE 80s AND 90s  
Levels of Development

	Dictatorship (1978-1987)	Transition (1988-1989)	Democracy (1990-1994)
Institutionalization	Low	High	High
Variety of Issues	Low	High	High
Policy Proposals	Low	High	High
Regionalization	Low	Low	High
Articulation	High	High	Low

Of course, this comparative table has many caveats: it is rather schematic, none of the periods or dimensions are as clearly defined in reality as they look on paper. However, it does serve as an instrument to evaluate the more recent developments, and especially it helps reveal the nature and the role of the women's movement after the return to democracy.

Institutionalization. Perhaps the most salient aspect of the development of the women's movement during the last decade is the number of women's non-governmental organizations (institutions and networks), social organizations, and grass-roots groups which have mushroomed, reacting to the need to change the status of women and the quality of women's lives<sup>35</sup>.

35 For a description of these hundreds of organizations, see T.Valdés, E.Gomariz (Coord.), Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, Avances de Investigación, Chile, VIII, "Organismos y acción de promoción de la mujer", Estudios Sociales N°37, FLACSO-Chile, 1992.

WOMEN'S NGOs, 1991

	Specialized NGOs	Programs within NGOs	Total
Action oriented	23	92	115
Academic and action oriented	15	29	44
Total	38	121	159

Source : CEDEM, Directorio Nacional de Servicios y Recursos para la Mujer, Santiago, 1992.

WOMEN'S SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS (1), 1991

Type of organizations	Number of organizations	Number of members	Federations
Mothers' Centers	4.243	93.346	13
Popular Economic Organizations	575	7.668	48
Urban Poor Women's Organizations			
- Santiago (2)	1.968	17.415	51
- Rest of the Country	1.986	24.229	3
Rural Poor Women's Organizations	1.524	27.432	--
Feminist Groups and Collectives	182	nd	--
Unions	12	nd	--
Professional Associations	17	nd	--
Voluntary Organizations	32	35.938	--
Solidarity Groups	2	3.730	--
Total	10.541	209.758	115

Notes : (1) Only some of these organizations perceive themselves as belonging to the women's movement.

(2) Aproximate number.

Sources : INE, PET, PRODEMU, INDAP, CEDEM, GUIA SILBER 1991, El Telar, Las Alamedas, SEPADE, CENPROS, Instituto de la Mujer, IDEL, Tierra Nuestra, SUR Profesionales, Tideh, Municipalities of Santiago, the organizations themselves.

These organizations began to appear during the struggle against the dictatorship, and they flourished especially during the transition and also after the return to democracy. Many of

them established women's centers (casas de la mujer), offered workshops and summer schools for consciousness-raising, leadership training and many other courses for middle and low-income women. These organizations have gathered for very different reasons: solidarity, participation, health, handicrafts, work, education, human rights, food, violence against women, among others -but they all share a common gender-specific concern.

### CASAS DE LA MUJER (Women's Centers), 1991

NAME	ACTIVITIES
<b>SANTIAGO</b>	
Casa de la Mujer La Morada	Education, training, legal aid, mental health care, domestic and sexual violence. Radio Tierra.
Casa Sofía	Alphabetization, mental health care, physical fitness.
Casa Malén	Education, physical fitness.
Casa de la Mujer Gabriela Mistral	Education, psychological aid.
Casa de la Mujer Población Chacabuco	Education, workshops for women leaders, technical training, dissemination, extension.
Casa Comunal de la Mujer de Conchalí	Psychological and legal aid, education, counseling, training.
Casa de la Mujer "Ruca Domo"	Training, personal development.
Casa de la Mujer de Huamachuco	Training, education.
Casa de la Mujer Quinta Normal	Education, folklore, dancing, physical fitness.
Casa de la Mujer de Villa O'Higgins	Education, technical training, dissemination, extension.
Casa de la Mujer "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe"	Education, organizational development.
Casa de la Mujer La Pintana	Education, technical training, credit, small workshops, dissemination and extension.
Casa de la Mujer de Nuñoa	Dissemination and extension, cultural activities
<b>REST OF THE COUNTRY</b>	
Casa de la Mujer de Arica	Education, dissemination, extension, activism, solidarity, research.

Casa de la Mujer de Valparaíso	Education, services, research, dissemination.
Casa de la Mujer de Sta. Julia	Education, technical training, credit, small workshops, dissemination, extension.
Casa de la Mujer "Yela"	Workshops and community workers training.
Casa de la Mujer de Nonguén	Education, technical training, credit, small workshops, dissemination, extension.
Casa de la Mujer de Coronel	Education and training.
Casa de la Mujer Mapuche	Training, organizational development, health care, marketing support.

In popular sectors, many soup-kitchens have been recycled into cooperatives or micro-businesses with the support of NGOs (for example, Raíces and PROSAN), serving meals at the community level or in public schools.

The trend toward institutionalization helped to strengthen and diversify the women's organizations. However, the effect on the movement was not directly symmetrical. In many cases, once the organizations had an internal structure, a budget and institutional goals, the need for survival and legitimation vis á vis the rest of society, also made the organizations more cautious in their involvement with the rest of the movement. It was also a question of numbers: the more organizations existed, more difficult it became to relate to one another, and to achieve a close, trustful and meaningful relationship.

However, in many cases, the organizations also developed very effective networks, which have enhanced the public visibility of the women's movement. We believe that in the medium and long-term, if the organizations maintain and expand their gender-specific purposes, the trend toward institutionalization will in fact result in a stronger and more powerful movement.

## WOMEN'S NETWORKS, 1992

- \* Red Interinstitucional Mujer y Trabajo (Labor): created in 1988
- \* Red Nacional contra la Violencia Doméstica y Sexual (Domestic and Sexual Violence): created in 1990
- \* Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres (Popular Education): created in 1988
- \* Foro Abierto de Salud y Derechos Reproductivos (Health and Reproductive Rights): created in 1992
- \* Red de Salud de la Mujer (Health): since 1984 in all América Latina
- \* Coordinadora de ONG Mujer Mapuche (Indigenous Rights): created in 1985
- \* Coordinación de ONG y Programas de Mujeres de Valparaíso: created in 1989
- \* Consejo Regional de la Mujer del Bío-Bío: created in 1984

Institutionalization does not only mean creating new institutions, it also means that demands which were formerly voiced in simpler forms in meetings or on the streets, now become more formal political platforms of organizations and are included in the public debate and in the media. Feminist women have even created their own radio station -Radio Tierra- which has been transmitting a feminist discourse since 1991, and there is also a feminist newspaper, Marea Alta. Gender studies, which were formerly limited to small -rather marginal- research centers, have been introduced in the public universities. The former small research centers (e.g. Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, Instituto de la Mujer) have now become solid and very productive institutions, and their professional services are often sought by SERNAM and other government agencies.

Simultaneously, there has been a tremendous increase in women's creative expression and cultural production, which manifests itself in academia, in literature, and in the arts. Women and gender-specific cultural manifestations have a greater presence than they ever had before. Part of this is due to the renewed freedom of expression within a democratic context, but it

also expresses the women's new sense of identity, and often shows the support of the women's institutional network. An interesting example are the Julieta Kirkwood Prize, given yearly by La Morada to an individual who has given outstanding public support to the enhancement of women's rights. There is also a negative distinction, the Antipremio Estropajo (Rag Anti-prize), given to the most machista representation of women in the media.

In addition to institutionalization, another complementary trend toward professionalization has taken place. In the late 80s feminist activism was just not enough any more to run the newly created organizations, and a large group of professional women and of women, especially trained to work in these organizations, developed. It is true, that today there is a more institutionalized and professional movement in lieu of the formerly more spontaneous and activist movement. However, even though some of the more romantic and idealistic aspects of the struggle for women's rights might get less attention, if bureaucratic practices are avoided, and the gender-specific goals are not only maintained but enlarged, these trends might help further the movement in the long run.

Variety of issues. Originally the Chilean women's movement addressed mostly a limited number of issues -the classical "women's issues" (legal and political discrimination, divorce, abortion, day care, birth control). Of course, the issues related to the anti-dictatorial struggle -human rights, freedom of speech, hunger and deprivation- were also present, but with a focus which was not too different from that of other social and political actors.

Increasingly, with the transition and the return to democratic rule, the movement gave impulse to a two-way process: on the one hand, the traditional "women's issues" were presented and in fact became, more and more, issues which concerned the

society as a whole; on the other, the women began to address and get involved in more general issues (the environment, housing, health, education, poverty, labor rights, communications, democratic governance, civil-military relations), with a gender-specific orientation.

This process of issue-diversification went hand in hand with that of institutionalization and professionalization of the women's movement. New work-environments and skills had to be developed to deal in a meaningful way with this new array of issues. This process is eloquently reflected in the production of knowledge by and for the women's movement of this period: while in 1982, women's studies focused only on 6 different areas; in 1989, that number had changed to 18 <sup>36</sup>.

After the return to democracy, there has also been some continuity regarding the apparently non gender-specific issues the women's movement has dealt with historically. For example, two issues which were crucial in the origins of the movement during the early years of the dictatorship -subsistence and human rights- are still active concerns at least of part of the women's movement, even if the context has changed because of an increased freedom of expression and an improved relationship with the State. Also, organized women continue to be the main constituency demanding truth and justice in the many pending cases of victims of military repression and abuse. The demand for political and social participation has also been a permanent issue for the women's organizations.

The grass-roots women's organizations are, in fact, almost the only social organizations which have survived from the days

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36 See Teresa Valdés, "Movimiento de mujeres y producción de conocimientos de género en Chile", in G.Briones et al., Usos de la investigación social en Chile, p:264, FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1993.

of the dictatorship. Some of the women have taken the leadership courses offered by the NGOs, and they have been active trying to obtain the legal status necessary in order to participate in their municipal Social and Economic Council.

Many specific class issues seem to have been put on hold temporarily within the movement, just as they have been in Chilean society at large, due in part to the complex political dynamics of the transition, and also because of the more general crisis of the left.

Clearly, there is no "single-issue" women's movement in Chile today. While this diversification has catapulted women to arenas where they were formerly absent, it has also dispersed some of the leverage a more specifically focused movement might have had.

The formerly so-called "women's issues" (abused and neglected women and children, abortion, parental rights and duties, sexual harassment, gender discrimination) receive a lot of public attention nowadays. They are covered extensively in the media, where they are treated as human interest issues. Even though this treatment of the issues often takes away some of the more gender-specific edge of feminist analysis, the goal of advocating the public debate of these topics is effectively met.

On the other hand, women have been busy trying to "engender" different realms of public discourse and policies<sup>37</sup>. These efforts have been more successful, for the time being, in influencing political programs and discourse, than in affecting

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37 See Virginia Guzmán and Rebeca Salazar, "Los problemas de género en el debate de las políticas públicas", in E. Lahera, Cómo mejorar la gestión pública, pp.151-193, CIEPLAN, FLACSO, Foro 90, Santiago de Chile 1993.

policies. Possibly it will only be through the direct empowerment of women that legislative results and policy implementations will effectively change<sup>38</sup>.

Policy Proposals. During the decade between 1983 and 1993, the political platforms and policy proposals developed by the women's movement became less and less denunciatory, schematic and general, and more and more pro-active, extensive and specific.

The increasing growth and maturity of the movement can be traced through the analysis of these political platforms. The Manifiesto Feminista<sup>39</sup> of 1983 was possibly the first of these documents. It was rather sketchy, but contained most of the themes the movement would develop later on (links between authoritarianism and patriarchy; violence against women; and indications on how to overcome the discrimination against women in politics, employment, jurisprudence, education). The Plataforma de la Mujer Chilena<sup>40</sup>, developed by MEMCh 83 in 1984, had a more complex structure, and closely followed the contents of the UN Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>41</sup>. The Pliego de las Mujeres presented in 1986 within the context of the Asamblea de la Civilidad, was another step forward. In previous pages we have

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38 An interesting case is that of the U.S.: a total of 30 laws which positively affected the status of women was passed in 1993, the first year after a significant number of women legislators had been elected to Congress. In previous years, the average number of laws per year had been only five.

39 See M.A.Meza, La otra mitad de Chile, pp.195-199, CESOC, Santiago, Chile, 1985 (?).

40 See M.A.Meza, op.cit., pp.201-210.

41 Within the political parties or political movements, women also developed platforms of their own, like the Propositiones de Políticas para la Mujer of the Christian-Democratic Party, and Mujeres por el Socialismo of the Socialist Women's Movement (see M.A.Meza, op.cit., pp.181-193 and 211-215).

already described the significant role of the Demandas de las Mujeres a la Democracia, presented by feminist women in 1988, in setting the women's agenda for the transition to democracy.

A significant conceptual leap was made in 1989 when the Concertación Nacional de Mujeres por la Democracia (CNMD) prepared its Propuestas<sup>42</sup>, which covered a large number of areas, and presented most of the gender-specific public policies implemented by the Aylwin administration. From a political point of view, the CNMD's programmatic achievements were a landmark, in as much the movement's discourse definitely completed the transition from denouncing gender discrimination to proposing specific measures and policies to transform the condition of women in Chilean society. This achievement involved the efforts of a large group of professional women who worked in the CNMD's eleven programmatic commissions. This was a very special moment in the history of the movement: after years of activism, study, thought and debate, this group of professional women had acquired the necessary skills and legitimacy to seek a change in women's condition from the perspective of their own area of specialization.

After the return to democracy, policy proposals have become more numerous, but also increasingly specific and technical. Organizations and individuals have worked on and tried to influence the legislative proposals concerning women seeking congressional approval. Most of these efforts have not been coordinated, and have thus not had the necessary impact to push through legislation. One of the challenges the movement will face in the next years, is to create an effective women's lobbying group to coordinate technical and political efforts, influence policy proposals, and mobilize women to press for the passage of bills concerning women's rights.

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42 See p.19 of this paper and S.Montecino and J.Rosetti, op.cit.

Dealing with the issues and discussing them on an organizational, civil society level before specific legislative or policy proposals are made, is crucial for the success of these proposals. Strategies for the implementation of these proposals are also important. An interesting case, in this regard, is that of abortion, which is illegal in Chile<sup>43</sup>, and is publicly viewed as a taboo issue. Women's organizations have been discussing abortion, but without much publicity for fear of reprisals. During 1992 and 1993, the need for therapeutic abortion<sup>44</sup> (which is also prohibited in Chile) was discussed and agreed on publicly. These debates have been strategically important: they initiated public debate about abortion, they have also fueled the discussion about the need for therapeutic abortion within the political parties (usually very resilient to deal with the issue of abortion), and will thus help support the legislative proposal presented by Representative Adriana Muñoz.

The women's movement did not engage as actively in trying to influence the political platforms of the 1993 election as they had in 1989. However, gender-specific issues had a prominent status within the "anti-system" presidential campaign of Manfred Max-Neef, who was backed by many feminists. Even if they were not as prominent, gender issues were dealt with in a more comprehensive way in Eduardo Frei's (the candidate of the center-left governing coalition) political platform<sup>45</sup>, which will at least partly serve as the basis of the next government's policies.

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43 However, there are about 150.000 yearly clandestine abortions, and about 1 in 3 pregnancies results in an abortion.

44 A therapeutic abortion is made when the fetus is severely damaged, or when the pregnancy is a serious hazard to the mother's health.

45 Un gobierno para los nuevos tiempos, Bases programáticas del Segundo Gobierno de la Concertación, Santiago, Chile, 1993.

The most comprehensive policy proposal concerning changes in the condition of women is the Plan for Gender Equality which SERNAM will probably present to the Frei administration in 1994. Although it is a document prepared by a government agency and not by the women's movement, it certainly incorporates (at least in the draft presently circulating) many of the proposals regarding gender equality developed by the Chilean movement, as well as many ideas which originated in women's movements elsewhere in the world.

Regionalization. Geographically, Chile is a very long and narrow country; its political system, however, is extremely centralized. Santiago is the capital; a real metropolis, where almost 40 per cent of the population is concentrated and which serves as the seat of the political and economic power elites. It is also the locus of contacts with abroad, which in a geographically isolated country like Chile, is of great importance.

In spite of its historic start in the nitrate North in the early twentieth century, the women's movement has had its traditional stronghold in Santiago. Thus, the history of the women's movement in the eighties is almost exclusively that of the Santiago movement. During the late eighties, however, a few women's groups and organizations began to appear in the bigger towns like Arica, Antofagasta, Valparaíso, Concepción, Temuco and Puerto Montt.

This changed dramatically during the transition to democracy. Together with the mobilization against Pinochet and in support of the democratic presidential candidate, ideas about women's rights began to travel at a very fast pace, and very soon there were active women's NGOs and social and political organizations in most regions of Chile. Many organizations were activated after 1989 in urban and rural areas; involving indigenous women, campesinas, housewives, and industrial workers.

In the Santiago area itself, many new organizations developed at the district and municipal level, decentralizing also the women's movement in the capital. In many cases, the NGOs served as the link between the grass-roots women's groups, and the more political organizations within the movement.

Some of these initiatives were activated by SERNAM's regional and municipal delegations; others by the PRODEMU, a government agency, oriented toward poor women, which is headed by the President's spouse. On the other hand, the process of institutionalization also projected itself to the provinces - especially during the transition to democracy- where NGOs had not developed as much during the previous period as they had in Santiago. Some of these NGOs have faced financial problems after the return to democracy, and it is uncertain how many of them will be able to survive. Nevertheless, the map of women's organizations in Chile has changed during the recent years: the news about equal rights for women are now reaching most of the country's urban and some of its rural areas, even though the condition of women might not have changed much yet.

Articulation. There is no articulated and publicly highly visible women's movement in Chile today. This is possibly the main reason why some analysts and activists are arguing that presently there is no women's movement at all.

During the struggle against the dictatorship and in the transition period, the level of articulation of the movement was certainly higher. Why?

Articulating the women's movement in the eighties was simpler than it is in the nineties. Then, the struggle against authoritarianism and patriarchy merged and became a driving force for organizing International Women's Day celebrations, political

demonstrations in the streets and a few large public meetings. Agreement was only necessary on a few basic issues.

At that time, the movement was much smaller and less complex. There were fewer organizations, as well as individuals, focusing on a limited number of issues; most of them personally knew one another, and were concentrated in the city of Santiago. Today, increased levels of institutionalization and professionalization, as well as the larger variety of issues and more comprehensive policy proposals, added to a growing process of regionalization and decentralization, have changed the movement into a much larger, heterogeneous, very fluid and rather dispersed body, which has become very difficult to articulate.

Another important factor of cohesion -the anti-dictatorial struggle- has also disappeared. This was in itself a unifying force for the women's movement, but it is also true that the opposition political establishment was interested in supporting and highlighting the importance of the social movements in the struggle against Pinochet. It was precisely this interest that helped to introduce the women's movement's actions to the media. This interest disappeared after the return to democracy when "politics as usual" displaced the social movements as front line political actors.

Much of the articulation and cohesion that exists today has been organized around regional and/or issue-oriented women's networks -labor, domestic and sexual violence, popular education, health and reproductive rights, indigenous rights.

Seeking articulation in Santiago and at the national level are the biggest challenges the women's movement is facing today. Articulation and public visibility are not per se necessary conditions for the existence of the women's movement. The

movement may persist in a state of latency<sup>46</sup>, and even grow, develop and mature without a high level of articulation. However, if the movement is seeking a real breakthrough in the condition of women within Chilean society and in their relationship with the State, and is advocating comprehensive cultural changes and very ambitious policy proposals, this can only be achieved by a movement which has gained leverage through significant levels of internal articulation and public mobilization.

During 1993, an electoral year, a few initiatives arose within the women's movement in order to articulate to break the inertia of the exclusion of women from the political candidacies. On the one hand, the women leaders of the government coalition got together and denounced publicly the complex manoeuvres that the party negotiators had used in order to avoid the presence of women candidates. On the other hand, a group of women organized a brief campaign called Más Mujeres al Parlamento (More Women to Parliament), and managed to get thousands of signatures backing a stronger presence of women candidates. Their biggest achievement was to press for the nomination of María Antonieta Saa (a long-time feminist and leader of the women's movement) as a candidate in the Partido por la Democracia (PPD), and help get her elected as representative for Conchalí, after she had been displaced by political sectors within her own party. An independent feminist candidate tried to run for Parliament, but her candidacy did not prosper because of lack of support and articulation.

These initiatives were only limited and their achievements were altogether rather meager. They did show, however, that internal articulation is possible -when there is enough political

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46 See Alberto Melucci, "Social Movements and the Democratization of Everyday Life", in John Keane (ed.), Civil Society and the State, Verso, London, 1988.

will- and that it results in definite achievements -if the objectives and available resources are well-defined.

### Conclusion

Since its historic beginnings in the early twentieth century in the nitrate North, the Chilean women's movement has developed and passed through a variety of stages -all of them closely related to the political developments of the time. An upswing moment was the struggle for female suffrage in the thirties and forties; another one came in the eighties, with the combined struggle against the military regime and for women's rights, during the dictatorship and the transition to democracy.

What seemed to be the main challenges to the women's movement in the late eighties, that is, "building a mass movement, developing cross-class alliances, coordinating the mobilization of the women's opposition, and, importantly, maintaining autonomy to ensure that social movements would not be marginalized by political parties in the transition"<sup>47</sup>, have not been met after four years of democratic rule.

However, the women's movement is flourishing in Chile today, and it is more extensive and diverse than it was ever before. It is a movement which consists of thousands of women's groups, NGOs, social and political organizations, with a variety of orientations and purposes, focusing on many different issues, and spread out all over the Chilean territory. In spite of their great variety and considerable dispersion, all these groups and organizations share gender-specific concerns and have in common a desire to change the status of women.

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47 Patricia Chuchryk, "Feminist Anti-Authoritarian Politics...", (revised paper).

If compared with the women's movement of the eighties, today's movement shows an increased level of institutionalization and professionalization; it focuses on a greater variety of issues and has been able to develop much more comprehensive policy proposals; and it has spread from Santiago to most regions of Chile. Its impact in the cultural sphere is considerable.

There are two dimensions, however, where the development of the movement has lagged behind. One, is the internal articulation and consequent public visibility which is necessary to enhance and give leverage to the women's proposals for social change. Another, is to place the feminist agenda within a more general framework of social change, without losing its autonomy and specificity, and modifying the presently gender-specific characteristics of power relationships. These will be the great challenges for the women's movement of the mid and late nineties.

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