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ABSTRACT APPROVAL

Thesis Title: (ARTURO ALESSANDRI AND THE CHILEAN
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1920)

Candidate: Sally Ann Jones

Degree: Master of Arts in History

Thesis Presented: May 9, 1968

Thesis Adviser

ABSTRACT

After rising to a position of political and economic importance among the Latin American republics of the nineteenth century, Chile lost that leadership in the early 1900's, much to the consternation of her leading statesmen and intellectuals. The economic dislocation following World War I exacerbated the already serious social conditions, while at the same time the traditionally passive lower classes started to demand a voice in the management of their own affairs. The existing governmental system had proved itself powerless to solve the pressing problems facing the country at every turn. Chile desperately needed new leadership; the time was perfect for the emergence of a modern-style caudillo. As early as 1918, Arturo Alessandri was prominently mentioned as a likely candidate for the Presidency. He had established his charismatic qualities and his political prowess in his 1915 campaign for the Senate seat for Tarapacá, and in the short span of four years he became the "popular" choice for the highest office. Alessandri won nomination as the candidate of the Liberal Alliance coalition in 1920, and he was elected President by such a slim margin that the contest

had to be decided by a Tribunal of Honor. His triumph made him Chile's first middle-class chief executive-- a victory for the middle sectors that voted for him and the lower classes that threatened revolution if he were denied the office. The magnitude of his win must be qualified, however, for the oligarchy was aware that without control of Congress Alessandri would be unable to effect even moderate reforms. He had promised to right all the things that were so wrong in Chile but such promises were not to be fulfilled.

ARTURO ALESSANDRI
AND THE
CHILEAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1920

A THESIS

Submitted by
Sally Ann Jones
in partial fulfillment of
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History
Portland State College

June 1968

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PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1920

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Dean of Graduate Studies

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AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

He was the grandson of an Italian juggler who traveled to Chile with a group of entertainers and stayed to become the Kingdom of Italy's first accredited diplomat to the Santiago government. He was the son of a gentleman farmer who acquired connections among the local aristocrats but who never succeeded in becoming one of them. He was a lawyer who won election to the Chamber of Deputies at the age of twenty-nine, and became the youngest man in the nation's history to hold a cabinet post.

Arturo Alessandri Palma was inaugurated as President of the Republic of Chile in December, 1920, the first "popular" candidate to be elected to the highest office and the first chief executive of middle class immigrant background. His victory climaxed a violent political struggle which, in the midst of economic distress and social unrest, brought the country to the brink of revolution. To Alessandri, called the "Lion of Tarapacá," must go some of the credit and much of the blame for the nature of Chilean development in the twentieth century.

I. THE CHILEAN POLITICAL SETTING

During most of the nineteenth century the Republic of Chile was regarded as a model for stable and enlightened government in Latin America. Its system of political parties dates back to 1831, and the practice of orderly transfer of public office was firmly established shortly thereafter. The Chilean oligarchy accepted the principle that the opposition was entitled to a voice in government; and while honest elections were rare, at least members of the opposition could be seated if they managed to overcome official control of the electoral machinery. After 1870, three or more parties were regularly represented in Congress, thus minority factions were able to maintain continuity between presidential campaigns. A party's doctrine was more important than its candidate--in Latin America an attitude uniquely Chilean--and partly because of that attitude, Chile escaped the evils of personalism and caudillismo so prevalent in the neighboring republics. Yet the President, in practice, constituted an almost invincible authority who directed the administration of the country, influenced congressional elections, and designated his own successor. Domination by the executive extended over the courts, the armed forces, and the provincial governors and intendants;

and it was in no way curtailed while the Conservative Party remained in power. With the ascendancy of the Liberals at mid-century came gradual constitutional reforms which weakened somewhat the control exercised by the President, but he still retained the prime power of intervention in local government affairs.

Chile fought a major war against Peru and Bolivia in the years 1879 to 1883, acquiring additional territory, a strengthened economy, and a new set of problems. Almost 25,000 mestizo nitrate workers had to be incorporated into the labor force of the north, and Chileans closed their eyes to the exploitation of those "inferior foreigners." The expanded frontiers required more effective defense measures, which on the one hand led to the professionalization and Prussianization of the army, and on the other fostered suspicion and mistrust in civilian sectors.

Furthermore, significant shifts in the power structure had occurred--economic and social as well as political--and the upper classes were able to challenge the previously uncontested executive authority. In 1890 the Liberal Party, with a formidable majority in Congress, dared to resist President Balmaceda and to lead the movement in support of a parliamentary form of government. The Liberals also renewed the struggle for the old

principle of electoral liberty.¹ Events reached a climax the following year when revolution toppled not only a president, but presidential dominance as well; the entire system collapsed.

Under the new regime, the President was to govern in accord with the parliamentary majority, and he was required to submit all his acts to the scrutiny of Congress. The composition of the majority varied greatly, depending on the particular circumstances, and any splinter group might topple a ministry by withdrawing its support of the dominant coalition. During the thirty-three year existence of the Parliamentary Period, the instability of ministries reached epidemic proportions: 121 cabinet changes involving the incredible total of 530 ministers.² Most representative of political parties were the Democratic Liberals who, according to Fredrick B. Pike, "stand as a symbol of Chilean politics during the era. They were ready to combine with any and all alliances and coalitions, or to leave them just as casually, provided political expediency so dictated."

For more than a quarter of a century, Chile wallowed

¹At that time the Liberals were profiting from the practice of electoral intervention, though many opposed it on moral grounds.

²According to official Senate figures cited by Alberto Edwards Vives and Eduardo Frei Montalva, Historia de los partidos políticos chilenos, p. 134.

in political sterility under a cloak of outward stability. There was little chance for even the most dedicated leaders to plan and carry out programs of national development; for yesterday's ally might be tomorrow's foe, and each party faction had an effective veto.³ Abuse of the Congressional power to interpellate and censure Ministers, coupled with irresponsible delay in passing appropriations bills--fiscal blackmail, served effectively to neutralize what little executive authority remained. In the Chilean tradition, Presidents did succeed one another according to the provisions of the Constitution; and though that fact is notable, it hardly constitutes a ringing endorsement of the system. Civil liberties of the middle and upper classes were respected, freedom of the press was maintained, some improvements in communications and in education were evident, and the personal integrity of the numerous cabinet members was creditable.⁴ The two most

³Fredrick B. Pike, Chile and the United States, 1880-1962: The Emergence of Chile's Social Crisis and the Challenge to United States Diplomacy, pp. 87-8.

⁴Corruption and bribery within the bureaucracy have been noted by most writers on Chilean politics. The law of 1892 providing autonomy for municipalities was supposed to facilitate higher standards of government on the local level, but generally it had the opposite effect. Vote buying was an accepted procedure that developed with the shift of lower class population to the cities. The oligarchy determined that the only way to render the masses politically harmless was to pay them to vote for the right candidates; one's vote came to be considered property which could be sold to the highest bidder.

discussed issues of the period were the stabilization of the currency to slow the rampant inflation, and the expansion of education under the control of the State instead of the Church. However, years of debating produced no decisions; the Church-State issue was not resolved until 1925, and the economic dislocation resulting from World War I made impossible a return to the gold standard, so Chile continued her love affair with paper money. While senators and deputies engaged in histrionics and Presidents passed through La Moneda, the nation's social problems were growing acute.

Unrest and violence were not confined to the nitrate fields of the Atacama region, but became prevalent in the coal mines of the south as well. The rural labor force, predominantly mestizo, had existed in a "semi-feudal" society until many of the landed aristocracy lost their holdings around the turn of the century. Then the rural masses, uneducated and unskilled, migrated to the towns and cities, swelling the ranks of the urban unemployed; and this oversupply of brute labor only postponed the desperately needed improvements in working conditions and wages. Labor organizations developed slowly and protest meetings and demonstrations were ruthlessly suppressed with force.⁵

⁵The first serious labor movement began in the cities in the 1880's and 1890's, but major success was elusive until the founding of the Gran Federacion Obrera de Chile (FOCH) in 1909. Very moderate at first, it advocated an 8-hour day,

Throughout the Parliamentary Period the ruling groups were unable or unwilling to recognize the inevitable results of rising expectations among the lower classes in the face of economic distress. Only a handful of sincere reformers dotted the Chilean scene, and these few received encouragement from the tremendous volume of literature which decried the miserable living conditions endured by a large segment of the population. In fact, Chilean "muck-rakers" produced a greater proportion of such books and articles than did the famed Muckrakers in the United States, but they failed to generate any concerted effort to correct the existing inequities. Most of the reformers approached their goal from a basically conservative orientation. They defended the concept of a stratified society with a class of brute laborers at its base, and they clung to the belief that the lower classes were willing to be ruled. Since the masses did not aspire to a position of greater influence, they reasoned, then unrest and agitation had to be the work of subversives. Fundamentally, this was also the stance of the defenders of the status quo; the difference lay in the fact that the reformers recognized an urgent need to ease the plight of the masses if the political

sickness insurance, and arbitration of disputes; however, it soon turned to the left and by 1917 was avowedly revolutionary. See Robert J. Alexander, Prophets of the Revolution, p. 55; also, Pike, p. 110.

and social system was to remain intact. Significant improvement in living conditions was essential to keep the lower classes relatively passive and inert in the hierarchical structure.

Whether motivated by enlightened self-interest or sincere concern for the suffering population, Chile's small group of forward-looking aristocrats undertook an enormous task, and their failure was due more to the circumstances of the times than to their own lack of ability or dedication. Chileans had experienced a perceptible decline both in national morals and in the national morale. They had lost confidence in the leaders and pride in their institutions. The economy was unbalanced and unhealthy; and a sizable portion of the nation's citizens--ill, unfed, unclothed, and without shelter--appeared almost ready to rise up and overturn the old order.⁶

Such was the state of the Republic when Arturo Alessandri made his entrance into national politics.

⁶See Pike, Chapter 4, particularly the section entitled "Self Criticism: The Favorite National Pastime"; see also Edwards and Frei, pp. 174-6.

II. THE SENATORIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1915

The province of Tarapacá was created in 1884 out of territory acquired from Peru in the War of the Pacific. By the second decade of the twentieth century this desert area, rich with nitrate beds, had become the political fief of Senator Arturo del Río who commanded the blind obedience of the provincial administrative and judicial authorities. Corruption flourished under the protection of the local government; and although a parliamentary commission had previously investigated and reported the deplorable state of the public services in Tarapacá, attempts by the government in Santiago to rectify the situation were futile.⁷ As the end of the Barros Luco administration drew near, general elections were scheduled for March 7, 1915. One of the twelve senate seats to be contested was that held by del Río.⁸

⁷Augusto Iglesias, Alessandri: Una etapa de la democracia en America, p. 332. See also Ricardo Donoso, Alessandri, agitador y demoledor: Cincuenta años de historia política de Chile, pp. 156-63.

⁸Department of State Files (Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Chile, 1910-1929. National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy No. 487), hereinafter cited as DSF. 825.00/104, G. F. Summerlin to Robert Lansing, March 31, 1915.

Less than three months before the 1915 elections, Alessandri received a telegram from his personal friend Julio Guzmán García, the president of the Liberal Party in Iquique, offering him the Liberal Alliance (Alianza) senatorial candidacy for Tarapacá. Alessandri expressed his gratitude for the display of confidence but declined the proffered candidacy, stating that he sincerely desired to continue in the Chamber of Deputies. He wanted to spare himself the ordeal of campaigning in a province where the difficulty of opposing the caudillaje of Arturo del Río was well known. Furthermore, he took note of the presence of other prominent prospective candidates, among them: Balmacedista Oscar Viel Caverro, President of the Radical Party Juan Castellón, and Liberal deputy Maximiliano Ibañez. The northern Liberal leaders anticipated a hard-fought and violent campaign, and for this reason searched for a candidate who not only held the correct political views, but who possessed the special attributes of courage and of persuasion characteristic of the caudillo. In the view of the Tarapaqueños, Alessandri seemed to be the only man capable of running with probable success. Additional support came from the poet Víctor Domingo Silva who, convinced of the necessity of nominating a candidate who was determined to put up a fight, contributed his enthusiasm and skill as a writer and as an ardent patriot to launch

Alessandri into the fray.⁹

One afternoon in late December 1914, Alessandri encountered del Río in the gardens of the Chamber building. At the mention of the coming elections, polite conversation changed to heated discussion and the senator angrily shouted a threat to Alessandri if he should be so foolish as to accept the opposition candidacy. That provocation dispelled any doubts Alessandri may have had about running; he sent a telegram to Tarapacá accepting the senate candidacy.¹⁰

Meeting in Iquique on January 9, 1915, the Provincial Convention nominated Alessandri for the Senate and Ramón Briones Luco as candidate for the Chamber of Deputies. A few days later Víctor Domingo Silva arrived in Iquique to assume his battle position as head of the Liberal paper La Provincia. He declared that the contest would be drawn between a program of reform and prosperity and one "of fraud and of exploitation of the masses for the benefit of a few." The paper became the prime mover of the Alessandri campaign. The vibrant pen of the poet sparked the enthusiasm of partisans of the Liberal candidate, extolled his attributes, and emphasized the opportunity at hand: the liberation of Tarapacá from the spoliation to which it had

⁹Iglesias, pp. 332-3; Donoso, p. 164.

¹⁰Iglesias, p. 333.

been subjected by political caciquismo.¹¹

In late January, Alessandri departed for Iquique to organize his campaign workers. His adversaries, relying on the aid and protection of the Montenegro Ministry, quickly effected measures to hamper the Alianza cause; and one appointment in particular merits notice. The del Río regime secured the transfer of prefect of police Luis Vargas to the South, and in his place the Santiago government appointed Rogelio Delgado, a daring and unscrupulous--but "reliable"--man who formerly had been sub-prefect of the police force of Antofagasta. Delgado was destined to play a critical role in the events of the next few weeks.¹²

Alessandri arrived in Iquique Sunday, January 24, 1915, on the Peruvian steamship Huallaga accompanied by don Luis Malaquias Concha, Democrat candidate for deputy. The ship was met by groups of people on the dock (some were del Río's ruffians) and small boats filled with cheering, flag-waving admirers who swarmed on board the vessel to greet their "redeemer." Alessandri had to wait several minutes before disembarking while his supporters cleared the dock

¹¹Donoso, p. 165.

¹²Due to the activities of this official, plus an assault on a Radical Party demonstration in Iquique in which mounted police charged the public with drawn sabers, Alessandri earlier had summoned Minister of Interior Pedro Nolasco Montenegro into the Chamber of Deputies. He demanded that the Minister appoint a new police chief who could guarantee order and respect for the law in Iquique. Iglesias, pp. 333-4.

of Riístas stationed there to impede the arrival of the deputy from Curicó. The party then made its way to the Chalet Suisse (a hotel at the edge of the dock district) surrounded by enthusiastic adherents. The only unpleasant element of the entire day was the mud which splattered the shoes and trousers of the travelers and townspeople; the night before, del Río had ordered a watering of the dusty unpaved streets and the result was a large mudwallow. From his window at the Chalet Suisse, Alessandri addressed the throng gathered in the mud below, describing his campaign as one of liberation. He assured them that the cause of freedom would prevail, climaxing his words with the pledge: "I have not come to fight, but to triumph."¹³

Almost from the moment of Alessandri's arrival in Iquique, the campaign was characterized by unusual violence that ranged from attacks on the houses of political adversaries to assassinations. Gangs of del Río's ruffians, paid with local funds and protected by the police, perpetrated offenses day after day that contributed to keeping the region under a reign of terror.

On his return to Santiago, Alessandri denounced the situation in Tarapacá before the February 12 session of the Chamber of Deputies, accusing the Interior Ministry of open

¹³ Iglesias, pp. 334-5. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the responsibility of the writer.

electoral intervention. He referred to the appointment of Delgado as prefect of police, and to the maintenance of armed gangs subsidized by the municipality. He also expressed the opinion that the Government was incapable of maintaining public order, and he suggested the humiliating possibility that foreign consular agents would demand guarantees of safety for the interests of their nationals. Further, Alessandri maintained that the Minister of Interior, who had final responsibility under the Constitution for the conduct of elections, had refused to send a high-ranking army officer to preside over the balloting and insure an honest vote.¹⁴ He contended that the shameful episodes which had occurred in Iquique and in the entire province of Tarapacá could not be swept under the rug by the government. (In the opinion of one Alessandrista, more than just another legislative election, the 1915 contest in the Chilean North could be looked at as the confrontation of two regimes: that of liberty of suffrage on the one hand and that of systematic and official intervention on the other.)¹⁵ Before the assembled deputies the candidate thundered,

¹⁴Donoso, p. 166.

¹⁵Iglesias, pp. 335-6. And yet, once in La Moneda, Alessandri did not hesitate to exert official influence in parliamentary elections.

I do not demand the votes of public functionaries, policemen, and municipal officials who may want to support de Río; I only demand that order be respected and that the lives of the citizens be defended, for if things continue the way they are going now the life of the august Interior Minister will not be sufficiently long for him to repent the horrendous things which might occur in Tarapacá.

The Minister, Pedro Montenegro, who was in attendance, answered vehemently and started a violent incident during which highly insulting expressions were exchanged (a not uncommon thing, Chilean parliamentary politics being what they were). In Montenegro's opinion, electoral liberty was not menaced, and he stated that he was not disposed to remove any provincial official without due cause.¹⁶ The remaining cabinet members supported the position of the Interior Minister. After the brief dialogue there remained no other place to continue the dispute but the field of honor, another recurrent feature of Chilean politics. According to El Mercurio, the duel was carried out February 13 on the estate owned by Luis Barceló Lira which he called, ironically, Villa Tranquila. Onlookers included the four seconds and a doctor; however, they were not needed as the duelists exchanged a single revolver shot at twenty-five paces and both bullets missed.¹⁷

¹⁶Iglesias, p. 336.

¹⁷Donoso, p. 166.

Although neither man attempted a reconciliation, negotiations between the Government and the Alianza were initiated shortly thereafter, and among the several points considered was the matter of the change of authorities in Tarapacá. Undoubtedly influenced by the violent campaign against interventionism conducted by opposition newspapers following the Alessandri-Montenegro debate, President Juan Luis Sanfuentes agreed to send to Iquique General Sofanor Parra, who would assume command of the military forces of the province. Further, the intendant was replaced temporarily by an official of the Finance Ministry.

Up in Iquique new outbreaks of violence took place prior to the arrival of General Parra and the return of Alessandri to the North. On the night of February 26 a police official, Manuel Jesús Maira, was assassinated by a party of brigands as he left the Hotel Génova. Maira was suspected of having refused to do the bidding of Prefect Delgado. That same night, moreover, thieves entered the dead official's home and took possession of some papers that would have been damaging to his superior officer.¹⁸ Two days later the Huasco steamed into port; on board were General Parra, his aide Major Bernardo Gómez Solar, substitute Intendant Ricardo Vélez, and the

¹⁸Donoso, p. 167.

Alessandri party.¹⁹ Among those traveling with the senate candidate were Víctor Domingo Silva and ex-army officer Manuel Lemus, the Democrat candidate for deputy from Arauco who was also acting as Alessandri's bodyguard.²⁰

The opposition had been busy assembling a sizable gang of toughs, paid by the municipality, to supplement del Río's police force; but the Alianza was not without recourse. It too mobilized a well-remunerated and colorfully named force of highwaymen: a certain Chacón, alias "El quince cobres" (Fifteen Coppers); "El repollo chico" (Little Cabbage); "El rubio cordero" (Blonde Lamb); "El helado en paquete" (Ice cream bar); "El busca la vida" (Scavenger); "El repollo grande" (Big Cabbage). These men were recruited especially among the ruffians who congregated near the waterfront. The preparations that were made on both sides seemed to be more appropriate for a gang war than for a contest of political opinion.²¹

During his brief tenure in Iquique, Intendant Vélez resisted Alessandri's demands to put the police force under military authority, consequently he gave up the maintenance of order in the streets, a determining

¹⁹ Iglesias, p. 336.

²⁰ Donoso, p. 173 (Note).

²¹ Donoso, p. 167.

factor in the violence that was to follow.

Also in the week prior to the election, the minister of the Appellate Court of Tacna, Gustavo Sepúlveda, had arrived in Iquique on an extraordinary visit to draw up the indictment for the death of Officer Maira, and another against Prefect Delgado for arbitrary imprisonment of Aliancistas. On March 5, after investigation, Judge Sepúlveda ordered that Delgado be suspended from the exercise of his duties, but the intendant refused to execute the judicial decree.²² That act of defiance was but one further demonstration of the breakdown of Constitutional authority; however it had no practical effect, for the prefect met his death later that same night.

The elections were to take place on Sunday, March 7; on the preceding Friday, Alessandri was warned on three separate occasions of threats against his life. The first warning came from a policeman who years before had been an employee in the home of Alessandri's mother, and the other pieces of intelligence were delivered to the candidate as he was addressing a gathering at the Radical Youth Center.²³ Apparently not sharing the

²²Donoso, pp. 167-8.

²³The warnings noted the suspicious movements of Prefect Delgado and the armed mounted police force which constantly accompanied him, giving every indication that some type of plot was being hatched. Alessandri's friends

anxiety expressed by his friends, Alessandri continued his speech, concluding with the admonition that the audience should exercise great moderation and dissolve immediately. However, the rousing orations had so inflamed the ebullient crowd that such a request was patently ridiculous. The Alessandristas left in search of the police, striding to the strains of the Marseillaise played by an improvised brass band, cheering the Radical Party and the Liberal Alliance, and shouting down with the police and the prefect. "¡Abajo la policía! ¡Muera el prefecto asesino del pueblo! ¡Retírense los pacos!"²⁴

Alessandri, one of the last to leave, headed in the opposite direction from that taken by the throng. Noting with increased concern the unusual darkness throughout the neighborhood and the groups of mounted police lurking in sidestreets, the candidate changed his mind and decided to go to the Telegraph Office to notify Manuel Rivas Vicuña of the ominous turn which events were taking. Alessandri pushed his way past the comisario of Iquique and entered the office, accompanied by Manuel Lemus, several associates and his secretary. Scarcely had he

counseled him to avoid certain streets, and they indicated that Lemus could take measures if he thought it opportune. Iglesias, p. 337; Donoso, p. 168.

²⁴Donoso, pp. 168-9.

written the destination of the message when carbine shots sounded in the street, followed by scattered rifle and revolver fire. Lemus ran to close the door to the street and in doing so was wounded in the leg. Alessandri and his companions sought safety in the small room that served as the office of the chief telegrapher; as they burst through the doorway they came face to face with Delgado who was half-crouched behind the desk with a revolver in his hand. From this point the accounts of the melee differ, but when the altercation was over Delgado lay dead on the floor of the Telegraph Office. Outside, where the police had continued to fire into the crowd and to charge with swords raised, the toll was three men dead and numerous wounded.²⁵

The employees who were caught in the interior of the building retreated upstairs, followed by Alessandri and his companions and scores of demonstrators who had broken into the office. Lemus, bleeding profusely, was assisted to a small attic room and given first-aid. Down in the street the noise indicated that the police had received reinforcements, and with little hesitation most of the occupants of the building prudently fled via the rooftops of neighboring houses. Alessandri recognized that it would not be considered very dignified [or

²⁵Donoso, p. 169; Iglesias, pp. 337-9.

courageous/ for a senate candidate to be forced to escape by the roof, and he feared the resulting reaction of the electorate would be catastrophic. Therefore, he slowly descended the main stairway peering into the gun barrels of the waiting guards.²⁶

Requesting that the sub-comisario accompany him, Alessandri went directly to the Hotel Fénix to seek aid from General Parra. However, the general already had been alerted and in a matter of minutes an army troop was dispatched to restore order at the scene of the tragedy. The soldiers took charge of the telegraph building, driving out the police, and they then assisted criminal Judge Ismael Poblete in setting up an inquest. The army also began patrol of the streets and public places.

Shortly after 11:00 A.M. in the telegraph office Judge Poblete convened the inquest; however, the following day the hearing of depositions was continued by Gustavo Sepúlveda, minister of the Appellate Court of Tacna. In Donoso's estimation, the inquiry seemed prepared with the deliberate purpose of muddling the whole matter and hiding the truth. Only seven witnesses had been held; many were allowed to leave with Alessandri without giving their

²⁶The Iglesias version (see p. 340) is based on Alessandri's recollection of the event. The statement of witness Arturo Prat Carvajal as quoted in Donoso (p. 170) differs somewhat.

names or making statements. The author concluded that one does not need much perspicacity to determine who finished off Prefect Delgado: from the statements filed by Alessandri and by other witnesses, the responsibility of Lemus was crystal clear.²⁷ The autopsy showed that in addition to a cranial fracture, the victim's aorta was perforated by a bullet from a Browning pistol. Thus the precise cause of death was a massive hemorrhage from the bullet wound; however, the inquest did not establish who shot Delgado.²⁸

The voting took place as scheduled on March 7, and the Liberal Alliance won an overwhelming victory in the province of Tarapacá. Alessandri was elected senator and Ramón Briones Luco (Radical) and Luis Malaquías Concha (Democrat) were voted seats in the Chamber of Deputies, while the government coalition succeeded in electing only two deputies. Nationally, the Coalicionistas retained their majority in the lower body while the Aliancistas gained control of the Senate.²⁹

²⁷ Donoso, pp. 169-70; p. 174, Note 4.

²⁸ Donoso, p. 170; pp. 173-4, Notes 3 and 4.
Alessandri carried a Smith and Wesson. When Parra's aide examined the gun it was fully loaded and there was no smell of powder. Iglesias, p. 340.

²⁹ DSF 825.00/107, Summerlin to Lansing, March 31, 1915.
Throughout the country, 12 senators and the entire Chamber of Deputies were to be chosen. The Coalition lost 2 seats in the Senate while the Alliance gained 3 to give it a 19-16 majority. The Coalition controlled the Chamber of Deputies 66-50.

In April, municipal elections were held, and Tarapaqueños once again endorsed the Liberal Alliance slate of candidates. With that second triumph, the Alianza broke the hold of the corrupt local machine, and the once-powerful caudillo del Río disappeared from the political scene. He returned to his provincial residence where he spent the last fifteen years of his life. The poet Silva, whose mettle and passionate devotion to the cause had a decisive influence on the electoral contest, returned to playing his lyre and composing sonnets to the victor. All those who were involved in the death of Delgado evidently took an oath to keep secret their knowledge. On his return to Santiago, Alessandri received a warm and enthusiastic welcome from his supporters, unaware that the shadow of the prefect would pursue him tenaciously throughout his political career.³⁰

³⁰Donoso, p. 171.

III. THE EMERGENCE OF ALESSANDRI AS LIBERAL ALLIANCE LEADER

The year 1915 also witnessed a presidential election in Chile, one in which real issues were introduced. Emerging as leading contenders for the nomination of the Liberal Alliance were Eliodoro Yáñez, a sincere reform-advocate; Guillermo Barros Jara; Ismael Tocornal; Ismael Valdés Valdés; and Vicente Reyes, incorruptible but past his prime. The Liberal friends of Agustín Edwards, conservative statesman, tried to persuade him to be the nominee of the Alianza, but he was unwilling to desert the Coalition. Alessandri, by virtue of his impressive performance in the recent senatorial campaign, received a number of votes in the nominating convention. However, in a compromise to avert the disintegration of the Liberal Alliance, the candidacy was bestowed upon the comparatively colorless Liberal Party leader, Javier Angel Figueroa.³¹ The convention of the Coalition parties was held the following week, and on the third ballot Juan Luis Sanfuentes received the nomination over candidates Abdón Cifuentes and Agustín Edwards. A senator from Concepción since 1906, Sanfuentes was the leading member of the Democratic Liberal Party.³²

³¹DSF. 825.00/104, Summerlin to Lansing, March 31, 1915.

³²DSF. 825.00/107, Summerlin to Lansing, March 16, 1915.

Alessandri insisted that prior to the provincial elections of 1915 he never considered the possibility of his becoming President of the Republic;³³ that senatorial campaign, nevertheless, served to crystallize in the minds of the public the image of the vigorous parliament member. It also recalled the memory of other Alessandri campaigns: his vituperation toward the administration of Pedro Montt, particularly in regard to the 500,000 pound government loan to the Casa de Granja y Cía.;³⁴ his arrests as the romantic pamphleteer during the Revolution of 1891; and his noteworthy tenure as Minister of Public Works in 1899 during the regime of Federico Errázuriz Echaurren. A group of enthusiastic followers in Iquique expressed those sentiments in a pamphlet directed to the Radical Party assemblies of the country, soliciting support for their endeavor to convert the new Senator of the Desert into the future presidential candidate.³⁵ A culminating factor was the tour around the country with Figueroa's campaign party, during

³³Alessandri, p. 27.

³⁴The Casa Granja operated eight nitrate offices, and owned the port of Coloso and the railroad of Aguas Blancas that served fourteen nitrate offices in the northern Chilean pampa. After the agitation that had shaken the province of Tarapacá during 1907, the firm announced that it was threatened with violent stoppages in its districts and demanded government help. Donoso, p. 103.

³⁵Iglesias, p. 341.

which Alessandri received spontaneous demonstrations of popular sympathy and affection which overshadowed those for the candidate, and further seemed to affirm his political potential for the future.³⁶

The presidential elections were held on June 25, and the Coalition candidate Sanfuentes won by a small majority of six or seven electors. There were minor disturbances in all parts of the country, and several persons were killed in Santiago. But the police and the army kept the situation well in hand. Some Liberal Alliance leaders claimed victory for their candidate by a margin of eight electors, but higher officials of the Alianza conceded defeat. Considerable bitterness was expressed by younger members of the Liberal Party, many of whom stated openly that Sanfuentes would never be permitted to occupy the presidential chair. Demonstrations by the Aliancistas continued to occur nightly, always accompanied by minor incidents. The Liberal Alliance leadership accused the Coalition of having committed numerous frauds and falsifications, and appointed a committee of party members to investigate. In his confidential report the American Charge concluded, "It is well known that the country is Liberal [i.e., favorable to the Alianza]; that frauds were committed on both sides; and that the Candidate who had the

³⁶Alessandri, p. 28.

strongest financial support and the longest purse obtained a majority of the electors; and there was no concealment of the fact that votes were purchased right and left."³⁷

The Provincial electors cast their ballots on Sunday, July 25, and the results gave 179 votes to Sanfuentes and 174 to Figueroa (one electoral ballot from Iquique was not counted). The Alianza leaders persisted in their claims of fraud involving some twenty Coalition electors, and attempted to have the whole election referred to a Tribunal of Honor for review.³⁸ Following the provisions of the Constitution, the Congress met in joint session on Friday, September 17, to scrutinize the election. Irregularities were found in several departments, notably Constitución and Castro; and one of Sanfuentes electors for Valdivia was disqualified; Sanfuentes remained the victor with 174 electors to 173 for Figueroa. Thus neither candidate received an absolute majority of the whole number of presidential electors, and the election was thrown into Congress where victory for Sanfuentes was a foregone conclusion. According to the U.S. Ambassador, Liberal leaders had no hope of winning; the Coalition accepted the disqualification of its electors only because it commanded a safe majority in the Congress.³⁹

³⁷DSF. 825.00/108, Summerlin to Lansing, June 29, 1915.
³⁸DSF. 825.00/109, Summerlin to Lansing, July 13, 1915.

³⁸DSF. 825.00/110, Summerlin to Lansing, July 27, 1915.

³⁹DSF. 825.00/113, Henry P. Fletcher to Lansing, September 20, 1915.

The first part of the Sanfuentes administration saw the customary parade of cabinets, as the Liberals pursued their obstructionist tactics. Alessandri repeatedly raised the issue of the corrupt police force of Iquique, and the dispute degenerated into a personal battle between the senator and the new Minister of Interior Luis Izquierdo Fredes.⁴⁰ The fundamental criticism made by those attacking the ministry was that the government was preparing to intervene in the coming elections (1918). However, Conservatives and Nationals viewed the controversy as an attempt to overthrow not only the Ministry, but to undermine the parliamentary regime.⁴¹

The entrance of the middle class into the political arena was accentuated in the elections of 1915 with the Alianza victories in Congress, but it was not until 1918 that positive signs of a desire for reform in the social and economic spheres appeared. The rebellion of the electorate to which Alberto Edwards refers could be more precisely defined as "the rebellion of the provinces against the hegemony of Santiago."⁴² The provincial elections of March 1918 were hard fought, and money was used freely. An article in a provincial journal noted that the Coalicionistas opened the bidding at 300 pesos and were paying 480

⁴⁰Donoso, p. 196.

⁴¹Donoso, p. 197.

⁴²Donoso, p. 208.

pesos per vote when their funds ran out. The Aliancistas, with only moderate financial support, quickly used up what money they had.⁴³ For strength to compete successfully with the candidates of the Coalition, the Liberal Alliance had to look for adherents in the camp of the agricultural or industrial plutocracy, in spite of the coolness which members of these groups displayed toward Liberal doctrines. For this reason the campaign did not have an ideological basis. It did not propose a program to ameliorate social ills or to correct abuses in the political sphere, although the platform did take notice of the country's strong Liberal sentiment and the determination oriented toward crushing the influence of the Conservative Party.⁴⁴ The Liberal Alliance gained a large majority in both houses, and the Coalition was plunged into despair; President Sanfuentes even considered tendering his resignation.

The Coalition expressed its willingness to turn over immediately the job of running the government but Alianza leaders were reluctant to assume the responsibility of leadership until the new Congress began its deliberations. A disagreement between the Minister of War and the rest of the

⁴³DSF. 825.00/116, Frederic de Billier to Lansing, March 9, 1918. In the Senate the Aliancistas won 24 seats to 13 for the Coalicionistas; in the Chamber of Deputies the result was 68 to 46, with 4 Independents.

⁴⁴Donoso, p. 209.

Cabinet (with presidential support) concerning punitive measures to be taken against some naval officers brought on a ministerial crisis, and the entire cabinet resigned April 15, 1918.⁴⁵

The President then saw the opportunity of creating a division in the ranks of the victorious Liberal Alliance, and he leaked to the Radical Party leaders the proposal that Alessandri was to be entrusted with the responsibility of organizing the new ministry.⁴⁶ Already, indications had appeared of a growing rift between Alessandri and Yáñez. The latter claimed that the success of the Alianza was due largely to the vigorous propaganda of his daily newspaper *La Nación*; therefore, he was entitled to the fruits of victory--namely, leadership of the movement.⁴⁷ The designation of the "Lion" was opposed strenuously by some of the President's closest advisers who were convinced that being named to the post of Minister of Interior was all-important to the consecration of a presidential candidate. Alberto Edwards referred to Alessandri's appointment by saying, "It was believed that this designation would incite the

⁴⁵Donoso, p. 209.

⁴⁶In Frei's opinion, Sanfuentes gave an example of his great patriotism by submitting to the popular will and respecting the parliamentary tradition. Edwards and Frei, p. 183.

⁴⁷Donoso, p. 210.

other Aliancista magnates (who still claimed an important following in Congress) to rebellion against the new chief, thus producing the dislocation of the victorious parties."⁴⁸ Tocornal, offended because the President had not summoned him to La Moneda, temporarily relinquished the direction of the Liberal Party to Manuel Rivas and Yáñez. Rivas related in his memoirs that Sanfuentes had offered to him also the leadership of the Cabinet, but he declined and suggested the names of two other likely candidates. He counseled the President that the appointment of Alessandri would be a grave error.⁴⁹

Finally, after three days of laborious negotiations during which Yáñez and Alessandri heatedly disputed the honor of organizing the first cabinet of the Liberal Alliance, Alessandri was successful in forming a ministry made up of three Radicals and three Liberals. The Democrat party remained excluded. The Ministry was integrated as follows:

Interior-	Alessandri, Liberal
Foreign Relations-	Daniel Feliú, Radical
Treasury-	Luis Claro Solar, Liberal
Public Instruction-	Pedro Aguirre Cerda, Radical
War and Marine-	Jorge Valdivieso Blanco, Liberal
Public Works-	Ramón Briones Luco, Radical

Sanfuentes may have hoped to neutralize Alessandri's political influence by putting him at the head of the Cabinet, but

⁴⁸Alberto Edwards Vives, La fronda aristocrática, p. 202-3.

⁴⁹Donoso, p. 10. The two leaders suggested were Luis Barros Borgoño and Antonio Valdés Cuevas.

the wily politician made the most of his opportunity by outlining a vast program of administrative action. Among the proposals he presented were: revision of the laws of civil marriage and registry, improvement of education, social legislation for the welfare of the working classes, fair employment practices in the nitrate industry, immediate consideration of bills relating to modification of the Constitution, and revision of the tax system. The new Interior Minister further requested that the various parties represented in Congress consider it their patriotic duty to reach an agreement on the pending appropriations measure. Far broader than a ministerial program, the reforms Alessandri set forth constituted a presidential program designed for implementation during the length of an entire administration.⁵⁰

The legislators of both political coalitions received the new Cabinet benevolently, and then proceeded to pass the appropriations bill. The truce was short-lived, however; and from the beginning of the regular sessions the fighting spirit of the new parliamentary membership was clearly evident. Alessandri enthusiastically supported a new union of Liberals and Radicals--the partial resurrection of the old Liberal Alliance of 1875--in order to carry out

⁵⁰ Donoso, pp. 210-11.

his projected reforms. He utilized the interpellation of Conservative officials over a local problem in the town of Castro to eulogize the old Alliance⁵¹ and to promote the new one. He flattered the Radicals and Liberals with his clever oratory:

The country has wanted to overthrow this anarchic regime and return to homogeneous and truly parliamentary government. The highest honor that a man can attain in political life . . . is to come to this bench and be able to say with pride: I am representing the aspirations, the orientations and the program of national ambitions that are contained in the program of the Liberal Alliance.⁵²

Alessandri's performance was crudely condemned by the Conservative deputy Rafael Luis Gumucio, who accused him of running for the presidency. The deputy's attack concluded:

Public opinion, after appraising whether or not the Minister of the Interior aspires to the presidential candidacy, will appraise also if his attitude in the Castro affair, if his flattery of the Radical Party, if his attacks on the Conservative Party and, above all, if his

⁵¹The dominant Liberal-Conservative coalition broke up in 1873 and a new combination composed of Liberals, Radicals, and Nationals became known as the Liberal Alliance. In the 1920 Alliance the Democratic Liberals (Balmacedistas) and the Democrats joined with the Liberals and Radicals. Federico G. Gil, The Political System of Chile, pp. 43-4.

In Castro, the judge surrogate was forced to resign because of unwarranted pressure by the townspeople.

⁵²Cited in Donoso, p. 212.

magnificent doctrinaire boasting and his program of agitation, are to serve the country or simply are to serve his presidential ambitions.⁵³

Alessandri continued to hoist the standard of reform, and he maintained that the electoral triumph of March 3 was his popular mandate.

The other issue debated at length in the Congress during Alessandri's Ministry was the matter of reforming the by-laws to permit cloture of debate. After having employed the same tactics with devastating results, the Alianza now wanted to end obstruction by the Coalicionistas; and when the Conservative legislators made conciliatory gestures the Minister of Interior took the opportunity of effecting a compromise. At that point the Liberals came to believe that Alessandri was sacrificing their interests to those of the Radicals and Democrats, while at the same time looking for support among the Nationals and Democratic Liberals (Balmacedistas). Dissention grew more pronounced in the ranks of the majority combination. Alessandri preferred a total cabinet crisis to a partial shake-up, and his Ministry fell by vote of censure the first week of September.⁵⁴

In retrospect the breakup of the Liberal Alliance

⁵³ Cited in Donoso, p. 213.

⁵⁴ Donoso, p. 215.

was inevitable. A hybrid alliance of basically conservative oligarchical elements with the newly emancipated political forces of the provinces had to dissolve by virtue of its own dynamics. But in the days following the brilliant Alianza triumph at the polls, it was difficult for the victors--in the face of widespread popular enthusiasm--to turn their back on recently proclaimed principles and join a new coalition. The conservative faction of the Liberal Alliance resigned itself to lending apparent assistance to a caudillo whom they basically feared above all else. As this conservative element waivered, the left wing took advantage of their indecision and grabbed most of the high government positions and the administrative posts in the provinces. (The responsibility for primary instruction went to the anti-clerical Radicals.) However, behind the scenes and with the utmost secrecy, the resistance against Alessandri and his clique took shape. Heading the covert movement in the Chamber of Deputies was Manuel Rivas Vicuña, who did not advocate open opposition but preferred to assume an ambiguous position in the hope of dominating the Alliance without destroying it.⁵⁵ Such tactics might have met with moderate success in an earlier period, but they were destined to fail in the turbulent times ahead.

⁵⁵ Edwards, p. 203.

Mere political maneuvers, no matter how skillful, could not prevent a direct clash between the old social forces--near collapse, and the as yet amorphous but impassioned movement that stirred a large portion of the country.

Slightly more than two months after the resignation of the Alessandri ministry the World War ended, and immediate repercussions were felt in the Chilean economy. Nitrate exports fell to almost nothing and the cost of living rose sharply. Hardest hit were the workers who violently expressed their discontent in the nitrate fields and in the large cities. These circumstances marked the emergence of the proletariat in the political life of Chile, and one of the few who saw clearly the significance of the profound transformation was the Radical deputy Antonio Pinto Durán. In the Chamber session of December 26, 1918, he asserted:

We are spectators at the transformation of all our values. Our old social organization, formed by an omnipotent oligarchy above and an uneducated and miserable people below, has been supplanted by the formation of a sizable middle class--well-informed and intelligent--that is able to analyze situations and make decisions for itself, that acts with confidence and certainty⁵⁶

Thus, the conflict had first emerged in the social sphere, but the repercussions were immediate in the political arena.

⁵⁶Cited in Donoso, p. 217.

The Radicals, particularly the youth movement of the party, became dissatisfied with their Ministers whom they characterized as representatives of the oligarchy. Yáñez and Alessandri fomented this discontent and fostered the ambitions of other deputies who wanted to become Ministers. The latter part of April the three Radical members resigned and a new Cabinet was organized. During the regular session of Congress in the summer of 1919, discussions in the Senate were devoted largely to the bill for compulsory primary education. All recognized party leaders spoke extensively, thus encouraging much vitriolic oratory, especially among members of the Radical Party who adamantly opposed any extension of Church influence in the school system. The venerable Radical patriarch Mac-Iver referred contemptuously to the new class-oriented creed, and he in turn was bitterly attacked by younger senators. Alessandri spoke at length during the debates, refuted intelligently the arguments advanced by Mac-Iver, and extolled the reform sentiment which seemed to pervade the atmosphere. In Alessandri's words:

The problems and reforms are not a siren song, a sweet word that cajoles and caresses the ear, as the senator from Atacama has said; they are based on fundamental principles of right and justice, and they obey an imperious present-day need. They strike forcibly the duty and the conscience of the men of state who owe them effective and

preferential attention. It is not acceptable that while some swim in opulence, others are lacking absolutely in food, clothing, housing, inspiration for the spirit, and convenient and adequate rest for the body. The principles of solidarity, of justice, and of social conservation demand the existence of a prudent balance between the most diverse social strata.⁵⁷

The debates continued to provoke recriminations pertaining to the influence of the Church, the dirth of positive parliamentary action, and the ills of Chilean society generally.⁵⁸

On the popular front, another large demonstration took place in Santiago on August 29. The hunger rally, as it came to be called, vigorously depicted the desperate situation of the workers and produced alarm in government circles.⁵⁹ While discontent daily grew more intense among the bourgeoisie and the masses, the politicians feverishly gathered their forces in preparation for the coming elections.

The increasing agitation and unrest among the Chilean people also provoked deep concern in military circles, and the politicians intended to use the situation for

⁵⁷Cited in Donoso, p. 221.

⁵⁸The primary education bill finally was passed on the eve of adjournment.

⁵⁹Donoso, p. 222.

their own advantage. The dissident faction in the army, led by Generals Guillermo Armstrong, Vitalicio Luis López, and Manuel Moore, worked secretly to strengthen the ties between the chiefs of the various arms in order to bolster the position of the President of the Republic and to offer him an effective force in case of major civil disorders. The officers also hoped to obtain legislation improving the position of the military and permitting its members to hold government posts, both diplomatic and provincial, and to run for Congress. The tutelage over the government which these men sought to exercise would have amounted to rule by military junta.⁶⁰ The possibility of Alessandri's involvement in the conspiracy was widely rumored; the government moved quickly in preferring charges against the officers.⁶¹ Those implicated were courtmartialed and the affair was hushed up.⁶² In the opinion of the American charge d'affaires: "The only significance which remains is the fact that there is throughout the 'Clase Media'

⁶⁰Donoso, p. 227; DSF. 825.00/120, Warren Robbins to Lansing, May 9, 1919.

⁶¹Frederick M. Nunn, "Emil Körner and the Prussianization of the Chilean Army: Origins, Process and Consequences, 1885-1920," (unpublished article in possession of the author, Portland State College, 1968), pp. 26-7.

⁶²The trial dragged on through the spring of 1920. The prosecution had asked for the death sentence, but that was "pro forma"; a nominal sentence could be expected. DSF. 825.00/131, Joseph Shea to Bainbridge Colby, May 4, 1920.

and indeed throughout the country at large the conviction that the Executive and Congress do not consider seriously enough the labor conditions and economical problems which now confront the government."⁶³ Donoso concludes: "This was not the first time that the politicians had intruded in the barracks, but the conspiracy of 1919 exposed how far even Alessandri had gone in his task of corrupting the armed forces."⁶⁴

⁶³DSF. 825.00/123, Robbins to Lansing, May 22, 1919.

⁶⁴Donoso, p. 238.

IV. THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1920

At the end of the year 1919 the Liberal Party held a convention in Santiago, and the provincial delegates to that meeting clearly expressed their approval of Alessandri's likely candidacy for the office of President. That fact caused considerable uneasiness among the ruling clique of the party, who questioned the background and qualifications of the new caudillo. His forebearers had held no important political positions, and Alessandri himself did not belong to the select circle from which presidents ordinarily were chosen. He did not have a recognized party organization behind him; in fact, during more than eighteen years in Congress he almost always had worked independently, never subjecting himself to the discipline of any party. And only occasionally had he joined the ranks of the Liberals.⁶⁵ These reasons were cited by the traditional elements of the Liberal Party to justify their opposition to the candidacy of the "Lion." The important business before the convention was the formation of a new general board of directors for the party, and Alessandri fought to obtain members from among his strong supporters. The immediate task of this board was to establish rules and procedures under which the next year's

⁶⁵Alessandri, p. 28; Iglesias, p. 342.

nominating convention would select its presidential candidate.

The delegates divided into two distinct groups: those who supported Alessandri's candidacy and those who opposed it.⁶⁶ The latter declared that they would not accept the decisions of the extreme left-wing faction, and they promptly withdrew from the Liberal Party and from the Liberal Alliance, thus destroying its newly won parliamentary majority. The Rivas clique, which had lost its position of pre-eminence within the Alianza organized a new alliance with Nationals, Balmacedistas, and a Radical splinter group. This coalition supported the candidacy of either Tocornal or Barros Borgoño.⁶⁷ The new political combinations which resulted were the National Union, formed by Conservatives, Democratic Liberals (Balmacedistas) and Nationals, and the Liberal Alliance made up of Radicals, the majority of Liberals, and Democrats.⁶⁸ Alessandri wrote:

. The error of those opposing my candidacy, on separating themselves from the party and from the Alliance, had very serious consequences for them. They appeared to be abandoning their doctrines to battle an individual, one

⁶⁶The reformist faction, composed of middle class and provincial elements, followed Yáñez and Alessandri, while the traditional faction was led by Tocornal, Valdés Valdés, and Barros Borgoño.

⁶⁷Donoso, p. 240.

⁶⁸Alessandri, p. 29.

in whose hands they left the banner of the Liberal Alliance which had received great approval throughout the country. . . .

.
 I have said many times that, throughout my troubled political career, usually I have reached the highest positions, less by my own effort than through the action of my adversaries. More than ever, so it was on this occasion: gross was the error of the members of Congress who abandoned those who had elected them in order to swell the ranks of the opposition. Thus they opened to me the doors of La Moneda⁶⁹

Once the board of directors had been selected, the struggle over organization of the convention commenced. Almost as soon as it began deliberations, the board found itself divided: one group supported a universal convention in which all splinter groups of the old Liberal coalition could participate, while the other (backed by Alessandri) maintained that the convention should not relinquish the Aliancista banner but should admit only those delegates who remained loyal to the party in the 1919 convention. After much debate the plan for a closed convention prevailed and the board fixed the number of delegates allotted to each party and their qualifications.⁷⁰

Shortly before the scheduled opening of the Alianza Convention Eliodoro Yáñez seized the offensive

⁶⁹Alessandri, p. 30.

⁷⁰Iglesias, p. 343.

and toured the southern provinces, delivering a series of speeches in which he explained the position of the Liberal Alliance, and through which he hoped to gain support for his own candidacy. This action by a coalition candidate was a novel occurrence in Chilean electoral practice and Yáñez was warmly praised for his initiative. Their curiosity aroused, the people gathered in considerable numbers to hear the voice of the prestigious statesman, although his academic style, his quiet manner, and the wisdom of his opinions did not excite the provincial audiences that were eager for polemics and violent oratory.

The Yáñez tour was discussed heatedly by the close circle of politicians who began to gather at Alessandri's house to prepare his candidacy. All observed the urgent necessity of a similar swing through the South by Alessandri, and they were confident that the fieriness and mettle of his speeches would attract even larger crowds. The senator agreed to the wisdom of such advice, but he declined, stating that he did not have the audacity to appear in the same cities where Yáñez had spoken without having been specially invited. A few days later from Concepción, Alessandri received an invitation from the president of the Radical Center "Juan Castellón" to deliver a political lecture in the municipal theater. Thus a major obstacle was removed.⁷¹ At stations along the route members

⁷¹Arturo Olavarria Bravo, Chile entre dos Alessandri,

of the party greeted local leaders who approached the candidate to offer him their support. The train arrived at Concepción amid martial airs provided by the local band and loud cheers for the "Lion of Tarapacá," the "candidate of the people," the "future President of Chile." The enthusiasm of the multitude which struggled to approach and embrace the candidate was tremendous, and waiting at the theater was another throng that overflowed the available seating.

Alessandri was introduced by Juan Antonio Ríos, who noted that since Concepción had heard Yáñez, the Radical Center believed that "as an act of true democracy" the other leading contender for the nomination also should be heard. In his remarks Alessandri stated that the old guard of the Radical Party--those who earlier viewed his social doctrines as subversive--now understood that he was trying to defend the public order by means of necessary evolution, and they had become enthusiastic supporters of his candidacy.⁷² (The traditionalists, led by Mac-Iver, had waged a valiant holding action against the social-reform-oriented young Radicals, but in the end they were overwhelmed and the

Memorias políticas, Vol. I, pp. 64-5.

Among the members of Alessandri's retinue were the Radical deputies Hector Arancibia Laso and Rafael Torreblanca, Víctor Domingo Silva, the young journalist Guillermo Bianchi, the poet and orator Julio César Barrenechea, Oscar Garcés Silva and Arturo Olavarría Bravo, Alessandri's private secretary.

⁷²Alessandri, p. 31.

Radical Party assumed a new leftist orientation.)

Alessandri delivered a lengthy and stirring oration, and at the conclusion of the speech the audience gave him a standing ovation. The die was cast and Alessandri's presidential campaign was off to an auspicious start.⁷³

The echoes of the triumphant visit to Concepción spread throughout the southern region, and the people wanted to listen to the senator in order to make comparisons. In response to the rain of invitations that followed, Alessandri made a new tour, this time to Temuco, Valdivia, Osorno, Puerto Montt, and returning by way of Chillán. This tour, just as the first, was an unqualified success. The great majority of the Aliancistas of those provinces showed that they preferred the valiant caudillo to the academic orator Yáñez. In the words of Víctor Domingo Silva, Alessandri's cause spread "the word of liberty and the gospel of right."⁷⁴ The presidential campaign broke the traditional pattern of lavish promises made to effect local improvement projects; it presented a brand new aspect which the conservative elements equated with a first call to revolution.

The Convention of the Liberal Alliance opened April 25, 1920, with the registration of more than 1400

⁷³Olavarria, p. 69.

⁷⁴Cited in Olavarria, p. 71. The address was delivered at Temuco following a banquet in honor of the candidate.

delegates in the Salon of Honor of the National Congress. Among those assembled it was believed that the contest would finally narrow to a battle between Yáñez and Alessandri; bets were placed and Eliodoro Yáñez emerged with the best odds.⁷⁵ During the first session Armando Quezada Acharán, the head of the Radical Party, was elected President of the Convention. The nomination balloting was to take place within the framework established by previous nominating assemblies. There were to be three free ballots, and then two additional ones to decide among the three leading candidates. The party membership agreed to vote in the first and second rounds for their respective chiefs as was customary; however, on the first ballot Alessandri received nearly 400 votes. Since no candidate approached the necessary 60% majority, the delegates agreed to proceed to the second round. After having cast his vote, Alessandri made his way through the multitude toward the door, intending to go home and await the results of the balloting. A short time later, his afternoon tea with his family was interrupted by a disturbance at the door leading to the street. The senator went to investigate and was met by a noisy crowd of his supporters who had come to inform him that he had garnered more than the necessary three-fifths of the votes.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Alessandri, p. 31; Iglesias, p. 343.

⁷⁶Alessandri noted that on the second ballot he

According to his own account, Alessandri returned to the convention hall and was received with thundering applause. He was lifted to the presidential rostrum where Armando Quezada embraced him, then asked for silence. He declared that Arturo Alessandri had surpassed by far the 60% majority required for nomination in the by-laws of the Convention, and therefore he was entrusting to the "Lion" the standard of the Liberal Alliance, confident that he would carry it to victory. The delegates then demanded that the nominee speak on his program. Alessandri wanted some time to think and to put his important points in writing, but the delegates were insistent. Alessandri rose to the podium and proceeded to develop his ideas as they came to mind.⁷⁷

Alberto Edwards has said,

Alessandri did not hesitate to tint his candidacy with the colors of a revolution without arms. He openly declared war on all the formulas of the past, and even on the traditional beginnings of middle class society. He united in his program all the affronts and dissatisfaction that floated in the atmosphere and he promised to remedy them all.⁷⁸

obtained more than 800 votes even though his closest friends and the members of his family had not voted for him. Alessandri, p. 33.

⁷⁷ Alessandri, p. 33.

⁷⁸ Edwards, p. 210.

Thus it is difficult to define the precepts precisely and to categorize them within a logical doctrine; it was a program of rebellion and protest rather than one of reconstruction. Alessandri took strong exception to the views expressed by Edwards; however, the document offered as the enunciation of his program appeared years later with the considerable advantage of hindsight.⁷⁹

In Donoso's opinion: "The program contained nothing extreme; nevertheless, it alarmed the conservative classes. In that culminating moment of his career, the versatile politician . . . could not help but appear as the agitator who menaced those who might try to block the way."⁸⁰ Nor did he attempt to change his image. The concluding paragraphs of Alessandri's acceptance speech amounted to a parody of some earlier presidential candidates who had characterized themselves as conciliatory elements, threatening to no one. He said,

I want to be a menace to the reactionaries, to those who resist all just and necessary reform

I want to be a menace to those who rebel against the principles of justice and right; I want to be a menace to all who remain blind, deaf, and dumb in the presence of the transformations of this historic moment⁸¹

⁷⁹ See Alessandri, pp. 34-7.

⁸⁰ Donoso, p. 243.

⁸¹ Alessandri, p. 439.

On May 2, 1920, the opposition National Union met in convention to nominate its candidate for President of the Republic. The purpose of that assembly seemed to be to select, not the best candidate for the position, but the best man to campaign against Alessandri. Looming as an unexpectedly strong candidate was Senator Enrique Zañartu Prieto who, with the support of the Democratic Liberals, Nationals and some Conservatives, almost secured the necessary votes to be nominated. The Liberal faction that had opposed Alessandri favored the candidacy of Ismael Tocornal, a man of vast experience in public affairs with a solid and well-earned reputation. However, his name did not catch fire in the Convention; perhaps because of opposition from President Sanfuentes and Minister of Interior Montenegro, both of whom had suffered political setbacks at the hands of Tocornal. Other contenders were Guillermo Subercaseaux, former Minister for France; Ladislao Errázuriz; Arturo Besa, former Minister of Foreign Affairs; Agustín Edwards, Minister to London; and Luis Barros Borgoño. The balloting began on Sunday afternoon and by Tuesday it appeared that the Convention might have to adjourn without selecting a nominee. Zañartu offered to withdraw but his adherents were reluctant to give up the fight; the Tocornal and Barros factions seemed deadlocked. A last minute deal gave the required two-thirds vote to Barros Borgoño.

Nearly seventy years of age, but appearing much younger, Barros was a former law professor who had held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs at one time. He also had assumed a leading role in the issue of public instruction, thereby incurring some hostility from the Catholic Church.⁸² The nomination was applauded jubilantly by the delegates, but no one rejoiced more than Alessandri. From the vantage point of practical politics, he believed Barros to be the weaker candidate; he was known as an intellectual but he had never been a political activist.⁸³

Even prior to the nominating conventions the metropolitan newspapers had taken up positions for the impending contest. One of the leading editorial writers on the staff of El Mercurio, Joaquín Díaz Garcés was a bitter critic of Alessandri. When that newspaper agreed to sell the Alianza a page of advertising daily,⁸⁴ Díaz immediately resigned, charging publicly that El Mercurio was subsidized by the Alessandristas. He joined the staff of the President's organ, the conservative El Diario Ilustrado, where he continued his attacks on Alessandri. El Mercurio ceased to

⁸²DSF. 825.00/131, Shea to Colby, May 4, 1920.

⁸³Iglesias, p. 349.

⁸⁴The price paid by the Alianza was rumored to be 1000 pesos daily. DSF. 825.00/131, Shea to Colby, May 4, 1920.

comment editorially on the presidential nominees, devoting its columns to municipal affairs of the most minor significance. (Donoso interprets this policy as one of indecision --keeping an ear to the ground.)⁸⁵ Yáñez' daily La Nación, one of the most powerful papers in Chile, was devoid of editorial commentary following Alessandri's overwhelming victory in the Alianza Convention, although it regularly sold a page of advertising to the National Union organization.⁸⁶

The well-to-do segments of society expressed amazement and consternation over the easy win by the "Lion of Tarapacá." Domingo Amunátegui asked, "What new moral or political currents had puffed up the middle classes so that they dared have the audacity to combat their former masters?" The day following the nomination a further expression of alarm appeared in the press in the form of an advertisement paid for by the National Union. Entitled "Hannibal at the Gates" the item concluded: "Men of position: This is a matter of supreme national interest, of our own personal security. Take steps to defend it!" Manuel Rivas write in his memoirs:

In the Club de la Unión, in banking circles, among the earnest and

⁸⁵Donoso, p. 241.

⁸⁶It was rumored that Alessandri had attempted a reconciliation but Yáñez refused to see him. DSF. 825.00/131, Shea to Colby, May 4, 1920.

judicious people of the capital, the Alessandri candidacy was madness; it would be the final outlandish escapade of a much-discussed individual. He did not have the financial means to mount a campaign, he did not have a majority in Congress, it was purer nonsense.⁸⁷

A most interesting reaction was that of the Radical patriarch Enrique Mac-Iver, who still wielded considerable influence over his younger cohorts. He did not attend the convention, but from the first indication of Alessandri's possible candidacy, he was against it. This attitude alarmed the party leaders who sent a delegation to try to persuade Mac-Iver to cease his opposition to the Alianza candidate and to offer Alessandri his moral support. The old Radical retorted,

But don't you know Alessandri? Don't you know that he is a most deceitful Italian, personalistic and a friend of the unconscious claptrap that there is in the country? Are you sure that once in the Presidency, although he may have Radical Ministers, he is not going to surround himself with favorites . . . supplanting you and forcing you to retire, unless you become corrupt with him . . . ?⁸⁸

Donoso reiterated:

From the first, the "popular" candidate shook the sensibilities of the lower classes with Messianic promises: the agitator, the destroyer, the demagogue

⁸⁷ Cited in Donoso, pp. 243-4.

⁸⁸ Cited in Donoso, pp. 247-8.

was in his element. He promised the destruction of capitalism and the satisfaction of all the needs of the working classes; he presented himself as the paladin of social justice, the liberator of the oppressed and the redeemer of the downtrodden.

Early in the campaign Alessandri coined several phrases that he was to use with considerable success. He referred to the wealthy classes as la canalla dorada (the gilded rabble), he cajoled the masses by calling them his chusma querida (beloved mob), he repeated over and over that he would be President of the Republic pese a quien pese (that is, let the chips fall where they may).

A decisive element in the fervor that engulfed the populace was the attitude of the student youth, the so-called generation of 1920, that saw Alessandri as the reformer of antiquated political customs and the representative of new social currents. Youthful idealism and altruism, plus the impact of the Russian Revolution, had brought a degree of prestige and a modicum of success to the student movement; and it was a potent force which could be easily exploited by a man like Alessandri.

The new combination of parties that called itself the National Union received the vigorous support of the conservative factions. Grouped on its side were the most powerful economic forces of the country: banking, big business, industry, and the propertied classes. Its organ, El Diario

Ilustrado, reviewed the program of candidate Barros in glowing terms:

It is like a comprehensive synthesis of that which all patriots would want to see applied at all levels of national activity. It does not try to dazzle with excessive promises; it does not address itself to the passions of any single class; it indicates what is practically possible on the road to progress, in the concept of a statesman, not as simply the demand of a candidate.⁸⁹

Campaign activity intensified during the month of May. Barros, after a brief round of receptions, banquets and organizational meetings in Santiago, went to Valparaíso and then toured the southern part of the country, aided by Yáñez' political following. The Union candidate did not plan to invade the Alessandri stronghold in the northern desert provinces. From all appearances the Liberal Alliance had the better organization, and a number of young men from the upper class were supporting Alessandri enthusiastically; but there was considerable talk of bribery and corruption. Publicly, Barros' partisans predicted a majority of at least twenty in the Electoral College,⁹⁰ though privately they agreed that if the election results were reasonably close, Congress would unseat a sufficient number of Alessandri electors to insure the triumph of Barros. The Aliancistas

⁸⁹Cited in Donoso, pp. 246-7.

⁹⁰DSF. 825.00/136, Shea to Colby, June 1, 1920.

openly threatened revolution if their candidate were denied victory by such chicanery.⁹¹

Frequent protests were made by adherents of both groups over opposition efforts to disrupt public meetings and even to attack the candidates themselves. In Concepción, Osorno, and other southern towns, gatherings to publicize the Barros candidacy were interfered with and sometimes broken up. Stones and other missiles were hurled at the nominee, but he escaped injury. Disturbances also occurred in connection with Alessandrista meetings, and public officials were cited for failure to prevent disorders and for unlawful interference with the campaign. Several intendants and minor officials were removed,⁹² but not before the executive committee of the Liberal Alliance had filed a formal complaint against Minister of Interior Pedro Montenegro charging lax enforcement of the law, and thereby had brought about another cabinet crisis. The Ministers all tendered their resignations; the Alianza repudiated its representatives and refused to accept any new cabinet integrated without authorized Aliancista members. It also demanded ample guarantees that the

⁹¹DSF. 825.00/132, Shea to Colby, May 18, 1920.

⁹²The intendant of Talca, a province south of Santiago, was one of those called to La Moneda to answer charges of interference. He was discharged for pernicious activity and failure to perform his sworn duty. DSF. 825.00/136, Shea to Colby, June 1, 1920.

government would not exert pressure during the impending election.⁹³ El Mercurio editorialized on June 18, 1920:

The resignation of the Alliance Ministers was a necessary consequence of the declarations of the Allied parties and forces the President to look again for new men to form the Cabinet, thus making him responsible for the gravity of the situation that may arise. The situation is very serious and the necessity of having a responsible Government becomes more urgent each day. It is necessary to have a government with ample and impartial foundation, in which both tendencies may find effective guarantees, with men whose presence in the Cabinet will inspire confidence to the country This is an extreme case in which we must proceed with energy and nobleness, consulting only the interests of the country. Both candidates have an equal interest in the prompt solution of this situation, as a resigned Cabinet cannot preside in the elections, not having authority and responsibility for such acts.

La Nación, too, admitted the gravity of the political situation and in addition expressed concern over Chile's deteriorating position internationally in the absence of a functioning Minister of Affairs. The issue of submitting the boundary dispute with Peru to arbitration under the League of Nations covenant had been resurrected and demanded immediate attention.⁹⁴

⁹³Donoso, p. 249; DSF. 825.00/138, Shea to Colby, June 15, 1920. The deciding votes for censure were cast by the electrolíticos, an independent faction led by Manuel Rivas.

⁹⁴Cited in DSF. 825.00/139, Shea to Colby, June 24, 1920, translated by the Embassy staff. Shortly thereafter, Finance Minister Viera Gallo was moved to the Foreign Affairs post.

The leading Santiago dailies continued to display relative neutrality in their editorial columns, although each regularly ran pages of propaganda paid for by the opposing political organizations. The Edwards family, owner of El Mercurio, received considerable criticism for its mercenary attitude and lack of patriotic spirit in the face of the Alessandri "anarchist menace." La Unión, La Opinión, and El Diario Ilustrado continued their bitter assaults on the Aliancista candidate and his platform, both in editorials and in the news columns; and the most influential newspapers in Valparaíso pursued the same line. In the outlying provinces, though, the papers were about evenly divided in their political views; almost every small town had two newspapers: one that was Liberal or Democrat and the other Conservative or Democrat Liberal.⁹⁵

As election day approached, the intensity and violence of the struggle increased; and the frequent public statements--fraught with emotion--which were made by the leaders of both sides, revealed how deeply divided the partisans were. The war in the press narrowed to a bitter debate over the popular candidate, his program, and the sincerity with which he defended his proposals.

On June 13, 1920, as Alessandri was addressing a large crowd from the balcony of his home, two shots were fired

⁹⁵See DSF. 825.00/136, Shea to Colby, June 1, 1920; DSF. 825.00/138, Shea to Colby, June 15, 1920.

in his direction by a plain clothes policeman. The candidate's supporters insisted that the bullets were intended for him (one of the shells later was found imbedded in the balcony woodwork), while the opposition claimed that the officer was trying to defend himself from those in the hostile crowd who had discovered his presence in their midst. The incident was all but ignored in the newspapers, and government officials tried to pass over the matter as lightly as possible.⁹⁶

The following week, La Nación published an article accusing the Aliancistas of having committed a long list of outrages during the course of the campaign. Among these were attempts to counteract demonstrations favoring Barros by following them up with deliberate disorders perpetrated by Alessandri supporters; the incidents cited were in Viña del Mar, Coltauco, Putaendo, and in Los Angeles where a fatality occurred.⁹⁷

One issue, injected into the campaign at the eleventh hour, promised to provoke serious results, at least

⁹⁶DSF. 825.00/130, Shea to Colby, June 13, 1920; DSF. 825.00/138, Shea to Colby, June 15, 1920. Ambassador Shea reported having dined with the Foreign Minister on the evening following the shooting. The event was discussed in a general way, "but nobody seemed to attach particular importance to it." Shea also related that fears of serious casualties occurring before or on election day had been expressed in all circles.

⁹⁷DSF. 825.00/139, Shea to Colby, June 24, 1920.

for a time. From the Unionista page of El Mercurio grave charges were leveled against Alessandri concerning pending litigation with the National Bank of Chile. Some years before, the candidate had borrowed a large sum of money and had pledged as collateral shares of stock in Llallagua, a Chilean-owned mining property located in Bolivia. When the bank demanded payment, Alessandri authorized sale of the stock, but the amount realized was insufficient to satisfy the bank's claim. At the height of the campaign the bank insisted on a subsequent payment of 680,000 pesos, which Alessandri refused to make on the grounds that the bank had allegedly accepted the stock as full settlement in the first place. Furthermore, in the intervening years the stock had increased considerably in value, so Alessandri brought suit against the bank for three million pesos, the difference between the original value of the stock and its current value less the amount of the original debt. He based his action on the grounds that the sale was invalid because the written authorization had not been properly notarized.

During the progress of the litigation, a ruling adverse to Alessandri was made by the court; and a review of the decision plus a replica of Alessandri's letter with some damaging implications were printed in the newspaper. The following day a scathing rebuttal appeared in the

columns of the Aliancista advertisement. It stated, among other things, that the court decision in question had been obtained through the influence of a bank official who was also a counselor of state. This accusation caused a mild sensation, because the only man holding the two positions was Carlos Balmaceda, a man of some prestige and a nephew of the former President of the Republic. Balmaceda demanded satisfaction, the representative of El Mercurio disclaimed responsibility for the article, the Liberal Alliance Committee refused to accept responsibility and thereby lost its opportunity to buy space in the paper. After this impasse the furor subsided as quickly as it had arisen, and the matter seemed to be closed.⁹⁸

Throughout his campaign tours, Alessandri repeatedly had proclaimed the extent of his poverty, and had heralded the enthusiasm of his partisans as compensation for the scantiness of his resources. In reality, his campaign coffers had been filled generously, and his brother José Pedro contributed a sizable portion of his personal funds to the Alessandri cause. The National Union candidate also had abundant resources, and he risked a considerable part of his personal fortune as well.⁹⁹

⁹⁸DSF. 825.00/138, Shea to Colby, June 15, 1920.

⁹⁹Donoso, p. 251. The campaign funds spent on behalf of each nominee exceeded three million pesos.

The serious unrest apparent throughout Chilean society, especially among the laboring groups, was manipulated by the Aliancistas, but certainly was not of their creation. Congress had convened the first of June but ignored the urgent matter of the conversion law, and there was a general demand in the press for enactment of some measure to stabilize the currency.¹⁰⁰ Workmen were faced with high living costs that continued to climb steadily higher, inadequate wages and miserable working conditions. There were threats of strikes in the coal mines of the south and in the nitrate regions of the north. Because of a shortage in the bean crop, their basic food, the dock workers refused to load beans for shipment overseas. There was a shortage of 150,000 tons in the wheat harvest, also, and the government considered an embargo on wheat exports. The lack of adequate food and other necessities caused real suffering among the Chilean masses, and the political turmoil merely added to their difficulties.

Coal production had dropped about twenty percent, due primarily to the efforts of professional labor agitators, and the fuel situation became acute. Lights had to be turned

¹⁰⁰DSF. 825.00/138, Shea to Colby, June 15, 1920. The problem of cheap paper money dates back to 1892. By 1914 there was much sentiment on the part of the landowners to return to a metallic standard, but the dislocation produced by World War I made conversion unfeasible.

off to save electricity and restrictions were placed on the use of gas for cooking. All demonstrations by the miners were suppressed, yet workmen's organizations increased their demands for shorter hours and higher wages. A labor delegation sent to Santiago to present the case for the miners contended that the men were working eight hours a day and were not attempting to curtail production. The representatives claimed that the owners were stockpiling coal at the mines in anticipation of higher prices. The companies then intended to provoke a new strike to justify military measures in the coal region during the presidential elections, thereby hindering the free expression and action of the miners.

The situation grew so grave that the contending political groups agreed upon a pre-arranged division of electoral votes in the mining districts without reference to the actual election returns. In the province of Concepción, Alessandri was to obtain twenty-four votes while Barros was to get twelve. Such an agreement, in spite of the bitter struggle between the factions, gave evidence of the genuine concern felt by both sides over the very real possibility that the disorders might escalate to near anarchy.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹DSF. 825.00/138, Shea to Colby, June 15, 1920;
DSF. 825.00/139, Shea to Colby, June 24, 1920.

In Santiago on election eve, the casual observer would have concluded that there was only one candidate for the office of President of the Republic. The supporters of Arturo Alessandri Palma held almost continuous demonstrations in the streets; and in the vicinity of the candidate's home on the Alameda still more cheering followers, drawn largely from the laboring class, maintained their vigil.

Election day, June 25, dawned in an atmosphere of apprehension and turbulence. The Aliancista voters, obeying the instructions of the party leadership, appeared at the polls during the early morning hours and cast their ballots; and they then proceeded to organize themselves into crews for the avowed purpose of observing the voting to insure an honest election. According to Donoso, these poll watchers assaulted opposition officials, intimidated the voters, frightened the populace, and provoked disorders which the local police were unable to control. The first report of the results gave 179 electors to Alessandri and 175 to Barros; however, the Ministers left La Moneda that night without providing official information.¹⁰²

¹⁰²Donoso, p. 251; DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920. The account by the American Ambassador stated that election day, a legal holiday, passed quietly. Only a few incidents marred the balloting, and those were characterized as unimportant.

The following morning on its Alianza page, El Mercurio ran a large photograph of Alessandri with a caption stating that he had been elected. The next day on the Unionista page Barros was declared the winner. The government issued no official statement; unofficially it claimed that the returns were not yet complete. This failure to announce the election results appeared to arouse much resentment among the lower class supporters of Alessandri, and the Committee of the Liberal Alliance called a meeting of Alessandristas for one o'clock Sunday afternoon (June 27, 1920) in the Plaza de Armas. Also scheduled for the same hour in City Hall on the Plaza was the meeting of the Electoral College of the Department of Santiago.

To preserve order and control the milling masses who had paraded the streets throughout the night, mounted police and mounted carabineros armed with rifles and lances were stationed at all streets entering the Plaza. The officer in command was to permit no invasion of the Plaza, and as an additional precaution several machine guns were placed in strategic locations.

Shortly before the hour of the meeting the Aliancistas formed their procession, and with banners flying and posters of Alessandri held high they marched toward the Plaza. The carabineros met the parade and

halted it, and hostilities ensued at once. The officers finally charged the crowd which was growing by the minute, and in the melee several demonstrators were injured. The multitude quickly dispersed, only to regroup in front of Alessandri's residence on the Alameda. The numbers swelled rapidly and so did the animosity toward the police. About 4:00 P.M. the mob returned to the vicinity of the Plaza and attacked the carabineros with sticks and stones. The soldiers defended themselves with admirable restraint, although several of the contingent were wounded--one seriously. Before the crowd retreated, a number of demonstrators also had suffered injuries.¹⁰³

Immediately after the clash, Alessandri was observed walking through the streets with a small group of followers assuring the crowds that he had been elected, and this seemed to be interpreted by his partisans as a signal to cease creating disturbances.¹⁰⁴ Later the same afternoon Alessandri addressed an enormous gathering in front of his house; the contents of his speech were reported by an American who was present in the crowd. The candidate reiterated that he had been elected, that the government was deliberately holding back the news, and that he was delivering an ultimatum for an official announcement within

¹⁰³DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920.

¹⁰⁴DSF. 825.00/133, Shea to Colby, June 27, 1920.

forty-eight hours. Alessandri predicted that if the government refused to acknowledge his election or if he were assassinated, another messiah would rise to lead the Chilean people to ultimate triumph. The cause of the Alianza was just and was bound to succeed, he said, while the cause of the rich aristocrats who had made slaves of the masses for so long was surely doomed. He concluded his remarks with a plea to remain calm throughout the two-day period ahead. After the deadline, if the government had not proclaimed his election, he would consent to demonstrations of any magnitude.¹⁰⁵ The speech further aroused the fervor of the audience, but the Alessandristas acquiesced to the wishes of their leader and finally dispersed.

Sunday night the streets were comparatively quiet with no large crowds parading, although a sizable gathering maintained the vigil in front of Alessandri's home. The mounted police and carabineros remained at their stations along principal streets and at the entrance to the Plaza de Armas. Monday continued calm, shops remained closed, trams and busses halted operations, and few private conveyances were to be seen. A general strike was declared in Santiago, and Alessandristas held scattered parades but there were no disorders. Unofficial statements by government officials still claimed incomplete returns.

¹⁰⁵DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920.

Information from numerous sources indicated that on Tuesday afternoon, while throngs of partisans continued to block the Alameda and to create a potential disruptive force, Alessandri received word that since he was responsible for the strike and disorders, he would be considered guilty of disturbing the peace if he did not counsel his followers to disband and return to work.

According to the rumor, he was to comply with the suggestion before 5:00 P.M. At that hour, if the crowd had not dispersed, the carabineros would be instructed to charge with lances drawn, and Alessandri would be arrested for having caused the disturbances. It was evident that Alessandri was influenced in some manner, for he spoke to the assembled throng that afternoon and urged them to return home and go back to their jobs. He also renewed the assurance that, in fact, he had been elected.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920. Shea reported that he could not verify the rumor.

V. THE TRIBUNAL OF HONOR

The second phase of the electoral experience had begun. Unless one of the candidates received an absolute majority of electors, the full Congress would make the final determination, and Barros Borgoño enjoyed a comfortable margin in both chambers. In the face of that possibility, Alessandri began to claim that the government intended to rob him of the election by disqualifying a sufficient number of electors. He appealed to his chusma querida from the balconies of his home, keeping them stirred up and ready for action. In the week following the election, Santiago lived under threat of mob violence; numerous rumors circulated, and the well-to-do elements took steps to form a vigilante type organization to protect property and maintain order if such should become necessary.¹⁰⁷ Businesses remained closed, traffic was non-existent, indispensable services and supplies were cut off. In Donoso's view, the Alessandristas wanted to carry fear and anguish to every home in the city; they spread the rumor that the district would be surrendered to looting, whereupon bands of rotos invaded the area. Over the signature of the directors of the Alianza, telegrams were transmitted to the provinces

¹⁰⁷ DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920.

announcing that the revolution had broken out.¹⁰⁸ The attitude and conduct of the army had been above criticism; however, since many of the soldiers were recruited from the remote districts where Alessandri commanded his greatest strength, observers questioned the wisdom of placing too much dependence upon the unfaltering loyalty of the military establishment.¹⁰⁹

Both political combinations held to the claim of a majority of electors; and Alessandri demanded recognition of his victory, while the National Union pleaded for an end to the popular agitation. Furthermore, both groups agreed that a change in the Ministry was imperative. Under the pressure of a very grave situation, President Sanfuentes

¹⁰⁸Donoso, p. 252.

¹⁰⁹DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920; DSF. 825.00/137, Shea to Colby, July 1, 1920. Shea suggested that a visit by an American battleship or two on or about August 1 might have a salutary effect. He also reported strict enforcement of government censorship to minimize the importance of recent disorders. The American representative of Associated Press was permitted to send two telegrams to New York, then informed that future messages would have to be examined before being sent.

The papers of the Argentine consul in Santiago were cancelled by the Chilean Government because he allegedly acted as news correspondent for a Buenos Aires newspaper and sent out alarmist accounts of election disturbances. New York Times, July 4, 1920, II, 1:2.

The Chilean legation in Buenos Aires had received no news of the outcome of the elections. The American Minister at La Paz had received reports from Buenos Aires that Chile was in a state of revolution. He wired the American Embassy in Santiago for verification.

organized a new Cabinet made up entirely of Liberals including representatives of both the Liberal Alliance and the National Union. This Ministry, headed by Pedro García de la Huerta, was presented to the Congress on July 1 and was well received.¹¹⁰ The following day El Mercurio editorialized:

Former Senator don Pedro García de la Huerta has succeeded in forming a new Cabinet composed of three Liberals of the Alliance, and three Liberals of the Union. Señor García de la Huerta has a political personality which meets with sympathy and respect in both political groups. The other ministers are all men of prestige and authority in the groups to which they belong

Both political groups feel that their rights will be properly upheld by this Cabinet, because each has in it an active and duly authorized director of the late electoral campaign.

We are in urgent need of getting back to normal again, so that the Government may move forward again, legislation be promoted and social unrest be avoided.

The writer concluded with a plea for support from all political parties.¹¹¹

The next step in the electoral process was the casting of ballots by the provincial electors in the capital of each province on July 25.¹¹² After the electors had voted the Congress appointed a joint committee to study all details of

¹¹⁰Donoso, p. 253.

¹¹¹DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920, translated by the Embassy Staff.

¹¹²In order to cast his vote, each elector must first

the election, including claims of alleged frauds. If some electors were found to be illegally chosen, they were disqualified and their votes were deducted from the totals. The Chilean Constitution provided that a presidential candidate must receive an absolute majority of the total number of electors in order to be declared President; the magic number was 178. If no candidate received the required number of votes, Congress met in joint session and by a majority elected the President from among the candidates. The quorum was made up of nineteen senators and sixty deputies, and a decision had to be made by this body.¹¹³

Claims and counter-claims, accusations and diatribes continued to fill the press, and the animosity whipped up by the Alessandristas produced a state of near panic among the upper classes. Gradually a movement developed to form a Court of Honor composed of prominent men of both coalitions who would study the conflicting claims against electors and

have been recognized by the electoral college of each department as having been duly elected. Such colleges were formed of the assembled chairmen of the polling booths and they issued to each elector an attested copy of the act of his election. The electoral colleges were not empowered to decide on the legality of such acts, but they placed on record any claims against the certification of a particular elector.

¹¹³DSF. 825.00/153, Shea to Colby, July 9, 1920. The deadline for a decision was set at August 30, and in the event agreement was not reached by that date, an extension of time was possible by means of a joint act of Congress.

submit their decision to Congress for ratification. The members of both factions would be bound to accept the decision. Such procedure would minimize partisan considerations in controversies which were basically legal; it had been used before--in the presidential elections of 1895. The whole idea encountered strong resistance in National Union circles, for they had the necessary majority in Congress to elect Barros. It amounted to political blackmail: Alessandri or the revolution.¹¹⁴

In Bolivia, a July revolt ousted from power José Gutiérrez Guerra, with whom the Chilean Government had been negotiating a long-standing boundary dispute. Assuming control was the caudillo of the Republican Party, Juan Bautista Saavedra, who was friendly to Peru (and who probably received some assistance from that country's government in executing the coup d'état). The party claimed the label "revindicationist," and it was expected to center its effort toward effecting the abrogation of the 1904 treaty with Chile by which Antofagasta officially had been ceded. The first news of the Bolivian revolution was published in Santiago the morning of July 13; however, due to the late arrival of the information, there were no editorials on the subject. The report from the American Embassy indicated that the first reception of the news was somewhat casual, and El Mercurio

¹¹⁴Donoso, p. 253.

had prepared an editorial discounting the importance of the event and its impact on Chile, which was to appear the following morning. At the last moment the editorial was rewritten, presumably at the suggestion of the government, and the published piece was in an entirely different vein. After commenting that the revolution was most regrettable and would serve to strengthen the opinion of the outside world that South America was "a mass of comic opera countries . . . ," the article went on to review the history of Chile's recent relations with the two neighboring nations and it concluded with a call to the country to settle the internal political divergence so as to be free to devote all energy to what might become a serious international problem.¹¹⁵ La Nación and El Diario Ilustrado carried similar editorials that day. Ambassador Shea reported that a visit to the Foreign Office on July 14 conveyed to him the impression that the Chilean Government considered the situation serious. Officials frankly stated that troops were being sent to the frontier as a precautionary measure in view of the fact that Peru also was known to have massed about 10,000 soldiers close to the border.

Extensive coverage of the international situation continued to appear in the newspapers, and the fact that the Bolivian army had sided with the revolutionists increased

¹¹⁵ DSF. 825.00/154, Shea to Colby, July 23, 1920.

the importance of the movement and strengthened Chilean opinion in the belief that it was directed against the treaty of 1904 and the former friendly policy toward Chile. Furthermore, declarations emanating from Bolivia inferred the existence of a scheme by the governments of Peru and Bolivia to take advantage of the deep social and political divisions in Chile by beginning an action which would permit the former to recover Tacna and Tarapacá, and the latter Antofagasta.¹¹⁶ Another possibility was that Peru might be able to force mediation of the dispute.¹¹⁷

The strengthening of troops in the north was generally approved by the people, in as much as the government had been under fire for some time because of its seemingly indifferent attitude toward the proper defense of Chile's northern frontier. The First Division was promptly moved north and members of the reserve classes of 1913 through 1919 (of the First and Third Divisions) residing in the four northern provinces were called up.¹¹⁸ The government also announced it was recalling officers then abroad as members of military

¹¹⁶Donoso, p. 254. In 1919, the National Assembly of Peru had declared null and void the Treaty of Ancón which had established peace between Peru and Chile in 1884, so a state of war still existed.

¹¹⁷DSF. 825.00/154, Shea to Colby, July 23, 1920.

¹¹⁸DSF. 825.00/140, Voetter (Antofagasta) to Colby, July 15, 1920.

missions.¹¹⁹

Foreigners living in Chile were required to register --Peruvians first, and business houses were urged to discharge Peruvians in their employ and advise them to leave Chile immediately.¹²⁰

The Chilean populace responded enthusiastically to the apparent threat from her neighbors and the resulting measures taken by the authorities. Patriotic demonstrations were organized and parades were held almost daily, half-holidays were declared, and there developed an attitude of unity of purpose before a possible danger. The strikes in the north and the agitation in the coal mines subsided, and working men generally showed a desire to help during a time of crisis. There were some murmurings, however, to the effect that the government had created an emergency to divert public attention from the internal political strife.¹²¹ The notable exception to the nationwide expression of patriotic fervor was the response of the student groups and the more

¹¹⁹New York Times, July 17, 1920, 3:7.

¹²⁰DSF. 825.00/141, Alusna Valparaíso to Navintel, July 21, 1920. Anti-Peruvian sentiment increased and there were demonstrations and disturbances in several northern towns. The press contributed to the problem by printing accounts of the harsh treatment received by Chilean nationals in Peru. DSF. 825.00/154, Shea to Colby, July 23, 1920.

¹²¹DSF. 825.00/154, Shea to Colby, July 23, 1920; DSF. 825.00/142, Shea to Colby, July 24, 1920; DSF. 825.00/143, Deichman (Valparaíso) to Colby, July 25, 1920.

radical labor leaders. They viewed the entire situation as a bourgeois trick to swindle Alessandri of his just victory and assure the presidency to Barros Borgoño. During this period of intense emotional reactions three unfortunate incidents occurred, each with the complicity or indifference of the authorities.

One target for the hatred of the conservative classes was the Federation of Students. According to the Minister of Public Instruction (in a speech before the Senate), those students "had offended morality and had been guilty of grave disrespect for the constitutional powers of the state."¹²² The student group was well known for its socialist tendencies; it had protested against the military measures and had sent a commission to Sanfuentes to demand an explanation of the mobilization. Both the president of the Student's Federation and the former president (who was the editor of an anarchist sheet called The Red Message which had been suppressed) had made frequent incendiary speeches against the government, had been strong supporters of Alessandri, and had instigated many of the recent disorders. The headquarters of the organization, located in the center of Santiago, was assaulted at midday on July 21 while the police observed from the sidelines.

¹²²Donoso, p. 254. Its leaders were Juan Gandulfo, Alfredo Demaría, Pedro León Loyola, and Carlos Vicuña.

Furniture was hurled to the street and burned, and the students who were trapped in the house had to flee via the rooftops of adjacent buildings to escape the fury of the mob. Three days later, the Federation was dissolved by government decree.¹²³

That same night during demonstrations by two different crowds--one favoring the students and one opposing them--shots were exchanged; and a young member of the aristocracy, Julio Covarrubias Freire, was killed and several other participants were wounded. Donoso suggested that the incident could have been a deliberate attempt at intimidation.¹²⁴ The destruction by arson of the Federación Obrera de Magallanes took place July 27, with the cooperation of civil and military authorities. One policeman and four workers were killed and the building was burned to the ground. The reaction in political circles was intense, and a protest work stoppage of five days contributed to rising partisan emotions.

In Santiago the last week in July, the Chamber of Deputies was engulfed in a heated debate over a bill to appropriate five million pesos for mobilization, another

¹²³Donoso, p. 255; DSF. 825.00/154, Shea to Colby, July 23, 1920.

¹²⁴Donoso, p. 256. Throughout the night other disorders occurred, mostly demonstrations against Peru. DSF. 825.00/154, Shea to Colby, July 23, 1920.

instance of fortuitous timing. Later sessions of the Congress did consider the tragic events in Punta Arenas where, following the disorders, the courts had taken repressive action and had convicted and sentenced to prison a large number of workers, students, and other Alessandri sympathizers.¹²⁵ Within Chile, all of these events generated more ill will toward the government; and from without, they brought much unfavorable publicity along with some expressions of indignation and concern.¹²⁶ Peruvian refugees arriving in Lima reported that the situation in Chile verged on revolution, and travelers (American and European) verified the stories of rioting and killings.

After the situation in Bolivia had stabilized and the fears of imminent conflict with Peru had eased somewhat, attention of Chileans turned once again to internal politics and the presidential elections. Both sides awaited the next step in the electoral process--the review of the voting by Congress--which was set for the 30th of August; however, serious efforts were still being made to have the election reviewed by an impartial independent body. It was generally

¹²⁵Donoso, p. 256.

¹²⁶One of the most famous victims was the poet, Domingo Gómez Rojas. Another, a Dr. Ducci--professor of medicine and a former president of the Federation of Students--was upheld by the Board of Public Instruction after the government had tried to remove him.

believed that a partisan decision would not be accepted by the populace, especially in view of the fact that the results of the election amounted to a virtual tie. Alessandri considered himself sure of a victory and he welcomed the organization of a Tribunal of Honor; while some of his staunchest opponents, among them Enrique Zañartu, acquiesced to a compromise because of the distinct possibility of international conflict. Meanwhile, as further insurance, Alessandri had been carefully lining up in his camp the army, both officers and enlisted men. He sent Bernardo Gómez Solar to Antofagasta for this purpose (intelligence from Tacna indicated that the large body of troops quartered in that area were considered to be safely in the Aliancista fold). In his memoirs, Manuel Rivas affirms having seen uniformed army officers at Alessandri's house, indicating that the candidate had close dealings with officers on active duty.

Negotiations began between the two political factions for the purpose of establishing the Supreme Court as the Tribunal, but after laborious discussions the idea was discarded.¹²⁷

The Cabinet continued its search for a conciliatory

¹²⁷The Liberal Alliance refused to accept the Supreme Court as such a tribunal unless some of the judges were changed. It then suggested that the President of the Senate designate three men and the Chamber of Deputies elect three, with the Archbishop of Santiago as presiding officer. The National Union refused both proposals. DSF. 825.00/165, Shea to Colby, August 20, 1920.

solution but to Manuel Rivas went the credit for finally breaking the impasse. On August 8 the seven independent deputies known as electrolíticos, who completed the constitutional quorum necessary before Congress could act, declared that they would boycott the joint session unless agreement was reached to guarantee proper and just certification of the presidential election.¹²⁸ Negotiations continued and the representatives of both political coalitions finally established the working rules for the Tribunal but failed to agree upon the composition of the court. Alessandri proposed the names of Ismael Tocornal and Emiliano Figueroa, who would then designate a third arbiter to constitute the Tribunal. The National Union issued a statement on August 10 approving the idea and the next day the Liberal Alliance concurred. The two suggested names were accepted; also added were those of the presidents of the two Chambers, Fernando Lazcano and Ramón Briones Luco. The written agreement between the two factions was signed on August 21. There was still evident resistance to the idea of impartial judges, particularly by Lazcano whose determined opposition to Alessandri was no secret. The Senate President had launched the Lion in politics many years earlier; but in 1920 Alessandri seemed to him a Bolshevik, an advocate of soviet socialism and an anathema to a member of the old

¹²⁸Donoso, p. 257.

ruling order. Finally the four accepted arbiters reached agreement on three more, thus completing the membership of the Tribunal of Honor. To Luis Barros Borgoño the approval of a formula for the makeup and the deliberations of the court amounted to a renunciation of all his hopes, "and with serenity of spirit and civic valor he faced his bitter situation."¹²⁹

In his own version of the negotiations Alessandri relates:

I then approached Manuel Rivas Vicuña, who defended this solution /creation of the Tribunal/ with special energy, and I suggested to him the following as a formula for him to propose: the President of the Senate, Lazcano; the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Briones Luco; and the two former Vice-Presidents of the Republic who were alive, Tocornal and Figueroa. These four would appoint to complete the Tribunal Armando Quezada, Guillermo Subercaseaux, and former justice of the Supreme Court Luis Barriga.

When my cohorts got hold of the names that were circulating as possible members of the Tribunal, and without knowing that I was the one who proposed them, they shouted to high heaven complaining that of the seven members who were to make up the Tribunal, five were partial to Luis Barros Borgoño and only two--Briones Luco and Quezada--to me. I kept secret the information that the men had been suggested to Rivas by me, and I was very pleased at the uproar from my side, since that facilitated the difficult task of obtaining acceptance of the names. The National Union would accept only those men who inspired confidence,

¹²⁹Donoso, p. 259; DSF. 825.00/158, Shea to Colby, August 24, 1920; DSF. 825.00/159, Shea to Colby, August 25, 1920.

and the names that Rivas proposed inspired confidence precisely because of the quality of the men and also because of the resistance which those names encountered in the ranks of the Alianza Liberal.¹³⁰

On August 30, before the Tribunal had hardly begun its deliberations, Fernando Lazcano collapsed and died in the salon of the Senate building. Donoso commented,

There is in his death an emotion-provoking symbol: it is the fall of the oligarchy that had governed the country for so many years. He, the genuine representative of the traditional families, . . . saw as inevitable the triumph of his protégé . . . caught up in the whirl of social and ideological currents he scorned and failed to understand.

The Senate rendered homage to its former President; then Vice-President Abraham Ovalle assumed his duties and also his position on the Tribunal.¹³¹

While the Tribunal continued its deliberations, news of labor unrest and political agitation regularly reached the headlines. In Valparaiso a government investigation discovered the headquarters of an IWW organization, the group that had fostered the strike of Longshoremen and had carried on an active propaganda campaign in Punta Arenas. The authorities engaged in a vigorous program of

¹³⁰ Alessandri, p. 52.

¹³¹ Donoso, p. 260. Ovalle was a member of the Conservative Party.

suppression; foreigners were deported, and Chileans convicted of offenses against the government received sentences varying from five to twenty years. The continuing strife in Congress prevented the proper consideration of legislative proposals which could have improved the conditions of the lower classes. (The acute dissatisfaction was not limited to the laborers, either, but was expressed in most circles.) Another Cabinet crisis added to the difficulties experienced by President Sanfuentes, and although the Alianza Ministers withdrew their resignations, the political atmosphere remained tense. Troops were kept mobilized in the northern provinces in the face of mounting criticism, even though reports emanating from Peru and Bolivia made ridiculous the idea of an impending invasion of Chile. Isolated attacks on Peruvian property continued, and close to 500 nationals had already returned to Peru or were preparing to do so at the first opportunity. Thus the last months of the Sanfuentes administration were marred by protest, violence, repression, and (in the opinion of some) persecution. The only bright spot on the record was the passage of the compulsory primary education law the end of August.¹³²

During the month of September the Tribunal of Honor held daily sessions and heard representatives of each side

¹³²Donoso, p. 261.

in every contested case. No official statements were made concerning the decisions, but there were leaks and plenty of rumors. Most of the daily papers reported that irregularities had been discovered in the returns from Antofagasta; the official envelopes and seals had been falsified.¹³³

The Tribunal was approaching the end of its task, with only a few of the southern departments still to be examined, when Subercaseaux announced his resignation and Tocornal followed suit. The reason given was that Subercaseaux had been approached by members of the National Union who tried to pressure him into taking a partisan position on the Tribunal in defense of Barros Borgoño. He contended that his place was to see that a just decision was reached, and he bitterly denounced the criticism directed against his vote on several contests. The press devoted much space to the matter, and the earlier feeling of optimism turned to despair. Barros made no statement;

¹³³ Chilean electoral law provided that certificates of results from each district must be drawn up on special paper bearing the seal of the Senate and must be delivered in envelopes sealed in the same manner. The paper was distributed shortly before the election to the proper electoral authorities by the Fiscal officers of each department. This procedure was established in order to prevent falsified returns in instances where all the electoral judges belonged to one political combination. Only one certificate was provided, and it was signed by all the judges and political representatives present. It could not be altered easily, and a duplicate would be detected. DSF. 825.00/173, Shea to Colby, September 17, 1920.

however, Alessandri immediately announced he had every confidence in the integrity of the members of the Tribunal and he was certain a verdict would be reached without any influence from either political faction. The next day, at the urging of Liberal and independent deputies, Antonio Huneeus agreed to head a committee to attempt to solve the crisis. The group wrote letters to both judges assuring them that their position was correct: their duty on the Tribunal was to reach a decision without regard for party affiliation. Subercaseaux and Tocornal agreed to withdraw their resignations and the Tribunal was able to resume its labors.¹³⁴

On the morning of September 30 a rumor circulated that the court would render its decision that day, and throughout the afternoon a large crowd waited in front of the Congress building. The announcement came at seven-thirty in the evening; the Tribunal of Honor delivered its verdict in favor of Alessandri. The official notification sent to the representatives of the National Union and the Liberal Alliance read as follows:

I have the honor to communicate to you that the Tribunal of Arbitration, after having studied the different claims presented in regard to the presidential election, has reached a decision that Señor Alessandri received 177 votes and Señor

¹³⁴Donoso, p. 262; DSF. 825.00/176, Shea to Colby, October 1, 1920.

Barros Borgoño 176. One elector in Cachapoal, who cast his vote for Barros, was not considered. Therefore the Tribunal approved, according to Article 8 of the basis of its organization the following decision: Señor Alessandri, having received the majority of votes, according to the claims presented, has the best right to be considered elected.

(signed) Luis Barriga, President of
the Tribunal,
Ramón Gutierrez A., Secretary.

The final vote of the seven members of the court gave five votes to Alessandri and two to Barros.¹³⁵

The news of the results brought jubilation to the ranks of the Liberal Alliance and gloom to the adherents of the National Union. The bitter recriminations against Guillermo Subercaseaux resulted in his eventual resignation as president of the National Party. The Congress met in joint session on October 6, and (under the provisions of the Constitution and of those that were agreed upon in the Act of the constitution of the Tribunal) it proceeded to elect Alessandri President of the Republic. Senator Gonzalo Bulnes--on behalf of the Unionistas--made the first speech, stating in part:

. . . the National Union must fulfill the painful duty of concurring in the proclamation of the candidate as President which we opposed in the campaign; however, we submit to this duty because it is an obligation enforced by our constitution. The Liberal

¹³⁵New York Times, October 2, 1920, 17:3; DSF. 825.00/176, Shea to Colby, October 1, 1920, translated by the Embassy staff.

Union fulfills this duty in order to redeem the political pledge it took (to abide by the decision of the Tribunal of Honor) though in doing so it is necessary to repress many justified protests. I do not wish to open a debate *[sic]* on the question; but I repeat that our silence is a great sacrifice. The National Union asks all its members to give to Señor Alessandri the necessary votes which will proclaim him constitutionally elected. At the same time the National Union prays that God may guard the destinies of the nation, that our fears may not be realized, that our country may continue on the road of liberty and progress and that our future may be worthy of our glorious past.¹³⁶

A short debate followed Bulnes' address and then the vote was taken; eighty-seven ballots were cast for Alessandri and twenty-nine were cast in blank.¹³⁷ Vice-President Ovalle then declared that Arturo Alessandri had been elected President of the Republic for the period beginning December 23, 1920 and ending December 23, 1925.

Following the brief session of the Congress, the President-Elect issued a proclamation in which he promised to respect electoral liberty, maintain the parliamentary regime, and search for harmonious solutions to the conflicts between capital and labor. "Hollow and vain words," wrote Donoso, "that he would forget as rapidly as the frivolity

¹³⁶ Cited in DSF. 825.00/177, Shea to Colby, October 15, 1920, translated by the Embassy staff.

¹³⁷ Donoso, p. 263.

with which he had pronounced them!"¹³⁸

The Cabinet presented its resignation; however, the Alianza had no interest in assuming power at that moment, so it requested that the Ministry continue to function until the expiration of Sanfuentes' term. Editorials in most of the leading papers commented favorably on the decision of the Tribunal, there was a noticeable easing of tensions throughout Chile, and both political combinations appeared relieved that the possibility of revolution and widespread disorders had been averted, at least temporarily.¹³⁹ The transmission of presidential power took place on December 23 amidst tremendous popular enthusiasm for the new chief executive: at last the people had their candidate in power. There were many, though, who predicted that Alessandri would find it very difficult to carry out his sweeping promises to the working classes in the face of formidable congressional opposition. From the most pessimistic vantage point:

Now we have the agitator in La Moneda disguised as ruler; in the exercise of his duties he will apply the same methods used during his entire political life, he will stir up the masses, talk without let-up, issue manifestos, write letters--to form a dense column of smoke hiding the

¹³⁸Donoso, p. 264. The text of the proclamation is included in the Appendixes.

¹³⁹DSF. 825.00/177, Shea to Colby, October 15, 1920.

monumental mistake of placing govern-
mental power in his hands.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Donoso, p. 277.

VI. CONCLUSION

The crisis of 1920 was not simply an electoral problem. Something deeper and more fundamental was involved; the passive obedience of the Chilean masses to the oligarchy had disappeared. For the first time a presidential candidate had stumped the country to address the forgotten proletariat, and by means of his oratorical talents and his great personal magnetism, Alessandri had drawn the working classes to his cause. They did not stop to question his sincerity or to consider the tremendous obstacles standing in the way of profound social change. Eduardo Frei viewed the situation as "a great moment for the rise of a caudillo who would awaken a mystique and would express the vague aspirations that stirred the masses."¹⁴¹

The presidential election had divided the country, as always, into two bands that would fight each other to the death, but the contest of 1920 saw new factors enter the struggle. While on other occasions political interest centered in the directing classes, this time the election brought up social and economic conflict which greatly affected the proletariat. The Alianza candidate did not

¹⁴¹ Edwards and Frei, p. 184.

create the issues for his own political purposes, but he was clever enough to unite all the elements of agitation, dissatisfaction, and latent revolt which had been accumulating for years and which finally rose to the surface after World War I. The ruling classes, the traditional conservative elements of Chilean society, committed an irreparable error by ignoring this discontent and attributing it to artificial agitation. They failed to see that the agitators used only legitimate causes for unrest and manipulated those causes for their own purposes.

Alessandri promised to remedy all the ills which plagued the workers: to solve all the problems which had frustrated for more than twenty years such capable reformers as Socialist labor leader Luis Recabarren. Yet while the poverty-stricken masses rallied around their messiah with an enthusiasm bordering on the fanatic, they did not elect him. Since most were illiterate and thus denied the right to vote,¹⁴² Alessandri needed the support of the middle sectors in order to reach the La Moneda. That support at the ballot box brought him victory. There was little in the early career of the Lion to indicate he would become the champion of the down-trodden: he was as

¹⁴² Scarcely more than 8% of the population cast ballots in the presidential election of 1920. El Mercurio, November 3, 1925, cited by Pike, p. 172.

dedicated to preserving the status quo as most of his colleagues in the lower Chamber. After 1915, he did learn first hand of the terrible plight of the workers in the North, and he developed a mild social conscience. He probably was sincere in wanting to alleviate the suffering of the lower classes, but he also recognized that limited social legislation was vital to the preservation of order in the Republic. Moreover, he sincerely believed in his own destiny; his ambition often overrode his convictions.

The decision of the Tribunal of Honor was accepted by the National Union because the likely alternative was revolution. Besides, Alessandri did not pose a grave threat to the ruling clique, for he could not command a dependable majority coalition in Congress to pass any sweeping reform legislation. Nor did he even propose drastic changes in the form of government. The record does not support the contention of most Latin Americanists (authors of general works on Latin American and Chile) that Alessandri openly advocated in 1920 the abolition of the parliamentary system. He advocated only what others stated vaguely: that the presidential powers should be somehow expanded or strengthened, and that the provinces should enjoy more autonomy. However, in 1924, after more than three frustrating years of doing battle with a recalcitrant Congress, he doubtless became convinced that the parliamentary

system was indeed unworkable.

In sum, the year 1920 signaled the opening of a new era in which the traditional political climate in Chile was markedly modified by the acknowledgment that an explosive social situation existed in the country. Arturo Alessandri Palma--hero of the masses, savior, opportunist, demagogue, destroyer--became the transitional figure who was instrumental in bringing about the creation of a new, more democratic Chile.

A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Although much has been written about the parliamentary period in Chilean history (1891-1920), there is a dearth of available material concerning the early career of Arturo Alessandri and his struggle to obtain the presidency. The most valuable source in English consists of the Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Chile, 1910-1929. The reports of the New York Times are of limited usefulness. Also informative, though not available in translation, are Alessandri's writings including Revolución de 1891: Mi actuación (Santiago, 1950) and particularly Recuerdos de gobierno: Administración 1920-1925 (Santiago, 1952), the first of a projected two-volume set of memoirs that Alessandri did not live to complete. Arturo Olavarría Bravo, who became the senator's private secretary early in the presidential campaign, has written a four-volume history of recent Chilean politics entitled Chile entre dos Alessandri: Memorias políticas (Santiago, 1962-1965), and his first volume devotes a brief section to Alessandri's election and early years of administration.

Outstanding among the secondary sources is the definitive two-volume biography by the noted Chilean

historian Ricardo Donoso, Alessandri, agitador y demoledor: Cincuenta años de historia política de Chile (Mexico, 1952, 1954). Though constituting a bitter denunciation of Alessandri--which his family attempted to suppress--the work was thoroughly researched and carefully documented. In contrast, a very sympathetic biography is Augusto Iglesias, Alessandri, una etapa de la democracia en América (Santiago, 1960), a rather mediocre effort that lacks documentation. For a brief, somewhat superficial appraisal of Alessandri, there is a chapter dealing with his career in Robert J. Alexander, Prophets of the Revolution (New York, 1962).

Other general works which contribute to an understanding of Chilean politics of the era are Alberto Edwards Vives, La fronda aristocrática: Historia política de Chile (Santiago, 1959), a classic now in its fifth edition; and Alberto Edwards Vives and Eduardo Frei Montalva, Historia de los partidos políticos chilenos (Santiago, 1949). Luis Galdames, A History of Chile (2nd ed.; New York, 1964), in English translation, relates the history of the country from conquest to the second World War, and Fredrick B. Pike, Chile and the United States, 1880-1962: The Emergence of Chile's Social Crisis and the Challenge to United States Diplomacy (Notre Dame, 1963) presents an excellent detailed study of the recent national period, covering both domestic developments and foreign affairs. The best analysis of the Chilean

party system is The Political System of Chile by Federico G. Gil (Boston, 1966).

APPENDIX I

THE AGREEMENT TO FORM THE TRIBUNAL OF HONOR

The powers and formation of the Tribunal of Honor are set forth in the pact signed by the candidates and representatives of the Liberal Alliance and National Union as follows:

I. The representatives of the National Union and the Liberal Alliance agree to submit, to a court of arbiters, the protests which have been formulated against the election of presidential electors who voted or should have voted on July 25, 1920.

II. The Tribunal will be composed of Fernando Lazcano, President of the Senate; Ramon Briones Luco, President of the Chamber of Deputies; Ismael Tocornal; Emiliano Figueroa; Luis Barriga; Armando Quezada and Guillermo Subercaseaux. If any of the persons forming the Tribunal are unable to serve the other arbiters will, by unanimous agreement, appoint substitutes.

III. The Tribunal will consider the electoral claims in accordance with the Electoral Law; it will have full power as a jury to consider all evidence submitted and it will also render decisions on disputes which may be outside the province of the electoral law. All protests not accepted by the Tribunal will be considered as rejected.

IV. The Tribunal will have power to add electors if, by the protest submitted, it should appear that the eliminated elector belonged to the opposite political group. When an electoral fraud does not clearly justify the addition of an elector, the Tribunal will only eliminate the elector whose election is, in the opinion of the Tribunal, illegal.

V. The Tribunal will consider the votes of those electors who, for any reason, did not vote on July 25, 1920; and will re-establish any alteration which may have taken place in the votes cast by the electors after that date - this being done without prejudice to the protests made which refer to the election of such electors. The Tribunal will adopt for the study of the contested election, the following basis:

On June 25, 1920, 179 electors voted for Arturo Alessandri and 174 voted for Barros Borgoño: and that, according to the previous paragraph, the elector, Pastor Infante, who could not vote, would have voted for Borgoño.

VI. The Tribunal's decision will be rendered by an absolute majority of the total number of members forming the Tribunal.

VII. The main purposes of the National Union and the Liberal Alliance are that the arbiters shall decide all claims regarding the election of presidential electors, and that as soon as all the claims are decided, they shall declare which of the two candidates for the presidency of the Republic has been elected in accordance with the resolutions adopted by the Tribunal.

VIII. If neither of the two candidates obtains an absolute majority of electors, the Tribunal will declare which would have been elected if certain acts had not taken place altering the legitimate result of the election, - no matter what may be the number of votes to which the candidates are reduced.

IX. If the result of the election, after all claims have been decided upon by the Tribunal, should give an equal number of votes to both candidates, or if the Tribunal should decide that both have equal rights, then Congress will freely elect the President of the Republic from the two candidates.

X. The representatives of the National Union and the Liberal Alliance agree to this pact, moved them to the highest sentiments of justice and social order and desirous of maintaining the welfare of the Republic; and they sign it with faith that their respective friends in the National Congress will

follow the decisions of the arbitration Tribunal when the time comes for Congress, according to the Constitution, to elect the President of the Republic.

Translated by the Embassy staff

APPENDIX II

ALESSANDRI'S PROCLAMATION

"I reiterate my steady purpose of exerting from my post of President of the Republic every legitimate influence in favor of the program of work which I presented to the country during my campaign.

"As President I will pay strict observance to electoral liberty and will grant it amply and without limitations. I will respect the parliamentary system, seeking a close accord and harmony between the Executive and Congress, as only with the mutual agreement of these two powers of the State efficient Government action is possible.

"During all my public life I have worked for electoral liberty and for the respect of the parliamentary system. I have always condemned the men who, once elected, contradict with their acts what they established in their programs. I have the firm determination of not falling into such an error; and my most constant effort will be to obtain, when I abandon the high post to which I have been elected, the public recognition of my countrymen that I know how to prove with acts what I maintained and preached.

"The stabilization of our money is an imperious necessity which does not admit of further delays. This problem must be met and solved with the patriotic energy required by a question of such wide proportions and of such supreme importance from the financial, economical and social point of view.

"The social problems must be solved within a spirit of solidarity and justice, always trying to obtain the harmony between capital and labor, the only efficacious means to obtain all the efficiency of these two great factors of the economical progress of peoples.

"Capital must be respected and protected in its rights; but to labor must be given also its part of protection and justice. I have the

deepest conviction that the maintenance of social peace and order - supreme aspiration of all governing forces - are solidly supported only upon the basis of strict justice and of equal rights for all.

"I have, then, the absolute certainty that during my Presidency there will be ample and sincere electoral liberty; respect of parliamentary system; stabilization of money; and as to social problems, solidarity and justice, within the harmony which must exist between capital and labor.

"These are my ideas and my convictions and they represent the sacred pledge I have contracted with the country, because they sum up what I have expressed from town to town and from village to village of the Republic during the long democratic crusade which I started at the beginning of the political campaign which destiny crowned with success for the satisfaction of all those that see in this victory the beginning of an epoch of welfare and prosperity for our country."

Translated by the Embassy Staff