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Uruguay was once the most stable democracy in Latin America, but in 1973 the military seized power for the first time. Political parties did not disappear, however, even though they were made illegal. By the 1980s Uruguay's generals were anxious to find a way to withdraw from power. Yet they continued to insist on certain guarantees as the price for holding elections. The issue of whether to make any concessions to the military came to divide the country's three major parties: the Blancos, the Colorados, and the Left. Nevertheless, the latter two parties eventually did agree to a pact in July 1984. The military agreed to return to the barracks and the politicians made an implicit commitment not to prosecute them for their past human rights violations.

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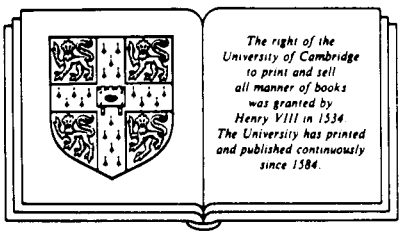
# NEGOTIATING DEMOCRACY

## POLITICIANS AND GENERALS IN URUGUAY

CHARLES GUY GILLESPIE

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*For Richard Goodkin*

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Charles Guy Gillespie
Frontmatter
More information

# Contents

*Foreword by Juan Linz* *page* ix
*Acknowledgments* xi

1 Introduction: Political parties, theories of regime change, and the Uruguayan case 1

PART I THE CRISIS AND SURVIVAL OF URUGUAYAN POLITICAL PARTIES

2 Politicians and parties in Uruguay: origins and crisis 17
3 The breakdown of democracy 33
4 The failure of military institutionalization and political engineering: the survival of political parties 50

PART II FROM AUTHORITARIAN CRISIS TO TRANSITION

5 Attempts at party renewal: from above and below 79
6 Party and military strategies in the "dialogue": from partial opening to confrontation after the Parque Hotel talks 104
7 From mobilization to negotiation: the exhaustion of alternatives 128
8 The Naval Club pact: party and military strategies in the transition

PART III POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

9 The competition for support: leadership strategies and electoral behavior before and after the 1984 elections 195
10 The legacies of authoritarianism and the challenges for democracy 217



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Charles Guy Gillespie
Frontmatter
More information



Conclusion Parties and regime change – some lessons and comparisons 239

*Appendix* 249
*Bibliography* 251
*Index* 261

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Charles Guy Gillespie
Frontmatter
More information

# Foreword

This work is a major contribution to comparative politics that many colleagues and friends expected to be the first of many by an outstanding young scholar. The study of Uruguayan politics was put on the map of Latin-American Studies by Charles Gillespie, not only by the present monograph, but by numerous articles and papers in collective books and by the work and enthusiasm he put into organizing a memorable conference on Uruguay at the Wilson Center for Scholars in Washington in 1984. He brought together scholars, intellectuals, and politicians from Uruguay and interested persons from the United States. His influence on the development of political science in that small Southern Cone democracy was enormous.

The present book contributes significantly to the study of transitions from authoritarian regimes to democracy. This theme has attracted more and more intellectual attention, renewed by the changes in Eastern Europe. To date no single monograph on these transitions in South America has been so well researched, providing so much insight into the political development of a country from democracy to authoritarianism and back to democracy. There is no comparable work, not only for any Latin-American country, but also for most countries that have experienced such changes since the seventies. We who work in that subject must turn to Gillespie's contribution. The study combines a wide range of methodological approaches, from historical, institutional, and legal analysis to the use of electoral data and personal interviews. In the course of extended fieldwork, living in the center of Montevideo and across from the Artigas monument, Charlie Gillespie became fully acquainted with intellectuals, scholars, and politicians during the critical years of the transition. This is a work based on a very personal experience of the process it studies.

Charlie came from a British-Irish family. Born in London in 1958, he obtained a BA from Oxford in 1980, where he studied at Magdalen College. After working for the *Economist* he came to Yale, where in 1987 he received a Ph.D. in Political Science with distinction. He was a Prize Teaching Fellow at Yale College from 1982 to 1983 and was awarded



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fellowships from the Tinker Foundation, the Interamerican Foundation, and the SSRC. His thesis was awarded the dissertation Prize of the New England Council on Latin-American Studies (1988). While at Yale, Charlie taught British and Western European politics. His academic career took him first to Amherst College and later to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where he impressed students and colleagues with tireless devotion to his task under trying circumstances.

Just before his untimely death he did important research on Paraguay, where he went to observe the 1989 elections as member of the delegation of the Latin-American Studies Association. His next big project was to be a study of the ideological change toward democracy among Latin-American intellectuals from their earlier critical writings and thought. This would have been a major and much-needed contribution, on which he had already done much work. It was inspiring to see him continue his scholarly work until a tragic end.

Those who, like myself, were associated with him as teachers, classmates, colleagues, and students, will miss his scholarly contributions, but, even more, we will miss a sensitive person full of life, energy, and enthusiasm – and a true friend.

Juan Linz

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More information

# Acknowledgments

This book is the product of seven years of work. During that time I have had the help of a great number of professors and friends at Yale University, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and in Uruguay. In its final form it owes more to Juan Linz than to anyone else, and I am profoundly grateful for the time and great effort he devoted to helping me improve it. His commitment to his graduate students is legendary and extraordinarily generous. More than once I felt that I was abusing his intellectual time and hospitality; whatever inadequacies may remain in the final product are my own responsibility. To Alfred Stepan I owe a debt of gratitude for encouraging me in the early stages of the project and helping me get to Uruguay. Among my friends and colleagues, Luis Eduardo González (both at CIESU and at Yale) has been an inspiration and a model of patience in responding to a barrage of questions, ranging from the painstakingly detailed to the monumentally broad. Juan Rial helped me greatly in Montevideo, particularly when it came to deciding whom I should interview, and he was most generous with his hospitality. Rodolfo Goncebate very kindly shared his questionnaire on Argentine politicians developed with Juan Linz. I have used many of his questions here. Margaret Keck provided invaluable assistance in sharpening my ideas and editing the first part of the manuscript.

Among Uruguayan social scientists whom I should like to thank for exchanging ideas, information, and help are Carlos Filgueira, César Aguiar, María del Huerto Amarillo, Horacio Martorelli, Romeo Pérez, Martín Gargiulo, Gerónimo De Sierra, Luis Costa Bonino, Rolando Franco, and Pablo Mieres. There were, of course, many more who helped me, to whom I apologize for not having the space to list them individually. I would like, however, to add a general note of thanks to the Centro de Informaciones y Estudios Sobre el Uruguay (CIESU), where I taught an introductory course in political science. I am particularly grateful for the contribution CIESU made in having my questionnaire typed and retyped and in publishing my early essays as working papers. I am also grateful to the Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios Sobre el Desarrollo Uruguayo



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(CIEDUR) for the invitation to participate in various seminars on the transition during 1984.

My earliest work on the breakdown of Uruguayan democracy has been incorporated into parts of Chapter 3. At different times it has benefited from the comments of David Mayhew, Robert Lane, Robert Dahl, Edy Kaufman, Howard Handelman, M. H. J. Finch, and Milton Vanger. The data analysis, especially in Chapters 3, 5, and 8, required a great deal of patient advice from Greg Herek, John Mark Hansen, and Luis González – though not all of it may have sunk in. Parts of Chapters 6–8 have benefited from the comments (at different stages) of Robert Kaufman, Scott Michael, Michael Coppedge, and Ben Ross Schneider. Part of Chapter 9 draws on an essay that appeared in a volume edited by Paul Drake and Eduardo Silva, *Elections and Democratization in Latin America, 1980–85*; both Paul Drake and David Collier made useful suggestions at that time. All my work on the Uruguayan transition has benefited from my close collaboration with Louis Goodman during the planning of the 1984 conference on Uruguay at the Wilson Center Latin American Program in Washington, D.C.

The company and friendship of Uruguayan journalists and editors as the dramatic events of 1984 unfolded were especially valuable. Particularly kind to me were Miguel Arregui, Carlos Jones, and Jorge Otero. Carmen Ariztegui and the other librarians at *El Día* were also a great help in providing materials and checking facts on many occasions. The staff of the Biblioteca del Palacio Montevideo, the Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo, and the Dirección General de Estadísticas y Censos all gave of their time. Valuable opinion data were generously provided by Luis Alberto Ferreira of Gallup Uruguay and César Aguiar and Agustin Canzani of Equipos Consultores.

Funds for fieldwork and write-up were provided by the Inter-American Foundation and by the Social Science Research Council under grants from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Ford Foundation.

To my parents and Richard Goodkin I wish to repeat the thanks I am not always able to put into words. I am also deeply grateful for the kindness and dedication of the nurses and doctors of St. Mary's Hospital in London and the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison. My greatest debt, however, is to the Uruguayan politicians whom I interviewed, as well as the militants who showed me how the parties organized themselves at the grass roots and welcomed a *gringo* to their meetings and conventions. Perhaps the most touching moments came when an old woman outside the Colorado Convention promised me her family would give me their votes, when I joined the euphoric Blanco campaign bus as it careened through the back-country roads from village to village while

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children threw white flower petals on Juan Raúl Ferreira, and when I was repeatedly introduced to a bemused Base Committee of the Broad Front as *compañero*. For all the warmth and spirit that they shared in times of great difficulty and hope I thank them all.

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