

ology leads men to prey on each other, the conflict will rage on in one form or another.

The military coup of September 1973 was the first experienced by Chile in 49 years, which in South America was a long record of military neutrality in political affairs. Chile was going from crisis to crisis, with chaos in the streets, daily demonstrations, strikes, and bloody riots. There was hunger, deprivation and desperation in the homes and illegal seizures and confiscations of property. For many people these events were raising the question of survival in Chile. Under such conditions a few individuals may turn their backs on society so bent on self-destruction, and emigrate to safer shores. But most people do not have this opportunity for lack of mobility, flexibility, knowledge, or the necessary means. Moreover, even if they would want to leave their country, they are not welcome abroad. In desperation they may call on the armed forces to restore order and social cooperation. When the military finally strikes, the people usually welcome and hail it as the restorer and guardian of peace.

For the generals the coup may be a patriotic duty which they reluctantly assume in order to save the country. The multitudes may applaud their courage and devotion to duty, and admire their example of leadership, which in time may ac-

tually corrupt them and finally destroy them. After all, they are not intellectual leaders who through patient teaching and preaching can change the hearts and minds of the people so that they discard their economic and social conflict notions and embrace the philosophy of individual freedom and social harmony. The generals themselves usually cling to the very ideas that are tearing society apart. They, too, favor economic redistribution by political force. But they want it in an orderly fashion without the fighting in the streets. The Chilean junta immediately reconstructed, with minor variations, the Allende transfer-conflict system.

Changing of the Guard

A junta regime usually comes to a violent end when it loses the support of public opinion. When economic conditions deteriorate again for any reason, or when public sentiment strenuously disapproves of the benefit order at the public trough, a violent reaction is likely. It may come from another general or colonel who senses the junta loss of popularity and, when successful, promises to be carefully guided by the popular will. Some juntas may even resist the temptation and corruption of power and relinquish it as soon as they sense a loss of public support. They may return the instruments of political power to the democratic transfer state and then wait patiently for

the coming chaos when they will be needed again. By their timely withdrawal they manage to safeguard the public esteem for the armed forces as the ultimate guardian of law and order.

The seizure of power by the military always entails the risk of violence and bloodshed. The risk is minimal when the administration in power has lost all respect and support by the disillusioned public. But it is serious as long as some elements of public opinion continue to give the administration their loyal support. Many communists and socialists held to their Presidente to the bitter end. Thousands of them were incarcerated for several years, hundreds lost their lives, many were later expelled from the country. Political parties were dissolved, the news media placed under censorship, the public subjected to rigid curfew.

In every case of civil rebellion the victor is quick to point at the sum total of social benefits created by his rebellion. When communists or socialists prevail they may speak of a liberation of the proletariat from capitalist exploitation. When defenders of the private property order prevail they may point at the restoration of private property and free markets. Both invariably propose to weigh their open violations of human rights against the economic and social rights which their violent ac-

tions are presumed to have gained. Both regularly conclude that their actions were justified by the sum total of benefits to society.

There surely is such a scale in the realm of political rights that negate individual rights, especially property rights. But, by its very nature, it is an arena of perpetual social conflict that ultimately brings forth the strong man. A society that routinely weighs political rights against property rights and finds them wanting ultimately will weigh the loss of human lives in revolution and rebellion against the sum total of collective benefits.

There is no such scale in morality which is religion with its face toward man. No sum total of social utility and benefit whatever can outweigh the death of one human being or any suffering inflicted on him. No man or assembly of men can secure well-being or happiness by violence against a single individual. Violence breeds violence and is an offense against God even when committed in the name of majorities.

A Shadowy Future

The ideological forces of social and economic conflict that led to the 1973 disintegration of Chilean society continue to be alive and active at home and abroad. Under their spell the junta hastened to restore the conflict system that forcibly redistributes income and wealth from the