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THE OAS, DEMOCRATIZATION AND CONTEMPORARY INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS¹

ABSTRACT Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie roli Organizacji Państw Amerykańskich (OPA) w procesach demokratyzacji oraz wielostronnych działań państw amerykańskich mających na celu promocję i umacnianie wartości demokratycznych w regionie zachodniej hemisfery. Od samego początku swojego istnienia OPA aspirowała do roli promotora demokracji wśród państw zachodniej półkuli. W okresie swego funkcjonowania organizacja ta przyjęła wiele deklaracji i rezolucji potwierdzających chęć szerzenia wartości demokratycznych. Autor wykazuje, iż w okresie zimnej wojny hasło demokratyzacji stało się jednak bardziej instrumentem polityki zagranicznej Stanów Zjednoczonych niż rzeczywistym działaniem OPA na rzecz tworzenia demokratycznych systemów w regionie Ameryki Łacińskiej. W okresie 1948, a więc od czasu ustanowienia OPA aż do roku 1989 i końca zimnej wojny, w regionie tym miało miejsce jedynie kilka transformacji demokratycznych. Ta sytuacja zmieniła się wraz z końcem rywalizacji Wschód–Zachód. Kraje Ameryki Łacińskiej masowo decydowały się wtedy na demokratyzację swoich systemów politycznych. Tym razem aktywną rolę odegrały w tym procesie również Stany Zjednoczone. Swoją działalność na rzecz szerzenia idei demokratycznych zwiększyła również OPA. Jednocześnie w latach 90. XX w. w zachodniej hemisferze pojawiło się nowe forum chcące odgrywać aktywną rolę w procesie promocji i umacniania demokracji w tym regionie. Forum tym stał się proces Szczytów Ameryk, który w przyszłości ma doprowadzić do powstania Strefy Wolnego Handlu Obu Ameryk (FTAA/ALCA). Artykuł jest próbą przedstawienia problemu demokratyzacji jako jednego z celów procesu Szczytów Ameryk. Bez wątpienia, jeśli te dwa organizmy chcą zrealizować swój wspólny cel, ja-

¹ The paper was presented during the XII Congress of FIEALC, September 27-30, 2005 in Roma.

kim jest konsolidacja demokracji w regionie latynoamerykańskim, muszą one ze sobą ściśle współpracować.

All of the countries of the Americas seek to consolidate democracy and defend human rights; we coincide in the need of to strengthen our participation in world markets through open trade and global investments; we seek to improve social equity and promote equality of opportunities as necessary condition for the development and stability of our continent; we seek to cooperate to improve living standards and the quality of the environment in which we live; we are concerned about the destabilizing proliferation of drug trafficking that poisons so many North and South.

Jose Miguel Insulza

The idea of democracy and the aim of strengthening it at the international level is not anything new in the Western Hemisphere. As early as the Panamerican era, the promotion of democracy was an important part of inter-American relations. The emergence of totalitarian ideologies, like nazism, fascism and communism, confirmed that the realization of democratic values cannot be only be achieved through the gestures of national governments; democracy must also be supported by the actions of the international community. That is why, with the beginning of the creation of a new organization which assembled all the American republics after World War II, it seemed to be natural that one of its principal goals should be to support the democratic systems of the member states. The expression of that tendency were the statements of the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS). At the very beginning the Signatories expressed their conviction that “representative democracy is an indispensable condition for the stability, peace and development of the region”. Second among the stated aims of the new organization was the consolidation and promotion of representative democracy with due respect for the principle of non-intervention². The establishment of the principle that democracy should be supported and strengthened, which is contained in the Charter of the OAS, was a kind of a turning point. Until this moment the American countries were supporting democracy only by proclaiming declarations; meanwhile

² *The Charter of the Organization of American States*, Bogota, April 30, 1948 [online:] www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/charter.htm.l

the Charter of the OAS created a normative precedent which galvanized states in Latin America.

However, the inscription of the promotion and consolidation of democracy in the Charter did not prevent the appearance of new authoritarian regimes in Latin America. The slogan of democratization became an effective instrument of American foreign policy. However, its main goal in the region was not the promotion of democracy but the containment of the potential spread of communism. In effect, it became evident that the idea of democracy is extremely difficult to realize in the framework of the inter-American system. Authoritarian and military dictatorships in Latin America were not very interested in respecting civil liberties and democratic rules. The arguments were always the same: specific conditions of national development and the necessity of the maintenance of national order. Also, Latin American dictatorships declared that, because of the struggle against communism, there had to be a "temporary" restriction of the civil liberties. Thanks to the firmly anti-communist attitude of Latin American regimes, the United States had an easier task in the struggle with communism. In effect, the United States usually decided to support authoritarian governments in spite of their open contradiction of the U.S. slogan of democratization. Very quickly, this situation caused the reduction of the conception of democracy to the struggle with communist ideology. As a result, in the 1940's and 1950's the idea of democratization stepped aside. During the years 1948-1954 in many countries of Latin America authoritarian regimes gained the power.

Despite of these very unfavorable conditions, discussions within the OAS about supporting democratic systems were still present. A decade after the Bogotá conference, the Fifth Consultative Meeting of Foreign Relations Ministers was held in Santiago de Chile in August 1959. That meeting produced a list of specific attributes of representative democracy. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights was created and the Inter-American Juridical Commission was given the responsibility for drafting a convention on human rights that would consider the legal relationship between respect for human rights and the effective exercise of representative democracy. The committee was also asked to prepare a draft convention on the "Effective Exercise of Representative Democracy". Furthermore, the meeting made unmistakably clear, in the Declaration of Santiago, that "the existence of antidemocratic regimes is a violation of the principles on which the OAS is founded and [is] a danger to peace and unity of the Hemisphere"³.

Notwithstanding this important achievement, authoritarian regimes still dominated in Latin America and democratic forces could not count on any support from outside. The United States was still guided predominantly by the containment policy, and used democracy only as an instrument in the struggle with any leftist movements. In this situation, the OAS, with its ambitions of promoting democracy, fell into some kind of stagnation. The Organization used to send missions to observe

³ Heraldo Munoz, 'The Right to Democracy in the Americas', *The Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 40, Spring 1998.

elections in Latin American countries, but these missions never criticized any government or condemned fraud. In effect, the inter-American system found itself in a deep crisis. As the OAS was put to the test on successive occasions and over a wider range of issues, it systematically demonstrated its incapacity to live up to the values enshrined in its Charter. Examples abound of how the inter-American system came to be seen as lacking of force. The Malvinas war, the confrontation in Central America, the Panamanian crisis, and the economic crisis of the 1980's were but a few of the dilemmas the OAS was incapable of handling⁴.

The breakthrough came in the 1980's. Its first symptom was the protocol of Cartagena de Indias, approved at the 14th Special Session of the OAS in December 1985. The Protocol praised the Organization's obligations to advance democracy to an explicit purpose. This document amended the OAS Charter to add a new provision under Article 2 of chapter 1, "Nature and Purposes". The Charter henceforth, enshrined the regional obligation to promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of non-intervention⁵.

After the end of the East-West confrontation, there appeared conditions at the global international relations to the fundamental rebuilding of the inter-American system. Since the beginning of the 1990's, the OAS and other organizations and institutions which cooperated with it, engaged in actions which were designed to support democracy and promote respect for human rights and integrated development in Latin America and the Caribbean. In October 1990, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) was created after a motion proposed by Canada was ratified. Among the goals of the Unit were the establishment of consultative services and direct technical help for the member states during the process of the strengthening of political institutions and democratic procedures⁶. The next important step appeared to be the 21st Session of the General Assembly of the OAS on June 1991, in Santiago de Chile. The members adopted there two fundamental documents: the first was: *The Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System* and the second was AG/Res. 1080, *Representative Democracy*. The Santiago Commitment Declaration declared an "inescapable commitment to the defense and promotion of representative democracy and human rights in the region"⁷. The short Resolution 1080 instructed the Secretary General to convene immediately a meeting of the Permanent Council in the event of any occurrences giving use to the sudden or irregular interruption of a democratic political and institutional process or of the legitimate exercise of power by the democratically elected government of a member

⁴ Carlos Andres Peres, 'The OAS Opportunities', *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1990.

⁵ Andrew F. Cooper, Thomas Legler: 'The OAS Democratic Solidarity Paradigm', *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 43, Spring 2001.

⁶ Wiesław Dobrzycki, *System międzyamerykański*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2002, s. 170.

⁷ *The Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System*, Santiago de Chile, June 4, 1991; [online:] www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/OASpage/eng/Documents/Democratic_Charter.htm.

state. The Permanent Council would then decide to convene a Meeting of Foreign Ministers to decide on the appropriate collective response⁸.

Together with the adoption of those two documents, the activity of the OAS for the promotion and supporting democracy visibly increased. In December 1991, in Washington, the General Assembly of the OAS agreed to amend the Charter and insert a new article – Article 9. This amendment stated that “the member of the OAS whose democratically constituted government has been overthrown by force may be suspended from the exercise of the right to participate in the sessions of the General Assembly, the Meeting of Consultation, the Councils of the Organization and the Specialized Conferences as well as in the commissions, working groups, and any other bodies established”⁹. In practice, the Protocol of Washington allows the suspension of antidemocratic member governments.

All those initiatives created in the framework of the inter-American system were the effect of the events which took place in Latin America since the 1980's. During that decade the western hemisphere made a significant turn towards democracy. The beginning of that process occurred when Raul Alfonsin won the presidential election and ended the military dictatorship in Argentina. In the following years democratic governments were established, among others, in: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela. Democratization of the political systems was accompanied by the opening of the free marked economy. By the end of the 1980's, the development strategy supported by protectionism was jettisoned in almost the whole of Latin America. A change in the U.S. Latin American policy played an important role in this process. It took some time for the United States to recognize and to understand the advantages of a foreign policy based on the support of democracy. The issue has a long history in American foreign policy, relating to the old debate between “realists” and “idealists”. Realists believed that the United States should be concerned above all with defending its national self-interest, regardless of whom it resulted in being allied with. Idealists, in contrast, wanted a foreign policy imbued with morality and ethical purpose; they wanted the United States to be a “beacon on a hill” standing for democracy, human rights, and social justice, regardless of whom that resulted in insulting. The realist school was summed up, briefly if crudely, in the words of John F. Dulles, who once proclaimed that in the world “we have no friends, only interests”; the idealist school was to be found in Woodrow Wilson's vow to “make the world safe for democracy”¹⁰. The four years term of George Bush (1989-1993) resulted in the revision of the Latin American policy of the White House. At that time, Washington embarked on the regionalism and partnership in the relations with Latin America. The new treatment was visible, for example, in the secretary of state, James Baker's

⁸ AG/Res. 1080 “*Representative Democracy*”, Santiago de Chile, June 5, 1991; [online:] www.oas.org/XXXIIGA/english/docs_en/Representative_Democracy.htm.

⁹ *The Washington Protocol*, Washington, December 14, 1992; [online:] www.upd.oas.org/lab/Documents/executive_orders/ eo_washington_protocol_92_eng.pdf.

¹⁰ Howard J. Wiarda, *American Foreign Policy Toward Latin America in the 1980's and 1990's. Issues and Controversies from Reagan to Bush*, New York University Press, New York/London, 1992, s. 313.

speeches. He proposed to the western hemispheric countries a new partnership supported on the respect and joint responsibility. According to him, the inter-American dialogue should be concentrated on issues like: democratization, economic development, fighting with narcobusiness, debt, commerce, migrations, the natural environment and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Although, the triumph of democracy in the majority of the Latin American countries did not mean that there is no danger for new democracies. Only few weeks since the adoption of important resolutions in Santiago de Chile, the Organization had to stand up for defense of democracy in Haiti. On December 1991, the democratically elected president of Haiti – Jean Bertrand Aristide – was overthrown. Thanks to the newly adopted mechanisms the OAS immediately undertook the action. The first step was the condemnation of the coup and the convening of an *ad hoc* meeting of foreign ministers. In effect, the special commission was established. The commission was sent to the island to negotiate the restoration of Aristide. The goal appeared to be very difficult. It was possible only when the OAS cooperated with the United Nations and when the Security Council announced sanctions against the new government. Finally, the legally elected president and democratic order were restored after the military intervention of the United States in September 1994. It is worth underlining the fact that the intervention was made under the authority of the OAS and the UN.

The Santiago mechanism was activated a second time on 5 April 1992, when democratically elected president Alberto Fujimori of Peru illegally closed his nation's congress, usurped judicial power, arrested several members of congress and political leaders and suspended many civil rights. A few days later, the foreign ministers met and "profoundly deplored" Fujimori's actions and demanded the restoration of democracy in Peru. The ministers also appointed a special diplomatic mission to travel to Peru to promote negotiations between the opposition and the government for the restoration of democracy. Some countries, among them the United States, cut economic aid to Peru. Founded on the principle of democratic governance, the Rio Group suspended Peru from attending its meeting. In this context, the arrival of president Fujimori to Nassau in May 1992 to attend the meeting of OAS foreign ministers was completely unexpected. During this meeting Peru's president promised to restore democracy in his country through a process that would culminate in the election of democratic Constitutional Congress. The elections were held in November 1992, under OAS scrutiny¹¹.

The OAS has invoked Resolution 1080 again in the cases of Guatemala and Paraguay. The case of Paraguay was specific one because there was not a coup. On April 22, 1996, president Juan Carlos Wasmosy fired the army commander general Lino Oviedo, but Oviedo refused to resign unless the president also left the office. The Brazilian and Argentine, and the U.S. government actively discouraged Wasmosy from resign, and many international leaders, including OAS Secretary General came to his defense together with civil society of Paraguay. The OAS, as an institu-

¹¹ Heraldo Munoz, 'The Right to Democracy in the Americas'...

tion did not play a direct role, but Paraguay maintained its fragile grip on democracy for a couple of years, in which time the country went through another set of political crises. These were also handled in an *ad hoc* fashion with the help of the diplomats from neighboring democracies¹².

All these events confirmed that the mechanisms of defense and consolidation of democratic systems worked out by the Organization are quite effective. Additionally, the OAS believed that it can play an important role in the democratization process. Although, together with the deepening of democracy, the transition to the free market economy proceeded. The economic transition in Latin America took place under very difficult circumstances. However, as early as in 1991, most of Latin American countries had new free market economies. As a result of those changes George Bush's administration sought to build a new relationship with Latin America based on consensus and cooperation in order to resolve problems affecting the Americas. Those tendencies could be observed in relations between the U.S. and Mexico and the process leading to the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

However, it was Bill Clinton, the first post-Cold War president of the United States, who was entrusted with the task of implementing those new ideas. On arriving in office, Clinton had limited experience of international affairs. In its Latin American policy Washington had to concentrate on two main issues: the passage of NAFTA and resolving the Haitian dilemma. Generally, the Clinton administration was not very interested in Latin American affairs. However, the successful ratification debate over NAFTA allowed President Clinton to come up with the idea of a trade bloc stretching from Alaska to Patagonia. The new proposal referred to Bush's Initiative for the Americas. Clinton's initiative was the result of growing awareness of the increasing significance of the Latin American region for the U.S. economy. Also, the timing of the presentation of the idea at the Summit of the Americas in Miami in December 1994 was no coincidence. Authoritarian regimes, in the majority of countries, had been already overthrown and replaced by democratic governments led by political leaders who would guarantee their commitment to the implementation of both political as well as economic reforms. Every country in South America had made a great deal of progress toward democracy, a fact that carried significant geopolitical implications. Even though Brazil and Argentina had been rivals almost since their independence, their civilian presidents realized that if they fail to cooperate with one another, only their respective militaries would benefit. These two South American states ended their nuclear weapons programs, reduced their defense expenditures, and joined with Uruguay and Paraguay in 1991 to establish a common market arrangement termed Mercosur¹³. Many countries had managed to end their local guerilla wars and to overcome the crisis of the 1980's.

¹² Robert A. Pastor, *Exiting the Whirlpool. U.S. Foreign Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean*, Westview Press, Boulder, 2001, p. 302.

¹³ Idem, 'The Clinton Administration and the Americas: the Postwar, *Rhythm'n'Blues' Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 38, Winter 1996/1997.

However, the Clinton's proposal was met with a mixed reception. It was favored by some countries like Colombia and Venezuela, although, the biggest economies had some serious reservations. Argentina was putting forward demands to eliminate subsidies for US farmers. Brazil's president-elect Henrique Cardoso stated that Brazil's integration with Common Market of the Southern Cone (El Mercado Común – Mercosour) was considered to be his government's priority, whereas Mexico didn't want to share its benefits from NAFTA with other countries¹⁴.

Finally, thirty-four leaders of Western Hemispheric countries met in Miami in December 9-11, 1994. The most important effect of the meeting was the adoption of the document titled: *Declaration of Principles. Partnership for Development and Prosperity: Democracy, Free Trade and Sustainable Development in the Americas*. In the introduction the authors stated that „for the first time in history, the Americas are a community of democratic nations”. The first part of the Declaration emphasized that representative democracy is indispensable for the stability and development of the region. The Signatories reaffirmed that they will work through the appropriate bodies of the OAS to strengthen democratic institutions and to promote and defend their constitutional role, in accordance with the OAS Charter. Also, they endorsed the OAS efforts to enhance peace and democratic, social and economic stability in the region¹⁵.

In this way, a new forum was created, and one of its most important goals was the protection of democracy. While the OAS, and especially its Permanent Council, remained on the margins of the negotiations process for the Miami Summit, the new multilateralism unleashed by the U.S. summit negotiators engaged the organization at the functional levels, where the OAS developed technical strengths and institutional legitimacy. The evolving Plan of Action also respected the OAS's role as a negotiator and as depositary for hemispheric conventions, such as the one on human rights. The OAS's areas of engagement with respect to the Miami Summit were principally “political” ones where the Organization had a long track record: democracy, human rights and security. Among these “political” issues are what can be seen primarily as “state-to-state” issues that assign heavy importance to foreign ministry negotiators and traditional diplomacy, where the OAS has had a significantly successful record. Nevertheless, the Miami Plan of Action assigned the OAS a paramount role in summit follow-up activities in a variety of summit mandates, both “technical” and “political”. The most important areas are: strengthening democracy, promoting and protecting human rights, combating corruption, eliminating the threat of national and international terrorism, building mutual confidence, providing the technical support for the Free Trade Area of the Americas¹⁶.

¹⁴ ‘Latin America? Where's that?’, *The Economist*, December 5, 1994.

¹⁵ *Miami Declaration of Principles*, Summit of the Americas, Miami, December 11, 1994; source: <http://www.summit-americas.org>.

¹⁶ Robin L. Rosenberg, ‘The OAS and the Summit of the Americas: Coexistence’, *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 43, Spring 2001.

The next Summit of the Americas brought further dissonance between the OAS and the forum which occurred at the Summits of the Americas. With the announcement that Chile would host a Second Summit of the Americas in Santiago in 1998, also came the decision that the agenda for the Summit would be negotiated through the Summit Implementation Review Group. That meant the further marginalization of the OAS. At the Santiago Declaration, adopted during the Summit, the leaders of the western hemispheric countries stated that: "The strength and meaning of representative democracy lie in the active participation of individuals at all levels of civic life. The democratic culture must encompass our entire population. We will strengthen education for democracy and promote the necessary actions for government institutions to become more participatory structures"¹⁷.

However, the turning point was the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, April 20-22, 2001. The most important result of this summit was the adoption of the *Final Declaration*. The heads of states and governments acknowledged that the values and practices of democracy are fundamental. According to the Declaration any unconstitutional change or interruption of the democratic order in any of the states of the Hemisphere, constitutes an obstacle to the participation of that state's government in the FTAA process¹⁸. Also the leaders assembled at the Third Summit obliged foreign affairs ministers to prepare an Inter-American Democratic Charter. The project would have been prepared during the coming General Assembly of the OAS.

To sum up, we must agree that the Quebec City Summit did very little to advance the FTAA process. However, the adoption of democratic criterion as a *sine qua non* condition of participation at the Summits of the Americas process is undoubtedly an important achievement. It is important to underline the fact that when it comes to the issue of the protection of democracy, the participants of the Summits of the Americas process decided to closely cooperate with the OAS. The result of this co-operation was the adoption, just a few months later, of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. At the very beginning, in Article 1, there is a significant statement: "The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it". Further, in Article 3, the Signatories mention essential elements of representative democracy. There are included: respect for the human rights and fundamental liberties, access to and the exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law, the holding of periodic, free elections based on the secret balloting and universal suffrage as an expression of the sovereignty of the people, the pluralistic system of political parties and organizations, and the separation of powers and independence of branches of government¹⁹. Also, the Charter adopted

¹⁷ *Declaration of Santiago de Chile*, Second Summit of the Americas, Santiago de Chile, April 18, 1998; [online:] www.summit-americas.org/chiledec.htm.

¹⁸ *Final Declaration*, Third Summit of the Americas, Quebec City, April 22, 2001; [online:] www.summit-americas.org.

¹⁹ *Inter-American Democratic Charter*, Special Session of General Assembly of the OAS, Lima, Peru, September 11, 2001; [online:] www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/OASpage/eng/Documents/Democratic_Charter.htm.

at Lima express a lot of steps which can be taken by the OAS in the aim of restoration of democratic order at the member state. As the ultimate step the Charter expressed the possibility of suspending a member state from the exercise of its right to participate in the OAS by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the member states²⁰. The adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter was recognized as a significant success of the western hemispheric countries and the OAS. Also, there is significant evidence that in the sphere of defense of democratic values in Latin American countries, the OAS can successfully cooperate with the Summit of the Americas process. Undoubtedly such cooperation can bring a lot of good.

However, as we saw in the autumn of this year, in spite of adopting the Charter and closer cooperation between the OAS and the Summits of the Americas, the organization still is not prepared enough for resolving political crises in member states. The cases of Ecuador and Bolivia demonstrated the Organization's weakness and its inability to use the instruments the Democratic Charter provides. In both these countries, events gained significant momentum. On April 15, Ecuador's President – Lucio Gutierrez – flanked by armed forces' commanders, announced that he was dissolving the Supreme Court, *nota bene*, for the second time in four months. Also, he imposed a state of emergency in Quito. In defiance, several thousand protesters immediately took to the streets, calling for Mr Gutierrez to be sent packing too. As the army sat on its hand, within hours the president was forced to lift the emergency. Each day the demonstrations, led by Quito's middle class, swelled. On April 20, Congress heeded the clamor on the streets: 60 of its 100 members voted for a resolution which accused Gutierrez of "abandoning his post" and appointed in his place the vice-president, Alfredo Palacio. To the end, the president insisted he would not step down. But the police chief resigned, saying he would not repress people. Finally, the army hustled Gutierrez out of the presidential palace. He took refuge in the Brazilian embassy as an arrest warrant was issued against him. In this way, Gutierrez, who took office in January 2003, became the third president since 1997 to be ousted from power in Ecuador²¹.

Very similar crisis of democracy took place in Bolivia. After weeks of road blockades and sharp protests, the president, Carlos Mesa, has resigned, opening the way for the president of the Senate, Hormand Vaca Diez, a hate figure for agitators, to succeed him. Mr Vaca Diez shifted Congress from La Paz to Sucre, the seat of Supreme Court, but the protesters followed. It looked like Vaca Diez's accession to the presidency, might spark a civil war. Finally, he relinquished his claim to the presidency. The next in line, the president of the Congress' lower house did so too. In this situation, the office fell to Eduardo Rodriguez, the head of the Supreme Court, who is expected to hold a general election later this year. It should produce something Bolivia badly needs: a government and Congress with legitimacy to resolve disputes over natural resources,

²⁰ *Ibidem*, articles 19-21.

²¹ Juan Forero, 'Ecuador's Leader Flees and Vice-President Replaces Him'; [online] www.nytimes.com/2005/04/21/international/americas/21ecuador.html; downloaded: 27.04.2005.

the rights of the poor, and regional autonomy. But democracy may not produce the outcome the protesters want. Will they hold Bolivia hostage again²²?

These events disturbed not only a few states in the Western Hemisphere but also the OAS and its new elected Secretary General. The first step the Organization took was to send a special mission to Quito. But the mission's task was not to find a solution to the crisis but only to acquaint the OAS with the situation. In the case of Bolivia, the mission was not even sent. Despite the demands of President Alejandro Toledo, who pointed to the statements of Inter-American Democratic Charter, the Organization's activity was close to zero. In effect, it is was not particularly surprising that during the 35th General Assembly session in Ford Lauderdale, Florida, the issue of democracy and the mechanisms for its defense dominated discussions. The most controversial issue was the proposition of the United States to establish a permanent committee of the OAS that would monitor the exercise of democracy in the hemisphere. According to the U.S. plan, the Secretary General should have greater competencies to prepare an action plan which would include strong mechanisms for implementing a Democratic Charter²³. But that proposal faced strong resistance from the majority of Latin American countries. Among them were Brazil and Mexico. They rejected Washington's proposal because according to them it would create instruments for intervening in the internal affairs of sovereign states. They were afraid also that the plan was aimed against Venezuela²⁴. Finally, a Chilean-sponsored resolution was embraced at the end of the OAS General Assembly, ending a bitterly divisive gathering. After heavy modifications, it became a fuzzy compromise that allowed all sides to claim the victory. The Draft Declaration of Florida entrusts the Secretary General with developing a draft plan of action, with a view to propose specific measures to strengthen the effectiveness and application of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in defending, protecting and promoting democracy. It also calls for non-governmental activist groups to be given an official voice in OAS deliberations on whether member nations were straying from the democratic path. After the adoption of the document, there were voices of victory and a great deal of confidence that democracy would be strengthened. But is it plausible? We will see in the future. At the moment it seems to be that the U.S. ambassador to the OAS, John Maisto, was right when he said that: "This resolution is done in the OAS style"²⁵. It may be that there are only big words and nothing else. And at the present time, what are needed in Latin America and the Inter-American system are effective mechanisms for protecting and strengthening democracy.

²² 'Bolivia: Cooling Off', *The Economist*, June 18th, 2005, p. 46.

²³ Hugo Alconada Mon, 'Fracaso la propuesta de EE.UU. en la OEA'; [online] www.lanacion.ar/; downloaded: 07.06.2005.

²⁴ *Idem*, 'Nueva Rebelion contra EE.UU Dentro de la OEA'; [online] www.lanacion.ar/; downloaded: 07.06.2005.

²⁵ Nancy San Martin, Pabo Bachalet, 'OAS ends up with Compromise on Powers to Guard Democracy'; [online] www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/americas/11839755htm; downloaded: 08.06.2005.

To conclude, it is necessary to underline that the wave of democratization which started in the 1980s has finished with many successes in Latin America. Those successes are the effect of transitions which took place at the international level and in inter-American relations. As the millennium ended, the people of Latin America and the Caribbean were building democratic institutions abroad. They were cooperating with the United States while its excess more effectively. They were forging wise rules to remain in force and peace, finding that they valued the procedures of liberal democracy and the efficiency of markets²⁶. The decline of East–West rivalry made the resolution of problems easier. The result of that was the rapprochement between the Americas and a renaissance of inter-American relations. There occurred new possibilities and tasks. The OAS, free from the cold war disputes, can concentrate on the resolving of problems the western hemisphere and the promotion of democratic values. As was showed at the Quebec City Summit, the OAS can count in that area on the support of the leaders of the western hemispheric states. However, this task does not belong to the easiest ones. The future of democracy and its ability to overcome a growing array of the changes will be partly determined by its ability both to devolve power beyond traditional elites and to further evolve outside traditional Western societies. Having already inspired the most fundamental political change of the twentieth-century, democracy now holds out the prospect of further innovation, sometimes in unfamiliar directions, as it expands in the twenty-first century²⁷. Therefore, the question of whether democracy has achieved complete success in the Latin American region is still open, and the need for consolidating and strengthening democratic values still exists.

²⁶ Jose I. Dominguez, 'The Americas: Found and Then Lost Again', *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1998, p. 134.

²⁷ Robin Wright: 'Democracy: Challenges and Innovations in the 1990's', *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1997, p. 34-35.

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