On September 11, 1973, the attempt to create a democratic socialist society in Chile was brought to a violent end by a coup d'état. Contrary to the expectation of Allende and the Popular Unity leadership and mass base, a division significant enough to provoke a civil war did not occur in the armed forces. Since the coup, an increasingly large number of analyses have appeared probing the fundamental causes and reasons for UP’s inability to maintain itself in power. Those analyses have documented the role of the United States in strangling the Chilean economy through credit boycotts, dumping of its copper reserves, etc; the economic chaos created by the lockouts, black markets, and speculation organized by entrepreneurial associations (the gremios); attenuation of the government’s power to contain ever-increasing economic and social disorder as a consequence of Christian Democratic and National party obstructionism in Parliament; and the internal divisions within the UP coalition itself which made it difficult for the government to act consistently and decisively. The fundamental causes of the coup are not to be found in the armed forces. To the extent that analyses of the coup have been made in a lacunae of information concerning those institutions and their interaction with the UP government, Allende and his advisors have been faulted with a generally weak and naive policy vis-à-vis the armed forces.

Errors were made by the UP government in formulating a general strategy that would have permitted it to remain in power and accomplish the transition to socialism. And errors were made in the tactics pursued vis-à-vis the armed forces. Suggestions concerning the organization of popular militias and dismissal of officers suspected of disloyalty, ignore the realities of Chilean military organizations: their capacity, organiza-
tion, and zealously guarded professional autonomy concerning promotions, assignments, and dismissals, as well as their monopoly over arms. The formulation of a strategy to prevent professional military organizations from successfully intervening to end a revolutionary process is extremely difficult.

UP's strategy vis-à-vis the armed forces was part and parcel of its overall strategy to maintain power and implement the transition to socialism. It was generally premised on the possibility of working through the existing institutional structures of the state, given their strength and relative autonomy within the democratic political system of Chile. According to the analysis of Allende's personal political advisor, Joan Garcés, the strategy was more specifically premised on the UP government's adherence to constitutional norms, and its capacity to maintain public order and a reasonable amount of economic stability, if not actual growth (Garcés, 1972: 27-50; Martner, 1972: 135-47). Maintenance of these conditions, along with broad guarantees and numerous benefits promised to the country's large middle class in the UP program, were perceived as necessary for winning over or at least neutralizing that powerful and well-organized sector of the population. Neutralization signified the prevention of an alliance of the middle class with the large landowners and bourgeois industrialists, who would be spearheading an aggressive opposition in their attempt to maintain control over the means of production. This strategy, heavily dependent on a supportive or neutral middle class, implied the necessity of controlled and disciplined working-class and peasant mobilization in support of the government. Spontaneous and "illegal" mass action would threaten public order and, at a minimum, provide material for powerful antigovernment propaganda to which both the middle class and the armed forces would be very responsive.

Garcés's analysis and UP literature in general manifested an acute awareness of the instruments of control available to the state, and the importance of the middle class in the political system. While these issues were extensively and carefully examined, the forms that disciplined working-class and peasant mobilization would have to take were rather sparsely elaborated. Garcés (1972:35) limited "social pressure from the bottom" to "specific cases or very concrete objectives." This suggests that mobilization of the mass base for a socialist transformation was not perceived as a continuous process that had to be initiated from the moment UP ascended to power.

The conditions identified as necessary for obtaining the support or neutrality of significant sectors of the middle class were also those