

## Acknowledgments

IT is with mixed emotions that I submit this book to its readers. I wish that the stories it tells and the analysis it presents were more optimistic regarding the prospects for social reform and the deepening of democracy in contemporary Latin America. It is not my intention to dismiss the personal struggles and sacrifices—from the mundane to the heroic—that have been devoted to the causes of resisting authoritarianism, constructing democracy, and promoting social justice in modern Latin America. Neither do I wish to denigrate the tangible gains that have been made in the region; I started research for this book early enough to experience the Pinochet regime in Chile, and am convinced that even the most limited of democracies is a vast improvement over the horrors of military dictatorship. I am also convinced, however, that progressive causes in Latin America are not furthered by inflating expectations unrealistically, romanticizing ephemeral expressions of social mobilization, and ignoring the profound structural constraints on the exercise of popular sovereignty. The experience of recent decades should disabuse the Latin American Left and its North American sympathizers of the illusion that each new form of social organization is part of a groundswell that leads ineluctably to popular empowerment.

I firmly believe that the first step toward a deepening of democracy in Latin America must be an assessment of the impediments

that have repeatedly blocked it. It is with this spirit that I have undertaken the critical, and often sobering, analysis contained in this book. I offer no magical solutions or bold prescriptions to resolve the dilemmas of the partisan Left and social movements in Latin America. My more modest hope is that this book might contribute to a clearer understanding of the nature of these dilemmas so that they may one day be tackled more effectively.

Any project that has been this long in the making necessarily incurs debts of gratitude too numerous to mention, and certainly that is the case with this book. Nevertheless, I would like to acknowledge the special contributions of some individuals who have made indelible impressions on this study, either by opening doors for my research or by providing me with new insights and angles from which to approach my topic. They have improved this work immeasurably, and although they bear no responsibility for the flaws in my analysis, they deserve much of the credit for that which proves useful.

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