

THE “GOOD AMERICANS”: U.S. SOLIDARITY NETWORKS FOR CHILEAN AND ARGENTINEAN REFUGEES (1973-1983)

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Abstract: In June 1975, the *Special Parole Program for Chilean Refugees* allowed entry in the United States to a handful of people escaping from the Pinochet *coup d'état* who were followed a couple of years later by other exiles from Argentina. It is a paradox that supporters of Socialist President Salvador Allende, as well as other leftist political activists from Buenos Aires and outskirts— for whom anti-Americanism was an indisputable ideological point — found refuge in a country that was extremely well informed, when not a direct supporter, of the repressive policies of Southern Cone military regimes. The aim of this article is to tell the story of this movement or, better said, of those social actors, and try to understand the historical context in which this movement came into being in the United States.

Keywords: Chile, Argentina, Salvador Allende, Pinochet, Southern Cone military regimes.

1. BEYOND KISSINGER'S 'REALPOLITIK'

In June 1975, the *Special Parole Program for Chilean Refugees* allowed entry in the United States to a handful of people escaping from the Pinochet *coup d'état* who were followed a couple of years later by other exiles from Argentina. It is a paradox that supporters of Socialist President Salvador Allende, as well as other leftist political activists from Buenos Aires and outskirts— for whom anti-Americanism was an indisputable ideological point — found refuge in a country that was extremely well informed, when not a direct supporter, of the repressive policies of Southern

Cone military regimes. While it must be pointed out that soon after the violent overthrow of Allende, scholars, journalists and politicians published evidence of U.S. involvement during the Kissingerian era in the 1973 Pinochet coup (Birns, 1974; Church Committee, 1975; Farmsworth, Feinberg, Leenson, 1976; Chavkin, 1982; Jensen, 1988), it is only now that it has become available an unprecedented, comprehensive bulk of information on U.S. foreign policy in the Southern hemisphere during the administration of Richard Nixon (1968-1974) and of Gerald Ford (1974-1976). This was made possible at the beginning of the new millennium by the major *Chile and Argentina Declassification Projects* (Kornbluh, 1999 and 2004; Osorio, 2003 and 2004). Thousands of cable dispatches, telegrams and memoranda of conversations clearly show how the State Department, the secret services and big corporations covertly 'blessed' the *dirty war* against political opponents in those countries. Officially, however, they ambiguously proclaimed the need to implement human-rights-sensitive policies (Dinges, 2003).

In this atypical exile destination, Chileans and Argentines — who otherwise tended to find shelter mostly in Mexico, Venezuela, Israel and Europe (Yankelevich, 1998 and 2004; González, Franco, 2004; Roniger, Sznajder 2004; Bolzman, 2002; Luján Leiva 2002) — were helped by different organizations.

Activists coming from the realm of the so-called civil society, defined here a «collective identity, independent from the State» (Seligman, 1992:3; Hall, 1995; Janoski, 1998), or more precisely in

this case, independent from the government, played an important role in the production of counter information. Sometimes they even lobbied governmental and state actors. In a recent article, human rights activist and scholar Juan Méndez wrote It is commonly accepted that the interest and the initiatives of the U.S. Congress for a more active, human rights-based foreign policy came about as a response to Vietnam, due to delusion with the Nixon-Kissinger-Ford foreign policy, and pressure from the U.S. human rights movement (in Quigley, 2004:2).

The aim of this article is to tell the story of this movement or, better said, of those social actors, and try to understand the historical context in which this movement came into being in the United States (Calandra, 2006). Despite their difficulties and contradictions and despite governmental policies, scholars, political activists, religious leaders (Rabbis, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Catholic priests) were crucial in promoting a new sensibility towards human rights and in organizing pressure for the implementation of the *Special Parole* refugee program. An analysis of this solidarity network could add a new lens through which to look into bilateral relations between the United States, Chile and Argentina during the 1970s, too often reduced to an interplay of governmental policies, covert actions and corporate interests. This widespread paradigm maintaining the existence of asymmetrical, unbalanced relations between South and North America and the militarily- and financially-hegemonic United States (Britton, 1997; La Rosa-Mora, 1999; Cottam, 1998; Schoultz, 1998; Smith, 1996) seems not to have left any room for recognizing the role of other social actors. There is no intention here to overestimate what Keck and Sikkink would call the ‘leverage politics’ of this solidarity network (Keck, Sikkink, 1998:16). And yet, recounting the strategies and values of these civil society actors could add shades of grey to a context that has always been painted with broad, black and white strokes. As far as we know, there are presently few important studies focused on these minor historical characters (Green, 2003 and 2009; Martin, Sikkink, 1993). As Méndez’s quote suggests, the help given to Latin American refugees by these champions of ‘civil disobedience’ was both the symptom and the result of a domestic (post-Watergate) and foreign (post-Vietnam) political crisis.

These people came from very different walks of life but shared a deep lack of confidence in their government’s home and foreign policies and a powerful anti-imperialist language and set of values. Let’s see who they were.

2. FROM THE ASHES OF THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT: NACLA, CALA AND NICH

In early November 1966, twenty-three people, including professors, independent journalists, activists from the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), the University Christian Movement and former volunteers of the Peace Corps in Latin America, met in Chicago. Many souls of what a well known American historian called *Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Gitlin, 1993) -- i.e. the Sixties and its heterogeneous ‘movement’ -- were there.

That day the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), an independent research center ¹, was founded. NACLA's priority, as emerged from its regular newsletter, was the establishment of an extensive base of facts and figures covering every aspect of U.S. involvement in Latin America. A crucial precedent had been the public opinion reaction that followed the invasion of the Dominican Republic ². Staff members contributed with information uncovered in the course of their individual research projects and also provided data culled from the 45 periodicals which they regularly monitored. Inspired by the empirical research methods of C. Wright Mills, a sociologist renowned for his social activism, the NACLA board developed a hard-hitting critique of U.S. policies, publishing monographs, occasional papers, brochures, pamphlets and books.

A recurring topic in NACLA publications was a strong criticism of Latin American Studies. The creation of this new field of study -- copiously funded by the State Department and by private firms since the Cuban revolution of 1959 and polemically defined «subliminal warfare»³ -- embodied the U.S. administration’s drive to understand the potential enemy, so geographically near and so ideologically far. Another hotly debated issue was the Counterinsurgency Program on U.S. Campuses, which was held at

various universities since the mid 1960s. NACLA intellectuals and political activists were very concerned about the implications of aggressive American policies in different Southern countries. Several archive documents show that they used a similar anti-imperialist vocabulary to describe U.S. policies both in Vietnam *and* in Latin America. For example, a 1968 issue of the bulletin «*Viet-Report*», a publication found at the *The Data Center* archive, Oakland, affiliated to the NACLA West Coast branch, stated: The war in Vietnam took the cover off the Pandora's box in the Pentagon and State Department, but we soon learned that Vietnam was not an isolated case. Santo Domingo was next [...]. The U.S. democratic alternative to Communism in Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, soon had his counterparts south of the border: Costa e Silva in Brazil, colonel Peralta in Guatemala, as well as Joaquín Balaguer. ...

In Vietnam, we were cut short. To place our readers ahead of events this time, we provide in this issue a primer on U.S. penetration in Latin America, including an *Insurgents' Guide to the Care and Feeding of U.S. Capital in Latin America*, plus an important case study and reviews...[...] Opposition to the war in Vietnam finally led us to reassess official histories of American foreign policy interests in Asia. How many American boys will have to die before analysts decide to reappraise Latin American history? To ignore the parallels to Vietnam which pre-war Latin America presents is to run the risk of standing by helplessly while America steps into another quagmire⁴.

The parallel is even more explicit in the set phrase «*Vietnamization of Latin America*», which gives the title to other NACLA publications in the late 1960s⁵ and to pamphlets produced by similar groups a few years later. Among these groups, it is worth mentioning one of the several Community Action on Latin America (CALA), such as the «independent research/ action collective of students, clergy, and Latinos working together to promote the cause of liberation in Latin America and of Hispanic peoples in the United States» grown out of a meeting held at Cornell University in March of 1971⁶. The title chosen for their 1972 bulletin is precisely "The Vietnamization of Latin America", and the cover is, in Peter Burke's words, an 'eyewitness': a single, vivid

image more meaningful than any written document (Burke, 2001). Under the title «New Paints for Old Toys» Uncle Sam re-paints in bright blue, white and red military puppets coming from Vietnam and puts them in a box addressed to Latin America⁷.

From an historiographical point of view, chronology can become a tool to better understand the interplay of these two forces: the Vietnam War and the Counterinsurgency Programs in Latin America.

The conflict defined by Tom Wells «*the War Within*» U.S. civil society (Wells, 1994; Kazin, 1999) essentially overlaps with what has been called the third «authoritarian wave» (Huntington, 1991) in Latin America – i.e. the period between the coups in Brazil (1964) and Chile (1973). It was probably not a coincidence, then, that 1972 -- a very important year for the U.S. solidarity movement that saw the birth of another key actor, Non-Intervention in Chile (NICH), notably created *before* the overthrow of Allende⁸ -- coincided with the beginning of the gradual, controversial withdrawal of the United States from the Vietnam nightmare that eventually reached its climax in the following two years. Latin America symbolized 'the new frontier' of the kind of anti-imperialist discourse that characterised peace movement campaigns for the end of the Asian conflict. It represented a new cause, something to fight for in order to break the hegemonic mechanisms of the United States.

From a geographical point of view it is worth noticing that NICH and some other solidarity groups for Chile, though not the only in the US, were based in the Californian Bay Area, especially in Berkeley, which had an old Chilean community, a strong left, and was perhaps the most significant place for the genesis and the evolution of the Counterculture and the Antiwar movements (Berkeley Art Center, 2001; Rorabaugh, 1989; Heinemann, 1994; De Benedetti, Chatfield, 1992; Small, Hoover, 1992; Halstead, 1991).

It can be reasonably assumed, then, that this hotbed for 'contentious politics' (Tarrow, 1988) constituted a fertile breeding ground for new forms of protests which gradually shifted from the East to the South.

3. THE CULTURAL COLD WAR: THE FORD FOUNDATION AND THE ‘RED THREAT’ FROM CHILE AND ARGENTINA

The cultural foundations, most of all the Ford Foundation (FF) were another significant actor which devised solidarity strategies for the refugees from the Southern Cone. Documents from a very well organized archive in New York City prove how the interest towards the American subcontinent had developed well before the birth of the authoritarian regimes of the 1970s. The first exploratory mission of the FF dates back to 1957, and the first pilot project to 1959⁹. As remarked for Latin American Studies in the United States, the year of Castro’s win in Cuba marked a watershed, also for the Foundation, launching a new era of intensive cultural politics. The aim was to observe, grasp, and ultimately try to control a potentially dangerous area that could have contributed to the expansion of Socialism in the Western hemisphere. Several studies have highlighted the role of these institutions, real giants of American philanthropy, as indirect but powerful political actors supporting the cause of «the cultural cold war» (Appy, 2000; Stonor Saunders, 1999; Whitfield, 1991; Hixson, 1997). Even if we disregard Saunders’ hypothesis of direct CIA infiltrations in the FF staff, Giuliana Gemelli’s extensive research shows the connections of the FF with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a well-known U.S. cultural organization, and its planning of systematic operations to subtly promote the spread of the «American way of life» abroad (Gemelli, 1997 and 1998).

In the mid 1960s, the FF used grants and different forms of financial cooperation to become «the most consistent financial sponsor for social sciences in the Andean region»¹⁰. In this context, Chile got prize attention as it received funding from and cooperated with several prestigious U.S. institutions, such as the University of California and Chicago¹¹.

After fifteen years of cooperation, the Pinochet coup upset all intervention policies, producing multiple repercussions. As Jeffrey Puryear, special consultant for South America, stated, «the Ford Foundation’s response did not emerge full-blown from a few intensive policy discussions. Instead, it evolved painfully in successive steps over nearly three years»

(Puryear, 1982:15). Professor Richard Fagen, for instance, expressed one of the most courageous denunciations of Kissinger’s support of the atrocities of the Chilean military regime, referring explicitly to the disappearance and murder of American citizens Charles Horman and Frank Terruggi -- a well known case throughout the world after the movie «*Missing*» (Costa-Gavras, 1982)¹². Kalman Silvert, program advisor in social sciences for Latin America, also wrote a dramatic report on the situation in Santiago a few months after the coup¹³.

Those institutions devised, in any case, a specific program to relocate academics fleeing from the dictatorship. As Green has observed, there was an important precedent of financial support in Brazil in the years 1969/70, after 70 university professors were forcibly retired from universities. On October 1973, a small grant assigned to the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) was the first step for the formation of the Emergency Committee to Aid Latin American Scholars (ECALAS), initially funded with 80.000 dollars. In the course of the following 18 months, a total of 367,100 dollars were granted to an international network of agencies for the relocation and placement of Chilean professors and postgraduate students in other Latin American countries, Canada, Europe and the United States. This form of assistance helped rescue some well-trained and experienced social scientists, who were thus able to continue their work in new settings. In the same year, 1974, the FF assigned a 18.000-dollars grant to the UK branch of the *World University Service* to allow it to host scholars from Santiago¹⁴.

ECALAS distributed a list of 200 Chilean academics to be aided by 2500 U.S. colleges, from Connecticut to New Mexico, from Florida to South California, from Arkansas to Louisiana. Most of them were actually hosted as *visiting professors*, but sometimes sparked an ambivalent reaction from the local community, as in the case of Mario Valenzuela (foreign minister in Allende’s government), depicted by some colleagues at Bowdoin College, in Maine, as a «Marxist intellectual refugee», and a disquieting «communist in the faculty»¹⁵. Even if it was granted to no more than a hundred people overall, the aid provided to Chilean refugees marked, in a way, a sort of watershed for the FF, to the point that even internal documents make a distinction between

«the pre-refugees phase» and what came after¹⁶. In the 1950s and the 1960s, the aid traditionally provided to intellectuals forced out of their jobs and countries by political events was largely focused on the needs of East European scholars and professionals. The keyword *intellectual freedom*, so common in FF staff language, was therefore used only to refer to dissidents from Communist regimes. As far as Latin America was concerned, the Foundation extended its support to Argentines under General Onganía's dictatorship. A two-year grant, financed since 1966, provided temporary shelter to individuals oppressed by an impressive wave of repression in order to «prevent a 'lost generation' of social scientists»¹⁷.

This project, followed in 1974 by an intense cooperation with Enrique Oteiza's *Bolsa del Trabajo* in Buenos Aires¹⁸, set an important precedent for refugee intellectuals from the Southern Cone. Its impact and meaning, though, was not comparable with the aid provided to Chileans. Argentinean academics were not automatically identified with a leftist ideology. They were not fleeing from an overthrown Socialist regime, but rather from brutal and indiscriminate political repression. Chile was different because of the symbolic meaning of Allende's government and the powerful impact on public opinion of U.S. involvement in the Pinochet coup. As a Chilean exile declared in an interview, «We were the first to come 'from the wrong side' ... »¹⁹.

In any case, despite the fact that the number of persecuted people increased by impressive amounts after the coup in Buenos Aires, the FF always followed the precise policy to aid only a restricted number of people. Some internal documents refer to the programs for displaced scholars as «a sort of a guilded phenomenon»²⁰.

In a provocative paper presented at the Sixth National Meeting of the LASA, consultant Kalman Silvert was even more explicit in his critique, pointing out that the «faceless ones in less favoured occupations» were not taken into any consideration²¹.

To see who dealt with bigger numbers and 'blue collar' refugees we must analyse another social actor: the religious associations.

4. THE POWER OF MORAL PERSUASION: THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA AND OTHER RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

In November 1973, a few days after the Ford Foundation sponsored the LASA meeting in New York, a well known transnational institution, the World Council of Churches (WCC), launched from its Geneva headquarters an *Emergency Task Force on the Chilean Situation*, inviting all branches to raise at least 575,000 dollars²². Thanks also to Bill Wipfler, a leading figure in the U.S. branch, the Council launched in January 1974 a new appeal aimed at raising 1,200,000 dollars to be sent to the Chilean *Comité Nacional de Ayuda a los Refugiados* (CONAR)²³. In less than four months, the WCC managed to employ ten times more money than the Ford Foundation had done in three years. These figures give an idea of how much churches had been actively involved with the 'Latin American cause'.

With the Brazilian coup in 1964, religious newspapers like «*Christianity and Crisis*» or «*Christianity Today*» had begun to spread a 'vocabulary of solidarity' which was gradually extended to other media (Green, 2003: 91-92). The closure of the Brazilian Congress in 1968 and the routine employment of torture on political prisoners made Brazil the symbol of repression in the Americas (Green, 2009) and triggered the creation of the *Latin America Strategy Committee* (LASC). 1968, as is widely known, is considered one of the most conflictive years of the XX century. It includes *les événements* of the Paris Spring, the assassinations of Martin Luther King and of Bobby Kennedy, the Chicago National Democratic Convention, the TET offensive and the intensification of the Vietnam War. It also had deep repercussions on the social doctrine of the church, sparked in the subcontinent by the Medellín Conference (Dussel, 1991: 550-575). This doctrine also took hold in the United States.

The social commitment of religious communities – which grew in the context of the civil disobedience movement of the Sixties (Hollander, 1995:81-144; Mecosin, 1979; Hadden, Anson, 1988; Gaustad, 1990) – reached its climax after the Pinochet coup. In this respect, a very meaningful document is a petition signed by almost fifteen groups, among which there were the WCC itself, the Sisters of Charity, the Jesuit social ministries,

the Maryknoll Sisters, the Maryknoll Fathers, the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran Church in America, the Dominican Sisters, the Presbyterian Church and the Capuchin Fathers. On October 7th, 1974, their *Open Letter to President Gerald Ford* explicitly denounced U.S. policies in Latin America as «immoral and indefensible», making direct allusions to a deep crisis of confidence in internal and foreign policies, both of which were conducted with the aid of the secret services: [...] You also implied that the CIA was merely defending democracy in Chile by supporting opposition press and political parties, and this was “in the best interests of the people of Chile.” Aside from the arrogance of such a claim, we find your statements far short of the truth. CIA funds were allocated to bribe the Chilean Congress to support national strikes, and to foment civil disorders which precipitated the coup. Furthermore, where is the support for freedom of the press and democratic parties in Chile now that they have indeed been suppressed? Contrary to what you would have us believe, CIA covert actions in the Third World frequently support undemocratic governments which trample on the rights of their own people. We missionaries have felt first-hand the effects of such interventions, which are certainly not in “the best interest” of the majority of the citizens of those countries. U.S. interventions serve the interests of their wealthy minorities and are –as our critics often say- instruments of American economic domination

Gangster methods undermine world order and promote widespread hatred of the United States. Watergate has shown that such methods, once accepted, will eventually be turned against our own citizens [...]

In view of these facts, we hereby dissociate ourselves from our government’s use of the CIA to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries. We further demand: a disclosure of the CIA’s past and present covert actions, the termination of all future CIA covert actions; and the prosecution of any who have perjured themselves regarding CIA activities. We will support congressional and other responsible efforts to achieve these goals²⁴.

In the same year, 1974, LASC gave birth to another crucial solidarity actor: the *Washington Office on Latin America* (WOLA), founded by Joe Eldridge, a Methodist Church

missionary in Chile in the early 1970s. As James Green has observed²⁵, WOLA was more effective than its predecessor. After identifying friendly congressmen, it brought the Chilean case before the White House and it actively lobbied Capitol Hill. Donald Fraser (House of Foreign Affairs Committee, 1963-1979) recalls how Eldridge and his staff provided key witnesses which were often juxtaposed to representatives from the Department of State. By describing to Congress conditions in countries where serious human rights violations occurred, he wanted to persuade the government to change its policies. The expert and credible witnesses recommended by the WOLA did provide reliable and accurate information on the human rights situation in Latin America. Some of them came from the affected regions and gave particularly moving accounts (Quigley, 2004:1-2).

WOLA, the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Quaker American Friends Committee belonged, in Lewis Diuguid’s words, to a «unique species called *the religious lobbyists*». They were a selected group - no more than 130 people at the end of the 1970s - whose «unique currency was moral persuasion» (Diuguid, 1978:10). The strongest communicative impact of those social actors, as stated by different scholars concerned with the ‘religious factor’ in U.S. politics (Leege, Kellstedt, 1993; Reichley, 2002; Johnson, Tamney, 1986), actually consisted on their insistence on the moral side of public behaviour. Eldridge still keeps in his archive letters from many politicians thanking him for his activities²⁶. During a thorough interview, he recalled the importance, in 1974, of the *internal*, widespread crisis of confidence that followed the Watergate. The influence of the so-called ‘Watergate babies’, a new batch of congressmen elected right after the unprecedented scandal, was very meaningful also in foreign politics:

Much of the legislation would not have been passed if Kissinger... had Kissinger been a little more open listening and recognizing that Congress was an equal branch of government legislation would not have passed!.. But it was a reaction to Mr. Kissinger’s arrogance and haughtiness that led Congress to pass this legislation ... so a number of hearings were held on Chile and, hmmm... in which critics of the Pinochet government would come in and lay out why this was not their business. And part of the rationale was the United States

should not be supporting a government that tortures its own people. That is the moral argument! [...] In 1974 a new batch of Congress ... a new batch of members of Congress were elected and... if I can remember correctly there were 92 members... 92 members of new Congress elected in 1974 and two thirds, or three fourth of those were Democrats. There were the so called 'Watergate babies' and they were angling for change, they were willing to take on the government, they were reformers, they were the people who were instrumental in pushing this reform along²⁷.

Leaving the policies of the Gerald Ford administration behind, the Carter presidency opened in January 1977 a new era for the defence of human rights, establishing, with Patricia Derian as its head, the *Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs*. At the end of the 1970s, many refugees from Argentina managed to escape also thanks to the help of two powerful American Jewish associations, the Anti-Difamation League (ADL), and the American Jewish Committee (AJC). As Victor Mirelman points out in a detailed research (Mirelman, 1995:239-271), the ADL was especially effective. It periodically compiled lists of hundreds of political prisoners' names and of cases of forced disappearance²⁸. After the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' inspection of 1979, the ADL also launched a special Argentine Prisoner Project in order to help both Jews and non-Jews. Broadly speaking, with the onset of a new authoritarian wave in Latin America, the religious associations became among the most visible and powerful actors in U.S. civil society in terms of the pressure they managed to exert on Congress and on the State Department. To what extent did they really succeed along with the above-mentioned secular groups to make a difference for Latin American dissidents? Analyzing the genesis of a highly controversial refugees program can partially clarify if some degree of interaction between these non-governmental actors and U.S. foreign policy actually took place.

5. THE FIRST RESULTS ? THE SPECIAL PAROLE PROGRAM FOR CHILEAN AND ARGENTINEAN REFUGEES

Congressional Records testify how some days after the Pinochet coup -- on September 25, 1973 -- Democratic Congressman Robert

Drinan proposed the implementation of a specific program aimed at hosting refugees, making an appeal in the name of his country's hundred-years-old tradition as an asylum provider:

Mr. Speaker. I have today introduced legislation which will open the United States to those suffering political persecution in Chile. I urge that the United States give the same treatment to those suffering persecution in Chile as we have given to the Hungarian freedom fighters and refugees from Fidel Castro's Cuba.[....] The United States is very proud of its tradition of admitting those who have been the victims of social, religious, and political persecution [...].

From the earliest days of our history, pilgrims, Huguenots, Jews, and Catholics have been welcomed when persecution in their homelands forced them to emigrate. I am hopeful that I can live up to these traditions²⁹.

Three days later, senator Edward Kennedy used similar arguments before a specific hearing by declaring [...] As we do for refugees from other areas, our Government should be prepared to provide asylum and resettlement opportunities to a reasonable number of political refugees from Chile, under the parole provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. We have done this time and again. I think we did it admirably with the Hungarian refugees when Eisenhower was President. We have done this with some of the Cuban refugees and there is no reason why we cannot do it at the present time in regard to the political refugees from Chile³⁰.

As could have been expected, these speeches sparked polemic reactions. As of November 1973, several republican congressmen evoked 'the red threat' in the attempt to hinder the passing of the bill called for by Drinan and Kennedy. For instance, in a declaration registered in Congress records as *Chilean Marxist to Enter the United States*, congressman Earl Landrebe from Indiana expressed his concern by stating that It is our misfortune that a bill has been introduced by Congressman Drinan (H.R. 10525) which would allow Chilean political refugees to enter the United States. Apparently America is not to be a haven for the tired, the poor, and the huddled masses yearning to breathe free, but

for the angry, the envious, and the vanguard of the proletariat³¹.

A few weeks later, an indignant John Rarick from Louisiana referred to «importing Communist agents from Chile»:

Mr. Speaker, now that the Chilean people have been forced into a revolution to overthrow a Marxist government to prevent a Communist coup, many Americans may be unhappy to learn that our Government under a special "parole" arrangement has offered sanctuary to the Communist "refugees" of the new Chilean Government. Not only is our Government now importing unsuccessful, but Communist agents, and not one word of opposition has been voiced by the population control lobby³². Just as, in the summer of 1974, the proposal to grant asylum to this kind of fugitives was taking hold, deputy John Ashbrook from Ohio reinforced the view of congressman like Rarick

Mr. Speaker, Judith Haydes, a serious student of Chilean affairs, has written to inform me concerning a very disturbing situation developing in this country. She writes that Marxist professors from Chile are teaching their ideology to American students at our universities, and that influential Americans are assisting these Chileans by urging the U.S. Government to provide asylum for these so-called "political refugees", who are equated with genuine escapes from Hungary and Cuba. Somehow I had been under the impression that the Statue of Liberty and American tradition was a beacon of welcome and freedom of the oppressed-not the oppressor³³.

Despite this hostility, in June 1975 the State Department launched the Special Parole Program for Chilean Refugees, a program which was extended to other Southern Cone citizens a couple of years later. In a telegram to the U.S. Embassy in Santiago³⁴, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger clearly explains why he launched the program. It is interesting to note that he starts the telegram by listing the more general and vague reasons, “hiding” in the final points the more specific, and probably real, motives.

Now let me spell out the reasons why I have been working so hard to obtain authorization to permit the resettlement of Chilean detainees and refugees, and their families, in the United States. First and foremost, there is a

humanitarian need for such action. We sympathize with the plight of the refugees and detainees and we wish to do our part in the international resettlement effort.

At a time when European embassies had presumably granted all the visas at their disposal, the United States were probably under pressure by the international community. Notwithstanding this important reason, there were other reasons worth mentioning:

Secondly, there is strong religious support in Chile for such a U.S. effort. For example, both father Poblete, adviser to cardinal Silva of Chile, and bishop Frenz, Lutheran leader of Chile, have repeatedly urged us to take this action. He arranged for both of them to meet with staff counsel for the Senate and House Committee³⁵.

There were also more specific and probably more crucial issues. The United States needed to relocate more Vietnamese in other countries and were therefore forced to accept, in exchange, a handful of Chileans as part of an informal agreement. On an imaginary ‘planetary chessboard’ refugees were moved like pawns according to the strategic importance of their nationality:

Third, he have been asking the U.N. High Commissioner of Refugees to get other countries to take in Vietnamese refugees. It is inconsistent to seek cooperation from international organizations and other countries on the Vietnamese refugee problem if we refuse to lift a finger to help the Chileans. Recently the intergovernmental committee for European migration expressed to our Santiago embassy its hope for rapid authorization of the entry of Chileans into the U.S.³⁶.

Kissinger cites other motives at the end of the document that were of no lesser importance

Fourth, our acceptance of Chileans will demonstrate that our concern for refugees extends to all persons in need, regardless of the nature and political coloration of the government from which they are fleeing.

Such action will also help to improve the U.S. image in the eyes of millions of people in Chile and many other countries³⁷.

The United States' compelling need to restore their image and credibility abroad following public accusations of having been heavily involved in the coup, seems to justify in full this little 'cosmetic operation'. In this respect, it is probably not incorrect to think about a sort of "sense of guilt" by the State Department as an important propulsive force for political action. In conclusion, Kissinger made sure that the 'red threat' for the United States would be minimal and the refugees would be accurately 'screened' according to their political affiliations: communist militants would be rejected³⁸. The very last words of the telegram focused on the various 'directors behind the scenes' of civil society organizations:

Seventh, there is great domestic interest in this proposal. We have been receiving daily calls from representatives of many organizations and groups including, for example, the U.S. Catholic Conference, Amnesty International, the American Friends Service Committee, the National Council of Churches, and the Latin American Studies Association. They ask why, after all these months, we do not move ahead³⁹.

Subsequently, in the summer of 1975, the United States made 400 refugee visas available to Chilean political prisoners. Different sources testify how difficult it was to use them all over the next three years. Political activists from Santiago and its outskirts sometimes even preferred to remain in prison – where they were tortured and beaten – to finding shelter in the country that they identified as 'the empire of evil'⁴⁰.

On July 21, 1976, Kissinger declared to the United Nations that the Parole Program was to be extended to 200 Argentines, which became 400 over the following two years⁴¹.

It is not easy to provide a quantitative evaluation of beneficiaries, particularly if we consider the reluctance of the Chileans. Figures coming from the OAS and from private research centers⁴² might not be completely reliable. A possibility is to analyze the statistical information provided by local refugees associations⁴³ and compare them with the figures given in the oral testimonies of activists from the East and the West Coast⁴⁴. A rough estimate, notwithstanding government proclaims, can put the refugees at no more than 200-250 individuals per nationality each year. A three-year project, therefore, presumably

saw no more than a thousand people from the Southern Cone settle in the United States. This is an irrelevant number, especially if compared to other, more predictable, exile destinations. This would be the beginning of several stories of tough integration, of severe identity fracture and reconstruction and of an unexpected, but progressive evolution of the deep 'antiyankee sentiment'⁴⁵ of these refugees.

6. LATIN AMERICAN EXILES AS A MIRROR

The civil society organizations mentioned above were probably a sort of 'drop in the ocean' and represented an absolute minority subordinated to major strategic interests. Delving into their story, though, has permitted the articulation of what was an otherwise rigid interpretive framework, in which bilateral relations between the United States and Latin America during the 1970s were analysed only through the lens of governmental policies.

In his book *The Double Absence*, sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad suggests that migrants have a so-called 'mirror-function': they reflect, sometimes amplifying them, the internal contradictions of the host country (Sayad, 1999). We could partially apply this intuition to the impact on the United States of the exiles from the Southern Cone.

A sense being responsible for something and a deep crisis of confidence in domestic and foreign policy can be seen as powerful driving forces for political action and speak volumes on the genesis of the refugee program. It is highly probable, moreover, that the anti-imperialist rhetoric used by secular and religious activists served to express dissent towards a conflict abroad – the Vietnam War – that left a deep scar in the nation's collective identity. In a way, then, commitment towards Latin American refugees probably helped to exorcise the silent, overwhelming ghost of the Vietnam's victims.

On the one hand, the students, church leaders, rabbis and academics campaigning for the respect of human rights in Latin America and helping the refugees represented -consciously or not – the 'second generation of civil disobedients'. On the other hand, they fully expressed the bitterness and the lack of confidence in domestic politics after President Nixon impeachment.

The image of the mirror (Fuentes, 1992) seems to be an appropriate conclusive metaphor. But here it is not intended as the mirror on which Latin America looks at its own image and compares it to the Western civilization. It rather represents a screen upon which to observe the contradictions of U.S. identity.

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NOTES

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⁵ S. Weissman – J. Gerassi, *The Vietnamization of Latin America. A NACLA publication*, 1967, DACA.

⁶ *The Vietnamization of Latin America*, «CALA (Community Action on Latin America) Newsletter», December 1972, vol. 2, n. 3,

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⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸ In Spring 1972 CALA held a nation-wide conference on Chile which gave birth to a national support committee known as Non-Intervention in Chile, organized by «a group of North and South Americans who were concerned about the growing evidence of U.S. government and corporate involvement in Chile». See *NICH Organizes against Junta*, «Chile Newsletter», published by Non-Intervention in Chile, vol. I, n. 1, November 1, 1973, p. 1, DACA.

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¹⁰ *The Ford Foundation's Latin American and Caribbean Program. Discussion Paper for the Board of Trustees Meeting as a Committee of the Whole*, March 28, 1984, call number 008856, FFA, p. 12.

¹¹ H. E. Wilhelm, *University of Chile-University of California Collaboration, Jan. 29, 1968*, call number 004824, grant n. 0650032, FFA; G. C. Feliz, *Regional University Centers Innovation in Chile, University of California, Berkeley. Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, 1972*, call number 012973, grant n. 06100342, FFA. The consequences of the cultural exchange with Chicago will be visible throughout the whole dictatorship, when Pinochet's neoliberal economic policies will be led by the so-called *Chicago Boys*, young Chilean economists who took their Phd at Milton Friedman's school.

¹² Richard Fagen, University of Stanford professor, social science consultant for the FF in Santiago between 1972 and the Summer of 1973. During this period, he got in touch with Frank Terruggi (later murdered in the National Stadium), and Charles Horman (*desaparecido* after the coup). For his denounce on CIA covert actions in Chile see Department of State - Freedom of Information Act, State Chile Declassification Project Tranche I (1973-1978), *The Full Scale of the Tragedy in Chile is Just Now Coming into Focus*, 10-08-1973 to: Fulbright, William J., from: Fagen, R., Document Type: General Correspondence, Length: 10 pp., also reported in L. Birns (ed), *The End of Chilean Democracy*, 1974.

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¹⁷ *Grants to Academic fleeing from Argentina*, Grant File, approved September 24, 1966, n. 660-0444, FFA.

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¹⁹ Transcript of an interview with José Matta, Chilean refugee, New York, September 11, 2004, p. 24

²⁰ *Human Rights in Latin America, Minutes of meeting of the Committee on Human Rights and Social Science Process*, June 28, 1976, doc. n. 010188. FFA, p. 2.

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²³ *New Appeal Regarding the Situation in Chile for I, 200 000 \$*, January 31, 1974, NACLA NY, Chile-Roll 49, File 263, cit., frame 0520 e ss.

²⁴ *An Open Letter to President Gerald Ford*, October 7, 1974, NACLA NY, Chile-Roll 49, File 263, cit., frame 0500 and ss.,

²⁵ Interview with Professor James Green, Latin American Studies specialist, Los Angeles, December 2, 2003.

²⁶ Letter from Mark Schneider, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Department of State, to Joe Eldridge, January 9, 1978, scrap files, Eldridge’s private archive, WOLA, Washington D.C.; Letter from Don Bonker, Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Congress of the United States, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, to Joe Eldridge May 9, 1979, unclassified documents 1978-1979, Eldridge’s private archive, WOLA, Washington D.C.; Letter from Sen. Edward Kennedy, United States Senate, to Joe Eldridge, August 29, 1980, *ibid.*

²⁷ Transcript of an interview with Joe Eldridge, former missionary and founder of the *Washington*

Office on Latin America, Washington D.C., December 4, 2004, p. 5.

²⁸ Anti Defamation League Of B’nai B’rith Archives- ADLA, New York City, *Argentinean Jews in Danger*, «ADL Bulletin», November 1976; *Argentina Update*, *ibid.*, March 1977.

²⁹ United States of America, Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 93 Congress, First Session, volume 119-part 24. September 20, 1973, to September 27, 1973, Library of Congress-LOC, Washington D.C., pp. 31444-31445.

³⁰ *Appendix VI- Statement of Senator Kennedy on Political Refugees in Chile and Letter of Inquiry to Secretary of State*, in *Refugee and Humanitarian Problems in Chile*, Hearing before the Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, Ninety-Third Congress, First Session, September 28, 1973, LOC, p.5 and p.31.

³¹ *Chilean Marxist to Enter the United States?*, United States of America, Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 93 Congress First Session, volume 119 –part 27. October 18, 1973, to November 5, 1973, LOC, p. 35859.

³² *United States Importing Communist Agents from Chile*, United States of America, Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 93 Congress First Session, volume 119 – part 30. November 30, 1973, to December 6, 1973, LOC, p. 39287.

³³ *Chilean Marxism Transposed*, United States of America, Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 93 Congress Second Session, volume 120 – part 15, June 17, 1974, to June 21, 1974, LOC, p. 20652.

³⁴ Based on the text of a prepared statement by Assistant Secretary of State Rogers in an executive session testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee on June 12. See Department of State - Freedom of Information Act, State Chile Declassification Project Tranche I (1973-1978), *Parole of Chilean Refugees*, 06.13.1975, to: Santiago, from: State, Document Type: Telegram, Length: 5 pp., Message# 139066, p. 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ «Fifth, the security risk to U.S. is minimal. All Chileans will be carefully screened, on an individual basis. **It is not proposed to bring in communists, terrorists** or economic distress cases. In the course of our consultation with Congress we have been told repeatedly that it is undesirable to bring in communists. **All I can do is say once again that we do not, repeat not, intend to bring in communists.** Sixth, so far as I can discern, implementation of this proposal will in no way help the Communist Party. On the contrary, I am convinced that refusal to accept Chilean detainees and refugees

would serve communist propaganda purposes». Ibid., p.4.

³⁹ Ibid., p.5.

⁴⁰ Department of State - Freedom of Information Act, State Chile Declassification Project Tranche I (1973-1978), *Parole Program Problems*, 01.12.1976 to: State, from: Santiago, Document Type: Telegram, Length: 5 pp., Message# 220.

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⁴⁴ Interview with Professor James Green, Latin American Studies specialist, Los Angeles, December 2, 2003; Interview with Juan Méndez, lawyer, academic and *special consultant* for the U.N., New York, October 21, 2004; Interview with Antonio Leiva, Argentine refugee, Los Angeles, November 25, 2003.

⁴⁵ For an analysis of the way refugees and other exiles organized their daily lives and how this changed the perception of their host country see Calandra, 2005.