



DICTATORSHIP ACROSS BORDERS:

Relations between Brazil, Chile
and the United States from 1964–1985

Mila Burns - Ph.D. Student The Graduate Center / CUNY

ABSTRACT

Despite the common sense notion that the United States was the one and only supporter of the Chilean coup d'état, the Brazilian influence was instrumental to the Chilean dictatorship, from the overthrow of Salvador Allende to the confirmation of Augusto Pinochet as the supreme dictator of the neighboring country. Recently declassified documents of the 2012 Brazilian Truth Commission point to economic support, military training, and diplomatic strategies, such as Brazil sending weapons, food and medicaments to the right-wing movement that overthrew Salvador Allende. Before the September 11, 1973 coup d'état, the country even planned training and financing guerrilla group in the Andes to put an end to the socialist government. This project investigates relations between the United States, Brazil, and Chile from the election of Salvador Allende as president of Chile, in 1970, to the end of the Brazilian military dictatorship, in 1985. The Chilean coup was not the result of one country's influence, nor of domestic issues only, but of all of those factors summed to a complex thread of connections between right-wing leaders in the United States, Chile and Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1964, when Brazil became the first of a sequence of military dictatorships in South America, the United States has been pointed to as the main supporter of such regimes, especially of the Chilean one. It might be a consequence of the absence of sources, of the echoes of Dependency Theory, or simply of a lack of interest, but the fact is that the Brazilian role in the subsequent military regimes in the continent has been left untouched by scholars. This project aims to shed light onto this neglected area of history. By understanding the diplomatic and political relations between Brazil and Chile, we may be able to attest to whether or not the Brazilian regime, installed in 1964, supported Pinochet's government; if so, in what ways? What was the extent of the ideological, political, diplomatic, and economic influences to it? The periodization also makes it possible to understand how the Chilean authorities, still strong at the time the Brazilian regime began to decline, acted during its neighbor's process of democratization. Finally, by looking at this influence, it will also be possible to understand the real extent of U.S. support for both dictatorships. It is likely that the American government was not the only sponsor of military regimes in South America during the Cold War.

METHODOLOGY

The Brazilian Truth Commission has declassified millions of documents. Among the first ones sent to the National Archives, in Brasília, is a series of documents from the late Estado-Maior das Forças Armadas (EMFA), the General Staff of the Armed Forces from Brazil. It is constituted of 37 volumes of secret papers and 52 volumes of reserved bulletins. They also include files containing documents from the National System of Information and Counter-information. The files of SNI (foreign relations), DSI/MRE, and CSN (Nacional Security Council) reveal that the Brazilian government closely accompanied the political situation in Chile. The Itamaraty, in Brasília, holds the telegrams and letters sent by Antonio Câmara Canto, one of Augusto Pinochet's closest friends and Ambassador of Brazil in Santiago during Allende's presidency and the first years of the Chilean dictatorship. Also in Brazil the Centro de Documentação e Pesquisa and the Arquivo Público do Rio de Janeiro, in Rio de Janeiro, holds important documents of the period. Another important part of this research are the documents declassified by the Chilean Rettig Commission, which also shed light on Chilean relations with other countries. The documents of the Archivo Nacional and the Chancalaria de Chile, in Santiago, Chile, also reveal the importance of the Brazilian connection with the Chilean dictatorship. Many documents are also available at the United States National Archives.

Although the relations between Chile and Brazil during this time have never been subject of deep investigation, many scholars contributed to related topics. Among historians who investigated U.S. and Brazil relations during the military regime are Ruth Leacock, Phyllis R. Parker, Moniz Bandeira, E. Bradford Burns, W. Michael Weis, Thomas E. Skidmore, James N. Green, Carlos Fico, Matias Spektor, John Dinges, Tanya Harmer, and Jan Knippers Black. The support of the American government to Augusto Pinochet was subject of an even broader set of works, from Hollywood movies, such as "Missing", to an extensive scholarship by Russel Crandall, Eduardo Galeano, Peter Kornbluh, Edward S. Herman, Kathryn Sikkink, Joseph S. Tulchin, Augusto Varas, Greg Grandin, and Steve J. Stern, among others.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FINDINGS

More than fifty years after the fall of João Goulart, Brazil is experiencing broad questioning about its military period. The same cities that staged massive demonstrations against the dictatorship and the amnesty in the late 1970s witnessed, on March 2014, protests to call for the punishment of torturers, and reenactments of the Marcha da Família com Deus pela Liberdade, in support of the dictatorship. It is the portrait of a past that remains unclear. By shedding light onto a relation still unknown, this project aims to investigate an important part of the understanding of the dictatorship in Brazil and Chile. Since Brazil was the first country to have a successfully installed military regime, my hypothesis is that it influenced the subsequent authoritarian governments in South America. A preliminary look at the sources of this research indicates that the support of the Brazilian government was much bigger than scholarship has demonstrated. On the other hand, Chilean authorities also worried about the democratization of the neighboring country in the mid-1980s. By looking at the countries relations during the 1960s and 1980s, we will be able not only to understand this political organization, but also to reevaluate the U.S.'s role in the establishment of the Chilean and Brazilian dictatorship. It is possible that, by looking at the neighbors' diplomatic history, one can find that the global organization at the time was much different than previous academic works have led us to think.

