DICTATORSHIP ACROSS BORDERS: THE BRAZILIAN INFLUENCE ON THE OVERTHROW OF SALVADOR ALLENDE*

A través de las fronteras: la influencia brasileña en la caída de Salvador Allende

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RESUMEN:
Este artículo pretende arrojar luces sobre un área olvidada de la historia, centrándose en las siguientes preguntas: ¿cómo el régimen militar de derecha instalado en Brasil pudo influir en el derrocamiento de Salvador Allende? ¿Cuál era la relación entre los dos países durante los años anteriores al golpe de Estado chileno? y ¿En qué medida el Brasil y los Estados Unidos actúan como socios en este evento?
A modo de exploración y a través de la indagación en archivos, esta investigación utiliza a modo de ejemplo histórico documentos recientemente desclasificados. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo abrir nuevas vertientes de estudio a una amplia gama de estudios sobre las relaciones entre los gobiernos militares en América del Sur.

Palabras clave: Brasil, Chile, Guerra Fría, Diplomacia, gobiernos militares

ABSTRACT:
This article aims to shed light on a neglected area of history by focusing on the following questions: how did the right-wing military regime installed in Brazil influence the overthrow of Salvador Allende? What was the relation between the two countries during the previous years of the Chilean coup d’état? To what extent did Brazil and the United States act as partners in this event?
By way of an in-depth archival exploration of one historical example using newly declassified documents, this work aims to open up new possibilities for a wide range of studies on the relations between military governments in South America.

Key words: Brazil, Chile, Cold War, Diplomacy, military governments.

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INTRODUCCIÓN

On August 2, 1973, at the airbase “El Bosque,” in Santiago, some of the highest profile members of the Chilean military met to debate strategic matters. Political tension wracked the country. While groups from the right-wing and the radical left marched against Salvador Allende, supporters of the Unidad Popular administration demonstrated in favor of the democratically elected Chilean president. Food shortages and high inflation contributed to the climate of insecurity. But admirals, generals and commanders of the Allende Armed Forces did not discuss the country’s conditions. They analyzed how “the measures adopted by the Brazilian military during the revolution of March 31, 1964 could be useful in Chile.”¹ Representatives of the Brazilian government spread the news of the meeting to its intelligence services in a report that remained secret almost 40 years after the Chilean coup d’état.

In May 2012, Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff, a former member of VAR-Palmares, a resistance group against the military regime, installed the “National Truth Commission,” which finally released documents and draft conclusions about politically motivated torture and homicide cases during the period from 1964 to 1985.² The group has analyzed more than 30 million documents. Besides several bureaucratic reports on day-by-day activities, the files include the correspondence between military authorities from Brazil, Chile and the United States. Combined with information released in 2009 by the U.S. National Security Archive of the Unites States and telegrams from the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty), this new body of documents reveals that the Brazilian government opposed Salvador Allende’s presidency and influenced the September 11 coup d’état in Chile. This article aims to shed light on this neglected area of history by focusing on the following questions: how did the right-wing military regime installed in Brazil influence the overthrow of Salvador Allende? What was the relation between the two countries during the previous years of the Chilean coup d’état? To what extent did Brazil and the United States act as partners in this event?

I make no pretense of exhausting the sources for the study of such a historical time or to give the final word on the importance of this mutual influence to the rise and fall of the dictatorships in Brazil and Chile. This work will only treat one historical case rather than analyzing how South American dictatorships

² “Comissão da Verdade diz que ditadura militar violou direitos de 50 mil pessoas,” Agência Brasil (February 25, 2013).
influence each other in general. My intent is to present a brief history of a frequently forgotten diplomatic relationship that was larger than the one imagined by most of Chileans and Brazilians. By way of an in-depth archival exploration of one historical example using newly declassified documents, this work aims to open up new possibilities for a wide range of studies on the relations between military governments in South America.

Médici and Nixon

It was a cold December day of 1971, but inside the White House, the climate of the conversations resembled summer in South America. The Brazilian president Emílio Garrastazu Médici visited America trying in vain to leave behind the reputation of being an assertive and arrogant man, which preceded and followed him on his travels. Instead of hopes of getting a blessing from Richard Nixon, he considered himself the ruler of a powerful nation of his own. The trip offered the conservative media a thread of positive stories to tell, not only in Brazil, but also in the neighborhood. The Chilean magazine Qué Pasa published a cover story about Médici’s trip to America. Entitled “Brazil will speak in Washington as a world power,” the story acclaimed Brazilian economic success and ignored any mention of torture or censorship.³ It was a considerable change from the previous months, when the image of the Brazilian government had been hurt by several newspaper articles denouncing abuses of human rights. The negative was a reaction to a new strategy of Brazilian groups of resistance to the dictatorship: the kidnapping of international authorities in exchange for political prisoners. The government reacted violently, with more imprisonment and punishment. While the Brazilian media was under censorship, the Chilean leftist networks reacted aggressively, organizing demonstrations against Médici. A television show called the population to attend a protest against the violations of human rights perpetrated by the Brazilian government. The Brazilian ambassador in Santiago, Antônio Câmara Canto sent the news to the Department of National Security: “last Friday, 12, on TV 7, an enterprise whose major shareholder is the Chilean government, (in a segment) regarding the kidnapping of the German Ambassador in Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian government was the target of a tremendous diatribe.”⁴ The climate of criticism would not end soon.

⁴ Secretaria de Estado das Relações Exteriores (SERL), telegram number 19187, from June 18, 1971. DFE/DPR/660.7.
When Médici traveled to America, on December, 1971, he decided to focus on numbers. Brazil was heading for an active international policy. The country’s economy had achieved impressive growth—11% a year from 1968 to 1973. The population was moving from rural to urban areas, and the middle class grew considerably. From 1967 to 1973, exports increased from $1.5 billion to $6.2 billion. The strong economic momentum and his popularity led Médici to decide that it was time to pursue Nixon’s recognition. It would impress his military colleagues, the press, and Brazilian public opinion. Matias Spektor offers an insightful interpretation of Médici’s posture, arguing that “it is also possible that, for him, the trip was a way to legitimate dictatorship in a period when a network of political exiles was beginning to make noise with accusations regarding torture and terrorism from the regime he was commanding.”

As James N. Green demonstrates in his work about American civil society’s reaction to the violation of human rights in Brazil and its influence on the weakening of the dictatorship, demonstrations and publications questioning the Brazilian regime were now widespread. In Washington D.C., a group of Brazilian exiles and American intellectuals carried a large poster, readable from the White House, which stated: “Stop U.S. Dollar Complicity with Brazilian Torture.” While visiting the Organization of American States (OAS), Medici was once again challenged when a protester stood up and screamed in Portuguese: “Long live free Brazil—stop the tortures!” Just a few months before Médici’s visit, The Washington Post published a one-page article about Marcos Arruda, who lived in the United States, in forced exile, detailing his arrest and torture.

But Médici decided not to bother—or, at least, not to demonstrate that he did. On the night of Médici’s arrival, Nixon offered a dinner at the White House. He looked at the Brazilian leader, who listened carefully to the translator, and proposed a toast highlighting the importance of the meeting because “as Brazil goes, so will go the rest of that Latin American Continent.”

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7 Ibid., 194.
presumptuous Emílio Garrastazu Médici entered Richard Nixon’s office. With the help of an interpreter, the Brazilian president said his “visit and his welcome had been far above anything he had expected.” He continued, making it clear they were equals by saying jocularly that the “word had gotten around that he had hit it off well with the President, that they had become friends, and that was why people were asking him to intercede with the President,” to which Nixon replied that he felt they had “established a close and friendly relationship.”

The “true friends” went on talking about Cuba and what a great coincidence it was that neither wanted any kind of relation with the communist island. Then, Nixon suggested they open a secret line of communication, to which diplomats and their respective Ministries of Foreign Relations would not have access. Nixon said he would name United States National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to be the one responsible for such channel; Médici pointed to Gibson Barbosa, who had been handling a number of matters secretly, on a special file where everything was handwritten, so that “not even typists had knowledge of them.” After talking about the situation in Bolivia and stressing the difficulty they had “in dealing with the Latin Americanists,” Richard Nixon asked what Médici thought of the situation in Chile. Médici, then, made it clear that “Allende would be overthrown for very much the same reasons that Goulart had been overthrown in Brazil.”

The Brazilian coup d’état

On March 31, 1964, a group of soldiers marched into Rio de Janeiro. The president João Goulart did not try to resist. On April 1, the presidency was declared vacant. Just days later, the national congress appointed General Humberto de Alencar Castello Branco president. He promised to call elections soon, but Brazilians did not see it happen for more than twenty years. Washington immediately recognized the new government, declaring it part of the democratic forces emerging in Latin America, away from the dangers of

11 “Meeting with President Emilio Garrastazu Médici of Brazil on Thursday, 9/12/1971, at 10:00 a.m., in the President’s Office, the White House.” Memorandum for the President’s File. 9/12/1971.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
communism. Right after the coup, when João Goulart was still in Brazil, Lyndon B. Johnson sent a good-luck telegram to the new government.¹⁵

The American authorities had already declared that, under Goulart, Brazil could become a hostile country; therefore, they would reduce foreign aid.¹⁶ Jan Knippers Black argues that the United States had “attempted to modify or perpetuate the internal balance of political forces in Brazil” by using strategies such as warning business elites of the risk of Goulart’s government, containing the Peasant Leagues movements, and keeping a close relation with the Brazilian military. This was achieved, according to the author, through the manipulation of the media and a process of “penetration” of Brazilian elites.¹⁷ The U.S. Ambassador at the time, Lincoln Gordon, was a central figure in this process. Thomas E. Skidmore narrates that on the morning of April 1, 1964, the day after the coup, Gordon and his staff monitored the traffic between Palácio das Laranjeiras, the Rio de Janeiro presidential residence, and Santos Dumont Airport, waiting for João Goulart to concede defeat and take off for Brasília, which indeed happened hours later, when the U.S. embassy spotted the presidential limousine.¹⁸ More recently, Brazilian historian Matías Spektor also dedicated a large part of one of his books to Gordon’s impact.¹⁹

In 1976, Phyllis R. Parker demonstrated that military aid was also used. It was the discovery of the so-called Operation Brother Sam.²⁰ After that, scholars such as Moniz Bandeira and Carlos Fico wrote extensively about the episode, in which the United States posted four Navy oil tankers on the Brazilian coast,

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¹⁵ Telegram 2162 from Rio de Janeiro, April 2; National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–66, POL 23–9 BRAZ.

¹⁶ Many authors date this fear of communist expansion in Brazil from earlier periods. Ruth Leacock argues that it was first noticed in 1960, when Tad Szulc wrote an article for The New York Times about the involvement of pro-Castro Marxists in the organization of the Peasant Leagues in the Northeast. E. Bradford Burns finds that the rise of Brazilian nationalism in the 1950s, which veered leftward and criticized foreign economic domination, intensified a policy of attacks on the United States, the single largest investor in Brazil at the time. The anti-Yankee tone, Burns suggests, gained strength from 1951, when Getúlio Vargas returned to power, until the military coup of 1964—a situation that obviously did not please U.S. corporations.


¹⁹ SPEKTOR, Matias. Ob. cit.

in case the Brazilian Army needed the American support for the coup.21 Fico adds that although the Operation itself is frequently called Contingency Plan 2-61, these two actions were in fact different.22 Plan 2-61 was a larger project that housed the Operation and was planned in advance, not on the eve of the coup. It included logistical support and the provision of arms and ammunition.

Right after Castello Branco took office relations between the two countries grew stronger. The United States made a large loan to the new government (the country received US$ 2 billion from 1964 to 1970 and ranked third, behind Vietnam and India, as recipient of U.S. aid).23 In response, the military president adopted a policy of alignment with the United States. In April of that year, at the request of Washington, Brazil officially gave its support to the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic to prevent the country from turning into a “new Cuba.”24 The commanding officer and most of the twenty-five hundred Latin American troops that were deployed in the OAS operation came from Brazil.25 Relations between the two countries narrowed and the United States celebrated the fact that “the armed forces brilliantly stopped communism from taking over Brazil.”26 The climate of friendship was not a constant during the two decades of the Brazilian military regime, but the first years can be considered a stable honeymoon. The country once seen as a potential new China was now an important ally, and would become a solid partner in 1970, when a potential new Cuba was born in the Southern Cone. The election of socialist Salvador Allende in Chile was a call for warning; and later, for coordinated action.

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23 Ibíd., 78-80.
GETTING INVOLVED

Near the small church Capilla Sagrada Familia de Nazaret, in the metropolitan area of Santiago, rests a tribute to a Brazilian unknown in the neighborhood. In 1977, a bucolic street in the area was named after Antonio Cândido Câmara Canto. It was the year of his death. In his motherland similar tributes took place. But it is hard for current residents of this Chilean street to understand why a Brazilian diplomat deserved such distinction. The ambassador in Chile from 1968 to 1975, Câmara Canto was not a regular officer. A ferocious anti-communist, he dedicated three years of his mandate to weakening Salvador Allende, and two others to supporting his close friend, Augusto Pinochet.

Câmara Canto was born in Rio Grande do Sul, near the frontier with Argentina and Uruguay, and embodied the stereotype of the machismo gaúcho. Tall, robust, with a strong accent, he was a man full of convictions. In April 1969, he coordinated the Comissão de Investigação Sumária (Commission of Summary Investigation), a McCarthyist-style group designated by the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations to expel communists from its body of workers. It would become the biggest purge in Brazilian diplomatic history, ending in the abrogation of 44 mandates. Of them, however, only four were for political motivation. Câmara Canto decided to utilize the opportunity to get rid of alcoholics and homosexuals. “Aguentas una verdad?” (can you handle the truth?), he would ask the defendants in Spanish.27 One of the dismissed employees, who had no connections with the communist party, asked why did he lose his job. The answer, the Brazilian paper Jornal do Brasil did not dare write fully: “You were fired because you are (unpublishable word, designating homosexual).”28 Also among the victims of the Commission was the bohemian poet and diplomat Vinícius de Moraes, writer of the song “The girl from Ipanema.” When he heard they would fire homosexuals and bohemians, he rushed to announce “I’m an alcoholic!”29

During the Eduardo Frei presidency, the Brazilian government kept a cordial relation with Chilean authorities. In April, 1970, the Chilean administration decided to support the Brazilian candidacy to the United Nations Security

28 Ibid. In the original, “Fostes punido porque eres (impublicável, designando homossexual).”
Council. Besides economic trade, the countries maintained an intensive schedule of cultural events, such as cinema and arts festivals. Worried about the future of such connections, Câmara Canto followed closely the candidacy of Salvador Allende. He sent the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations detailed reports about every demonstration, speech or event of the Unidad Popular.

During the presidential campaign, the Brazilian dictatorship became a target to the left-wing. Santiago was the stage of several demonstrations, especially in the university campuses. Under this climate, a group of Brazilian students that had arrived in Santiago for an exchange program suffered threats from “leftist students” and were required to leave the University of Chile campus. Canto considered the episode a demonstration of the “amplification and depth achieved in this country of the campaign of international defamation organized by the media against the Brazilian government.” After Allende’s inauguration, the leftist media intensified the attacks. The newspaper La Nación, considered an “official” publication, wrote an aggressive editorial in December 1970. Câmara Canto called the general-director of the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Relations. “After saying he was sorry, he attributed the editorial to the fact that the many sectors of the new administration were not yet coordinated.” Less than a week later, Allende gave his first international press conference, receiving journalists from several countries, including Brazil, in his official residence. He stated that he aspired to keep cordial relations with the neighboring country, for “nothing can alter this friendship.” But he also complained about the Brazilian media coverage of his election, and the constant accusations that he would put an end to democracy in Chile.

In the early months of Allende’s government, the relationship between Chile and Brazil was one of carrots in public and a stick backstage. Cordiality was an important element, observed at events such as the XI São Paulo Biennial, in 1971, for which the Chilean government sent art works, and the annual Santiago International Fair (FISA), where the Brazilian government exhibited its latest agricultural innovations since the 1960s. Brazil, however, presented severe demands against Chilean international interaction. In January 21, 1971,
Murillo Vasco do Valle Silva, chief of the Estado Maior das Forças Armadas (EMFA), the General Staff of the Armed Forces, sent a letter to the president Emílio Garrastazu Médici recommending the removal of the country from the Junta Interamericana de Defensa (JID), the Inter-American Defense Board. Comparing the situation to what occurred in 1961, when the United States demanded the withdrawal of the Cuban delegation from the institution, Valle Silva argued that “although the socialist program in development by president Salvador Allende in Chile does not declare openly the adherence to Marxist-Leninist principles, it tends to create disharmony and distrust in agencies where measures of protection from communist ideological infiltration in the American continent are debated.”

The project of putting an end into this “disharmony and distrust” created connections between Chilean right-wing leaders and the Brazilian government. In a “strictly confidential telegram,” a journalist connected to former Chilean president Jorge Alessandri warned the Chilean Embassy in Brazil about a plan to create a guerrilla against the “red danger.” A month later, another telegram described a room, inside the Brazilian Ministry of the Army, where authorities studied maps and scale models of the Andes, where the anticomunist guerrilla would operate. The Brazilian Army would help teaching combat techniques, sending “several secret agents who entered Chile disguised as tourists.”

Chileans who opposed the UP government would learn and, later, fight.

On the domestic Chilean political spectrum, impatience grew strong against Allende. The Secretary General of the radical leftist Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR), Miguel Enriquez, complained that Allende did not do what he promised, and suggested that the population invade farms and industries, taking forcefully what “belonged to them” instead of waiting for the government restitution. But if there was one pivotal moment of Allende instability in 1971, it was when Fidel Castro decided to promote what the Cuban Communist Party called “a symbolic encounter of two historical processes.” The journalist and diplomat, José Rodríguez Elizondo, defined it differently, stating that Castro sabotaged the Unidad Popular administration. “First, there

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38 Ibid.
39 SERL, telegram number 062195, from November 03, 1971. BBP/600(32).
are no syllogisms for complex situations. Second, the illuminated ones always try to drag their friends, even if it is for death, and third, the illuminated ones cannot have friends, only followers.”

Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?

It was a warm evening; warmer than the usual summer evenings in Santiago. The smooth breeze of the Chilean capital was replaced with a heat wave, a harbinger of the upcoming weeks. It was hard to tell, however, if it was the result of an unpredictable weather phenomena or of the movement of more than one million people squeezing on the sidewalks of the Chilean capital to see Fidel Castro. The Cuban leader epitomized international fears and domestic fragilities of the time. On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Allende government, the president announced to a crowd gathered for the celebrations at the Estadio Nacional that Castro would arrive in a few days. Although the Chilean government invited him for a ten-day visit, El Comandante never confirmed how long he intended to stay.

The Brazilian government worried about relations between Chile and Cuba much earlier. At the day of Allende’s inauguration, Antônio Cândido Câmara Canto wrote a few lines about Allende’s opinion on the participation of Chile in the Organization of American States (OAS) and dedicated more than half of his telegram to Cuba. The ambassador communicated to the Brazilian government about Allende’s intentions to narrow relations with the Caribbean country, “a right that belongs to Chile, and which the country will develop with dignity, according to a sovereign nation. He added he will do it unilaterally, without requesting OAS’ authorization,” warned the diplomat. Câmara Canto added that a group of 30 representatives of the Cuban government would attend the inauguration ceremony, in what “will be the first contact between the country and the new Chilean president.”

Apprehension grew as the gossip of the upcoming trip began to spread. The day before Castro’s arrival, in his first telegram confirming details of the visit, Câmara Canto, advised the Brazilian government that the Cuban leader would stay for ten days. Two days later, Canto described the landing of a
“gigantic Ilyushin, from the Soviet enterprise ‘Aeroflot,’ under protection of the stricter security scheme ever seen in Chile.”45 During the upcoming days, the Brazilian ambassador thoroughly narrated every step the Cuban leader took. On November 12, he communicated the arrival of the former presidential candidate and Secretary of the French Socialist Party, François Mitterrand, and the mayor of Marseille, Gaston Deferre, for a one-week visit to “examine the current Chilean political experience.”46 On November 14, he detailed Castro’s four-hour-long speech at the university, in Antofagasta, and compared the Cuban leader to the Mexican comic film actor. “In some moments, I got the impression of hearing ‘Cantiflas.’ In any case, to the present mass of people, obsessed and clearly leftist, the speech of the “Caribbean Hyena,” so-called by “La Prensa” and “Tribuna,” was a truly revolutionary lesson.”47

At the end of the first week, Câmara Canto drafted an extensive report on the political consequences of the visit. “For Allende, Fidel’s visit is, up to this moment, at least, a great success. That’s because the Sierra Maestra’s commandant is acting in Chilean territory more like a politician from the Unidad Popular than as a foreigner chief-of-state.”48 Câmara Canto seemed impressed with the fact that Castro was able to “eclipse” the figure of Che Guevara, who used to be pointed to as the “spiritual guide of all the leftist Latin American movement.” This charismatic presence was a “contribution from the Prime-Minister to Allende, since it is known that the MIR has been impatient, its Secretary General at loggerheads with the UP, its guerrillas promoting violent actions in the south of the country. Any mention to Guevara’s name during Fidel’s visit would intensify the demonstrations in favor of the armed path and, to this moment, Allende points to the Chilean path.”49

This accurate observation, seen at first as Castro’s contribution to Allende, would turn into what some scholars consider to be the beginning of the collapse of “The Chilean Path to Socialism.”50 As historian Alberto Aggio suggests, there were two steps for this process. At first, Castro’s magnetic figure overshadowed the Chilean

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45 SERL, telegram number 064860, from November 11, 1971. DBP/DAC/430(24h)(32).
46 SERL, telegram number 065394, from November 12, 1971. DBP/DEOc/920(85)(32).
47 SERL, telegram number 065769, from November 14, 1971. DBP/DAC/920(24h)(32).
48 SERL, telegram number 066067, from November 16, 1971. DBP/DAC/430(52)(32).
49 Ibíd.
Embodying the communism sought by the radical leftist movements in Chile, he stole all the attention away from Allende at a moment when the government celebrated the results of the municipal elections and popular approval. Next to one of the most charismatic young leaders of the time, Allende looked like “the uncle of the hero.”

Later on, when Fidel decided to stay in the country for much longer than one could predict, he began to look like an inconvenient guest, his charming looks fading away, the odor of novelty turning into a boring image, a guest who forgot to bring some good manners along with his luggage.

Castro stayed for 24 days, visiting more than a dozen cities. Time enough to make warm speeches regarding domestic issues and creating embarrassments with neighboring countries. While Salvador Allende tried to profit from the result of the municipal elections to control the demands of the radical leftists and the opposition, Castro talked openly about a more radical Marxist approach, since “to unite and wage the struggle, it is not necessary to get everyone to agree on everything.”

While Allende tried to use a conciliatory tone, and convince workers to avoid strikes, Castro declared that workers could not behave as if, after nationalization, they owned the factories. “Saltpeter belongs to all Chileans, the textile industry belongs to all Chileans, copper belongs to all Chileans, and all the natural resources of the nation belong to the entire nation, because this is what determines the will and the duty of the workers of all the Chilean people.”

While Allende’s advisors tried to find solutions for an unprecedented crisis at the University of Santiago, Castro stated that “when a revolutionary process is begun, when a revolutionary crisis is produced, the struggles and battles become tremendously acute.”

The Salvador Allende administration was a victim of its moderation. In the midst of the Cold War, the socialist government was an enemy of the United

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54 Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, Cuba-Chile, ob.cit., p. 265.

55 SERL, telegram number 066067, from November 16, 1971. DBP/DAC/430(52)(32).

56 Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, Cuba-Chile, ob.cit., p. 265.
States and Brazil, but at the same time it was not radical enough to gain the same financial and military support that Cuba and the Soviet Union offered to other socialist countries. Lubna Z. Qureshi argues that Chile was “too fragile to support any movement of national liberation” and on the day of the coup, fewer than 150 Cuban agents were in Chile, while Castro dispatched 36 thousand troops to Angola in 1975.\(^57\) Relying on several recently declassified documents, Tanya Harmer’s path-breaking research on Cuba-Chile relations demonstrates that the Chilean coup was not the result of a Washington-Moscow brunt, but of the dispute between Cuba, Chile, the United States, and Brazil. In South America, she states, the Cold War was not a bipolar, but a multidimensional conflict, in which Cuba and other countries from the continent played a decisive role.\(^58\)

Castro was still in Chile when the opposition to Allende mounted the “March of the Empty Pots,” a large demonstration in which thousands of upper-class women marched to the Palacio de la Moneda beating pots in protest against the government and Castro’s visit. The movement in favor of a plebiscite to decide whether Allende should remain in power gained strength. Allende had no option than to react boldly. “A fascist germ is mobilizing certain sectors of our youth, especially in the universities,” he said during a farewell meeting to Fidel Castro on December 2, 1971. As if he had a premonition of what Emílio Garrastazu Médici would say a few days later, while talking to Richard Nixon at the White House, Salvador Allende compared himself to the deposed Brazilian president, João Goulart. “The events are similar to those experienced in Brazil during the Goulart government.”\(^59\) And continued, on a second presage. “I am not a martyr... I will leave La Moneda only when I have fulfilled the task entrusted to me by the people. Only by riddling me with bullets can they stop me from fulfilling the people’s program.”\(^60\)

**The Chilean coup d’état**

The conversation between Emílio Garrastazu Médici and Richard Nixon on the cold morning of December 9, 1971, shows that the cooperation between


\(^{58}\) Harmer, Tanya (2011) Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American Cold War. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.


\(^{60}\) Ibíd, p. 157.
Brazil and the United States in the overthrowing of Allende was much more
direct than scholars have demonstrated. Just a year after Allende’s inauguration,
the American president talked openly about a coup d’état, asking Médici if
he thought that the “Chilean Armed forces were capable of overthrowing
Allende.”61 The Brazilian dictator replied “that he felt that they were, adding
that Brazil was exchanging many officers with the Chileans, and made clear that
Brazil was working towards this end.”62 Nixon, then, stated it was important
that the two countries work together and offered his help. “If money were
required or other discreet aid, we might be able to make it available. This
should be held in the greatest confidence. But we must try and prevent new
Allendes and Castros and try where possible to revert these trends.”63 Médici
told the president he was happy to see their positions were so close.

Actually, members of the Brazilian government predicted the coup even
before Allende’s election. The investigation of political, economic and
geographical aspects of neighboring countries was a usual practice for the
Estado Maior das Forças Armadas (EMFA). Activities such as “mapping of
the national territory and, in particular, the Border Areas”64 and the strategic
analysis of countries such as Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Argentina
and Peru were made and remade constantly.65 As early as May 18, 1970, the
Brazilian Colonel Luiz José Torres Marques wrote a three-page letter to EMFA’s
Vice-Chief detailing a meeting with the Brazilian ambassador at Santiago,
Câmara Canto. Marques, a flight supervisor, went to the embassy to introduce
himself and was surprised by the invitation to join secretaries of the embassy
and military attachés to discuss the Chilean domestic political situation.66

The flight supervisor stated that the situation was serious and listed several
reasons why the Brazilian government should worry: the Communist Party
was legal; most of the population and the military were against dictatorships;
the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) was gaining strength.
Misspelling Radomiro Tomic’s name, he described the Brazilian diplomats
predictions for the upcoming presidential elections: since the “51 votes from

61 “Meeting with President Emílio Garrastazu Médici of Brazil on Thursday, December 9, 1971, at
10:00 A.M., in the President’s Office, the White House.” Memorandum for the President’s File. 9/12/1971.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
65 Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, EMFA, Aviso no 05/ FA-2 204, Brasília, DF, 20/07/1973
66 Informes sôbre o Chile, Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, EMFA, Parte S/No, Brasília, DF, 018/05/1970.
the Christian Democratic Party are heterogeneous,“ the “27 right-wing votes will go to Alessandri and the 54 votes from the Popular Unity to Allende,” it was probable that “Atomic will hold the third position.” After affirming that both “Allende and Atomic are communists,” the ambassador recommend Alessandri, “an austere man and worthy from all points of view, the favorite among the upper class,” as the best choice for “those who don’t want to see communism in the country.”

Marques’ narrative demonstrates that, more than a clear vision of the trends of the Chilean congress, the Brazilian government’s most important representative had a strategy of reaction for each possible outcome. The first was that in case Alessandri wins the majority, Chile would remain a democratic government. The second situation was Alessandri winning a plurality, in which case, the congress would have to choose a candidate. Then, the diplomats suggested two hypotheses: “Alpha: the congress countersignatures Alessandri... Beta: the congress countersignatures Allende.” In the Beta case, the probable consequence was a “military move against Allende.” There is also a third situation, in which Allende wins a plurality. In this case, Câmara Canto predicts military reactions if Allende is nominated president and a “subversive reaction” if Alessandri is nominated.

Marques described Câmara Canto’s life in Chile as miserable. “Your Excellency the ambassador and his family live cloistered in their house, inside the embassy, and, in case they have to leave because of work obligations, the embassy secretaries and Brazilian military attachés give them some coverage, working as if they were police officers.” The reason for such fear was the “frequent menaces he suffers from national subversive elements and from Brazilians, refugees in Chile since the March 1964 revolution.” Marques finishes his report urging the Brazilian government to reinforce security in the embassy and attesting that the mood in the country is really disquieting against Brazilian representatives. “I was advised to use civilian clothes for my own safety.”

Chilean domestic problems were closely monitored by the Brazilian government. Câmara Canto reported in details the demonstrations organized

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
by opposition parties, food shortages and police operations.\textsuperscript{71} Leftist group clashes with authorities were also part of the reports.\textsuperscript{72} A division of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Centro de Informações do Exterior (CIEX), or Center for International Information monitored closely the steps of Brazilian exiles.\textsuperscript{73} Several other governmental agencies, such as the Serviço Nacional de Informação, SNI (National Information Service), the Centro de Informações da Aeronáutica, CENIMAR (Center of Information of the Aeronautics) and the EMFA joined the monitoring.\textsuperscript{74}

After the Brazilian coup, in 1964, several exiles flew to the neighboring country.\textsuperscript{75} Euclides Moraes Gomes was one of them. After the Chilean coup, he flew to Portugal. In August, 1976, the CIEX sent the SNI a report on Gomes’ travel to Stockholm, where he testified to Amnesty International about the participation of Brazilian intelligence services in the overthrow of Allende.\textsuperscript{76} An exile in Chile at the time of the coup, Fernando Gabeira remembered how the relatively calm times were disturbed by the menace of Allende’s overthrow. “Tales about how the Brazilian embassy refused to help Brazilians in need of aid due to the coup in Chile are renowned. Later, Brazil helped directly in the repression, something confirmed over and over by those who were tortured by Brazilian soldiers at the Estadio Nacional.”\textsuperscript{77} At the time of Gabeira’s accusations, most of the official documents present in this article were classified.

The Brazilian government support of Allende’s overthrow was not a hidden matter; it went beyond secret meetings and was clear and well-known. In 1985, while Chile was still under Augusto Pinochet’s rule and Brazil had elected its first civilian president in more than 20 years, Nathaniel Davis published an insider’s account of the years before the Chilean coup.\textsuperscript{78} He was the United States’ ambassador in Santiago at the time and coined the expression “Brazil

\textsuperscript{71} SERL, telegram from April 06, 1972. DMP/600(20).
\textsuperscript{72} SERL, telegram from April 22, 1972. DBP/600(20).
\textsuperscript{73} Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, CIEX no 154/77, BRAN, BSB, IE 16.4, p. 1/52, 14/04/1977
\textsuperscript{74} Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, EMFA, “Consbras Montevideo para Secretaria Estado, Atividades Subversivas na Argentina, Chile, Paraguai, Bolivia e Uruguaia,” 7/04/1976.
"Connection” to explain Brazilian influence in the process. 79 The first branch of this operation, Davis argues, was the Brazilian entrepreneurs. 80 He evokes a series of oral testimonies, such as ambassador Edward M. Korry, who declared that “the actual technical and psychological support came from the military government of Brazil.” 81 The series of interviews published at the Washington Post with right-wing Brazilian think-tanks is also mentioned. One of them declares that “the private sector played a crucial role in the preparation of both interventions, and the Brazilian businessmen who plotted the overthrow of the left-leaning administration of President João Goulart in 1964 were the same people who advised the Chilean right on how to deal with Marxist President Allende.”82

The Chilean leftist press also denounced the links between Brazilian businessmen and the opposition to Allende. In November 1971, the newspaper Ultima Hora reported the visit of the former Brazilian Minister of Planning, Roberto Campos, the so-called “economic mind behind Brazilian dictatorship.” According to the publication, he was “silently in contact with the right-wing” and “the indicated person to establish high profile contacts between the Chilean and the Brazilian right.” 83 When describing the Brazilian government of the leftist paper article, Câmara Canto called it an “obviously distorted” piece, in which Campos’ relations with American capitalists and South American military were “accentuated.” 84

The second branch of the Brazilian support of the coup, according to Davis, was the Brazilian ambassador.

At lunch with me in late March 1973 he made a series of leading suggestions (which I turned aside), trying to draw me into cooperative planning, interembassy coordination, and joint efforts looking toward the Allende government’s demise. Later I noticed that the reminiscences of leading coup planners like

79 ibíd, pp. 331-333.
80 In 2012, the Brazilian Truth Commission announced that it would investigate the role of Brazilian businessmen in the Chilean coup d’état. Para más información ver, João Paulo Charleaux, “Comissão da Verdade deve investigar participação de brasileiros no golpe do Chile,” OperaMundi, 5/5/2012.
83 “Ingreso silenciosamente al país teorico de la dictadura brasileña toma contactos con la derecha,” Ultima Hora, 26/11/1971, p. 3.
84 SERL, telegram number 069743, from November 26, 1971. AIG/DSI/DBP/591.71(32).
General Arellano reflected a special tie of consideration for the Brazilian Ambassador, manifested even in the frenetic days before 11 September. All in all there is no real doubt in my mind that allegations of a Brazilian connection are true.85

In a telegram to the Brazilian government, Câmara Canto states that the only way to guarantee “democratic and free elections in Chile, on March 4, is the Army.”86 After the result of the March 1973 parliamentary elections, from which the Unidad Popular emerged victorious, Câmara Canto raised the hypothesis of fraud. On May 14, 1973, he wrote to the Brazilian government warning of the possibility of a civil war. He repeated the alert on June 11, referring also to a possible coup d’état.87 A month before the overthrow of Allende, he wrote that the situation in the country was calamitous. “There is no fuel, no buses, no trucks to transport all kinds of commodities, no conversation between the government and the opposition, in summary, no cabinet.”88 The economic crisis and the Chilean coup cannot be detached.89 The United States suspended lines of credit to Chile in 1972. Peter Kornbluh demonstrates how this and other American actions were fundamental to the overthrowing of Allende. Even the economic crisis and the lack of money for investments were related to U.S. officials’ maneuvers, according to the historian. As early as 1970, the White House acted to bar loans to Chile from the Inter-American Development Bank, and succeeded.90 The collaboration remained during the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship, even in terms of domestic policies. The case of the “Chicago Boys,” a group of economic advisors who had graduated from top-tier American universities, is one that, as the nickname states, was related to the U.S. way of thinking, but also echoed a nationalistic agenda, with domestic strategies of development.

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85 DAVIS, ob.cit., p. 332.
86 SERL, telegram number 011923, from February 2, 1973. DBP/600(B39)602.2(B39).
87 SERL, telegram from June 11, 1973. DAM-I/60X(B39)611.5(B39).
88 SERL, telegram from August 04, 1973. DAM-I/600(B39).
CONCLUSION

Less than a month after the coup d’état in Chile, when Gabriel García Márquez was still celebrating the popularity gained with the award of the Neustadt International Prize for Literature, the Colombian writer accused Brazil of being dangerous to all South American nations and charged the country with orchestrating the overthrow of Salvador Allende, in Chile, Juan José Torres, in Bolivia, and the dissolution of congress by Juan María Bordaberry, in Uruguay. García Márquez warned that Argentina would be the next victim of the Brazilian dictatorship, united with other imperialist forces.91 Although accusations from other prominent figures and international institutions reverberated right after the Chilean coup d’état, scholars did not look at the Brazilian influence on the overthrow of Allende. The lack of sources, only now declassified, may be the best explanation for the oblivion.

The recently declassified documents presented by the Brazilian Truth Commission show that García Márquez was right. The Brazilian influence went beyond its frontiers, arriving at other South Cone countries. They also attest that Brazilian cooperation with the Chilean dictatorship continued through many years of Augusto Pinochet’s regime. When the Soviet Union cancelled the dispatch of wheat to Chile, the United States opened a line of credit to allow the country to buy the commodity. A few days later, the Brazilian government donated a ship full of corn flour.92 The Brazilian military also sent weapons to the neighboring country, with the Brazilian coat of arms carefully erased, which demonstrates the preoccupation with hiding details of the support and, at the same time, the extension of such aid.93

On September 11, 1973, the day of the coup, Câmara Canto sent several telegrams to the Brazilian government celebrating the new regime. Counselor Tomas Amenabar Vergada, chief-of-staff of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Chile, went to the Brazilian consulate to communicate the new power organization.94 A month after the coup, an extensive report from CIEX narrated the return to “normality” in Chile. It stated that the schools were open, the police kept searching for weapons, nine people were “summarily shot” on September 30, another three were executed in Santiago at the same day, and

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93 Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, no 006/ FA-12-041, 17/1/1975.
94 SERL, telegram from September 13, 1973. DMP/600(B39)(571).
other six were shot in Iquique.\textsuperscript{95} For the military behind the Brazilian coup, this was “normal.”

Only four years after the Chilean coup, Brazilian officers announced the end of the resistance of the leftist groups. Now, they stated, the Armed Forces needed to implement the training of its personnel to resist the “anti-subversive upcoming struggle. Such orientation will require an enormous effort, since the Chilean military needed an entire new system of intelligence and specific training to confront urban guerrillas.”\textsuperscript{96} They continue, acknowledging the presence of the “Chicago Boys” in the government, a group “proposing conservative economic guidelines.” After the coup, Brazilian officials also kept track of Chilean exiles and their supposed attempts to remove Pinochet.\textsuperscript{97} This article sheds light on a small part of a great effort for influence and support, neglected for years—stored away in what Brazilians learned to call “the dictatorship basements,” a reference to the place in the house where secrets are hidden. Waiting almost forty years to see their own history revealed many accepted a pre-packed version of it. Memory blurred, the role of dictators faded. Understanding the actions of the government not only in the national sphere, but at the continental level, may provoke the resurrection of what has been forgiven and forgotten.

\textsuperscript{95} Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, CIEX no 487/73, BRAN, BSB, IE 11.3, p. 28/121, October 5, 1973.

\textsuperscript{96} Arquivo Nacional do Brasil, CIEX no 566/73, BRAN, BSB, IE 16.4, p. 1/52, April 14, 1977.

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