



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGE

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CHILEAN EXILE The Uncertainties of Return

by Claudio and Marcela Duran

"So, really human beings are made of flesh, soul and a passport" . . . (Chilean saying in exile)

On September 11, 1973, a military coup led by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, General Augusto Pinochet, overthrew President Salvador Allende. The level of violence that occurred as part of the military takeover was of a kind never before experienced by Chileans. The repression seemed to have no boundaries and no laws. Many thousands were executed, killed in confrontations, made to "disappear", sent to concentration camps and tortured. Almost everyone among Allende's supporters felt threatened.

It is not surprising, then, that thousands of Chileans filled nearly every embassy in the hope of protecting their lives, their freedom, or their families. In the few months following the coup, tens of thousands of Chileans left their homeland to become established in many different countries for (what they expected

to be) a short time.

Now, more than ten years later, these thousands continue to live in exile. Although the military regime has slowly started to reopen Chile's doors, only a small proportion have been allowed to return. Between 1982 and 1983, 3,000 individuals went back.

The increased possibility of being able to return, but low actual number of returnees, adds to the already strong tensions Chilean exiles feel about their future. From those tensions, a creative culture of exile has arisen, illustrated by the so-called "New Chilean Song" played by several folk groups and mainly by Quilapayun and Inti-Illimani (the former based in France and the latter in Italy) who have spent the last ten years playing and singing all over the world, including most of the big cities in Canada.

One of their songs, called "I Return", has become a sort of "exile anthem":

I return at last without humiliation,
not asking to be forgiven, but, not forgetting.

Man is never really vanquished:
his defeat is always brief;
it is a stimulus that moves
the vocation of his struggle.
For the land that sends him into exile
and the land that receives him in exile
will tell him that, after all,
he suffers the pains of all nations.

Chilean exiles also share a political commitment. Political participation has been high, consistent, well-organized and tied to political activities in Chile itself. However, their political participation and their culture of exile have complicated the difficulties of adjustment in the countries of reception.

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To Our Readers

We invite our readers to submit news items or information for publication in *Refuge*.

Letters

To the Editor

Please allow me to introduce myself to you: my name is G. William Rubagumya, an attorney in the state of Texas in the USA. I am originally from the country of Rwanda via the refugee camps of Uganda and I have been in the USA for the last 7 years. As you may have guessed, my concern is with the refugees that I left behind both in Uganda and other surrounding countries. Myself and other Rwandans in this country have formed a nonprofit organization, The Tutsi Relief Foundation Inc., whose main purpose is to aid in any way possible, but with primary emphasis on education and relocation of those who are able to adapt to the changed environment.

My purpose for writing is to introduce the organization to you and to solicit assistance in finding homes and educational aid for our youth who would otherwise be denied these basics of life by circumstances beyond their control. The Foundation is now attempting to secure scholarships from various schools.

I must say that the Canadian official who was in charge of the Embassy in Kampala acted with such concern in 1982 and we believe that his actions were the difference between life and death for many of our people, and Canada seems to be the only nation that is actively and genuinely interested in the Rwandese' issue. We commend you all and hope that the leadership there will retain that humanitarian touch in the future.

G. William Rubagumya
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To the Editor

We in the Immigration Section of the Canadian Embassy in Buenos Aires always read with great interest your periodical "Refuge". A substantial part of our own workload involves refugees and we are always keen to learn of refugee developments and issues around the world.

Given the usual excellence of your publication we were therefore surprised to note a significant error in the editorial comments which preceded the text of the address of the Canadian permanent mission in Geneva to the UNHCR Executive Committee.

The refugee report to which Ambassador Alan Beesley made reference was of course not written by the Agha Khan, but rather by his uncle, Prince Sadrudin, who was the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees before Poul Hartling assumed this responsibility.

This must surely be only one of many letters you will receive concerning this error, however while the Agha Khan has effected many worthwhile activities on his own, surely his uncle's beneficent activities should not be included among them.

Colleen L. Cupples
First Secretary and Consul
Canadian Embassy, Buenos Aires

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To the Editor

An unfortunate misunderstanding has arisen in the printing of my article on the Guatemalan refugee situation in Mexico (Dec. '83), as the result of some errors of fact and judgement made by the editors of *Refuge* and my own over-

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sight in not checking more carefully the edited copy sent to me. The misunderstanding is particularly evident in the commentary by Howard Adelman who in his attempt to compare my material with that of Jeremy Adelman presents a very different perspective to the reader from the one I had communicated in earlier exchanges.

The editors who left out important self-explanatory source references from my originally submitted account (presented at a seminar on the subject held at the York University Documentation Centre on Oct. 18/83) assumed incorrectly that my main source of information was COMAR, the official public Commission for Aid to Refugees. Having worked for many years in Latin America I should know what are reliable sources of information, particularly when it relates to such a sensitive and complex political issue as the refugee phenomenon in Mexico. As indicated in my original version and earlier correspondence with Howard, one of my principal sources of information was not a public source but a national vol-

untary body, i.e. the General Secretariat of the Mexican Coordinating Committee of Aid to the Guatemalan Refugees - sponsored by the National Council of Roman Catholic bishops. Their reports were based on an impressive ongoing documentation of refugees' personal testimonies, and a monitoring network of refugee movements. These were corroborated for their accuracy by data I obtained through my personal interviews with refugees and numerous front line Mexican volunteer workers in the settlement areas near the Guatemalan border, as well as research accounts and analysis from academic personnel at the National University of Mexico. I had no contact with the government affiliated COMAR.

In addition to the above, I wish to call attention to a judgement implied in the editor's commentary that I seem to be more concerned with the refugee flow into Mexico than the plight of the displaced indigenous population in Guatemala. My focus in the article on the Guatemala refugees within Mexico should not necessarily imply such an in-

ference. It is also implied that I somehow wanted to exonerate the official Mexican position toward refugees, which seems to be contrary to the spirit of the article. In assessing the total Mexican response to refugees from Central America one has to differentiate clearly between the official position placed within a precarious political, social and economic context and the generous response from Mexican voluntary organizations and private individuals in spite of the Mexican official position.

The editor is correct in pointing out that Mexico is still a non-signatory to the U.N. Convention on Refugees. Further enquiry, by Ottawa UNHCR officials with their Geneva head office, on my behalf, indicates that Mexico can be expected to become a signatory within the next 12 months. Negotiations are apparently going on at executive levels within the Ministry responsible for external affairs.

*Hubert Campfens
Faculty of Social Work
Wilfrid Laurier University*

Deportation of Guatemalans

Dear Friends:

The attached letter from the Minister of Employment & Immigration gives an encouraging answer to the concerns you and I have expressed.

It seems, though, that we ought to keep up our encouragement to the Minister to send no more Guatemalans back to Guatemala involuntarily.

*The Reverend Dan Heap, M.P.
House of Commons
OTTAWA, Ontario
K1A 0A6*

• • •

Dear Mr. Heap:

As I promised, in answer to your question in the House on December 14, I have examined the question of deportation to Guatemala to determine whether persons removed to Guatemala from Canada face any danger on their return. First of all, I would like to confirm that the numbers involved are smaller than

reported by voluntary groups. Only 14 Guatemalans have been removed from Canada this year. The 56 refugee claims rejected on first review so far in 1983 will not result in further removals for some time because of the protracted review and appeal procedures available to these claimants.

In Guatemala, the problems are well known. Unemployment is 40 percent and repression by official organizations and para-military groups has produced flagrant violations of human rights. Naturally, returning anyone involuntarily into this milieu is a very serious matter. Our record in this regard bears out our concern. Fully 75 percent of refugee claims from Guatemalans have been accepted this year on first review and an additional 8 percent of refusals were approved when examined on purely humanitarian grounds. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has acknowledged that, in our approach, we have not only fulfilled our legal obligations, but have exceeded

them. The question is, because of general danger, as is the case with El Salvador, should everyone be offered de facto protection regardless of the merit of his claim.

In this regard, the situation is not so clear. The picture of violence and of widespread economic dislocation argues in favour of this approach. On the other hand, reports from the area also suggest that apolitical people have nothing to fear on return if they have not spoken out or worked against the Guatemalan government.

To deal with this dilemma, I have ordered a full review of the immigration implications of the situation in Guatemala. In the meantime, I will ensure no further deportation orders are handed down. I expect to be able to report further by the end of January.

*John Roberts
Minister
Employment and Immigration Canada*

Chilean Exiles

Continued from p. 1

Ten years have elapsed since Pinochet's coup. Chilean children in exile have been born, grown into adolescents and into adults during this period. It is the children especially who experience a divided consciousness. Their concerns and experiences differ from those of their parents, adding another dimension to the tension.

To go back or not to go back; that is the question facing Chileans now; it is already a reality for Argentinian exiles. Chile does not yet offer the possibility of repatriation for many. But that opportunity is expected to come in the future. And the weight of the impending decision hangs heavy in the air in many homes.

How does a family organize the process of "going back home"? What do parents tell children who have accompanied them through exile? The parents may want to go home, but the children have adjusted to the countries of reception.

Jaun Pablo Letelier in an interview with *Hoy* Newsmagazine stated, "Exile is different for every member of the family, particularly for the younger ones or the ones who were born outside Chile — for these are the ones more under the direct influence of their parents. Some young people feel that they have to pay for something their parents did and they show their resentment. In our family, we remained very close to each other and this bond grew when our father was murdered. But we are by no means a typical example. Exile has accentuated a diaspora of brothers, parents and their children. This is perhaps one of the subtleties hidden in the sorrow of exile: the annihilation of family groups, the separation and (sometimes) the destruction of families."

Reactions among youngsters of families who have already returned differ among teenagers who are the children of former political leaders and those youngsters who feel alienated from the "Chile" experience. A grandchild of Salvador Allende and the sons of Orlando Letelier (the former Chilean Ambassador to the United States who was assassinated in Washington, D.C. in 1976 by the Chilean Secret Police) all feel a moral commitment to live in Chile. As children of exiles, many of

CHILEAN EXILES

Venezuela	80,000
Spain	18,000
France	15,000
Canada	12,000
Italy	12,000
Sweden	9,916
Australia	9,000
Argentina	5,000
West Germany	2,500
Switzerland	2,500
Belgium	2,000
United States	2,000
East Germany	1,500
Holland	1,032
Austria	1,000
Denmark	800
Norway	700
Bulgaria	600
Algiers	500
Mozambique	500
Romania	500
New Zealand	500
United Kingdom	450
Hungary	300
Yugoslavia	300
Soviet Union	250
Luxembourg	120
Panama	100
Czechoslovakia	100
Poland	100
TOTAL	179,268*

*These figures were assembled by a team of journalists of the independent Chilean weekly newsmagazine, *Hoy*. Some countries with a high number of exiles, such as Cuba, Ecuador, Finland and Mexico, are missing from this list. We have been unable to obtain figures for these countries. Further, the figures gathered by *Hoy* do not include Chileans who have emigrated as a consequence of the military regime but mainly for economic reasons.

them had to learn to soothe the wounds inside their families.

In the ten years of Chilean exile, the scars of the past have left wounds that are now surfacing in adolescent neurosis, school failure, etc. There are innumerable cases of fear-ridden and distraught children — images of soldiers threatening or punishing their parents in front of them haunt their memories. Other children feel insecure as they see their unsettled parents longing for the distant land which the children can no longer remember nor understand.

What will *return* signify for all these young people? It is difficult to predict. For some, it may mean the very real possibility of putting the missing pieces of the puzzle of their lives together; this may bring them peace. For others, the older ones, it may allow the opportunity of finally making very real personal decisions in terms of living in the land of their choice. The decisions that these young people must make add to the tension experienced by Chilean exiles.

To return or not to return. Will we be given permission? When? Will our children want to come? Will they come? Will they stay? Will they be happy in Chile? Will we?

Claudio and Marcela Duran are Chilean exiles living in Toronto. Claudio is a professor of philosophy at York University and Marcela works for the North York Board of Education.

UNHCR Appointment

The Branch Office in Canada of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees takes pleasure in announcing the appointment, effective January 15, 1984, of Miss Nanda Na Champassak as officer in charge of information and public relations.