

Latin American Perspectives

<http://lap.sagepub.com>

Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in Latin America

Luis Roniger and James N. Green
Latin American Perspectives 2007; 34; 3
DOI: 10.1177/0094582X07302890

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://lap.sagepub.com>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:

[Latin American Perspectives, Inc.](#)

Additional services and information for *Latin American Perspectives* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://lap.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://lap.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Introduction

Exile and the Politics of Exclusion in Latin America

by

Luis Roniger and James N. Green

Political exile, a major political practice in all Latin American countries throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is still an underresearched topic. While ubiquitous and fascinating, until recently it has been conceived as somewhat marginal to the development of these societies and has been studied in the framework of traditional concepts and concerns in history and the social sciences. Accordingly, one can find numerous biographical monographs that mention exile as a formative political experience, from notorious cases such as those of Bolívar or Perón to those of less renowned individuals whose aggregate testimonies build up a collective story of communities of exiles and expatriates. Not surprisingly, the early testimonial literature on the recent wave of political exiles documented the experiences of Brazilians who were forced to leave their country in the aftermath of the 1964 coup d'état (Cavalcanti and Ramos, 1976) and marked a trend that was to persist for the next two decades. The number of such biographies and testimonies has burgeoned in the past generation and includes such insightful works as Oliveira Costa et al. (1980), Gómez (1999), Rollemberg (1999), Ulanovsky (2001), Guelar, Jarach, and Ruiz (2002), Trigo (2003), Bernetti and Giardinelli (2003), and Roca (2005). These biographical accounts and testimonies of exiles and expatriates contribute important building blocks toward a reconstruction of the collective experience of exile. They also point to the ubiquity and profound impact of the phenomenon, which resulted from political exclusion and persecution by the military dictatorships of the 1960s to 1980s. And yet most of these testimonies do not provide a systematic analysis of the role of exile in Latin American politics and societies and do little to explain the recurrence of exile and its transformations over time.

At the same time, recent years have witnessed the proliferation of literary analysis and criticism focusing on the universal meaning of the experience of exile, both imposed and self-imposed. This literature is mainly anchored in twentieth-century writings reflecting the pronounced impact of the political repression and military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s (Da Cunha-Giabbai,

Luis Roniger is Reynolds Professor of Latin American Studies at Wake Forest University. A comparative political sociologist, he is the author of numerous articles and nine books, among them (with Mario Sznajder) *The Legacy of Human-Rights Violations in the Southern Cone* (1999), which has also been published in Portuguese and Spanish. James N. Green is an associate professor of Brazilian history and culture and the director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Brown University. He is the author of *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (1999) and *"We Cannot Remain Silent": Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (in press). The collective thanks them for organizing this issue.

LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES, Issue 155, Vol. 34 No. 4, July 2007 3-6

DOI: 10.1177/0094582X07302890

© 2007 Latin American Perspectives

1992; Vázquez and Xavier de Brito, 1993; Rowe and Whitfield, 1997; Queiroz, 1998; Lagos-Pope, 1999; Naficy, 1999; Kaminsky, 1999; González, 2000). On the bright side, these works often provide in-depth theoretical hindsight on the existential experience of marginalization and the tensions it creates, especially for writers rooted in the language of communities that were silenced by repression and underwent processes of cultural transformation in which the exiles played only a tangential part while abroad. Most works in this line are, however, strongly permeated by cultural criticism, multiculturalism, and postmodernist emphases and have had less to contribute to the study of the impact and roles of exile in Latin American politics.

It is our claim that exile has played a vital part in shaping the forms and styles of Latin American politics. The recurrent use of exile reflects an ongoing challenge to the region's incomplete and exclusionary nation-states. Moreover, following recent developments in history, sociology, anthropology, and political science that highlight the centrality of diasporas and transnational studies, of transience and relocation, we suggest that the study of Latin American exile can become a topic of central concern, closely related to basic theoretical problems and controversies in these disciplines. Its systematic study also promises to lead to new readings of history and society in Latin America, away from the traditional readings of national histories and toward more regional, transnational, or even continental perspectives.

The study of exile highlights an ongoing tension between the principle of national membership and the principle of citizenship. Once pushed into exile, people may lose the entitlements attached to citizenship but at the same time may become even more attached than before to what is perceived as the "national soul." A latent dimension of collective identity that is often submerged in citizenship is necessarily recognized while in exile. Surprisingly, it is abroad that many of these nationals discover, rediscover, or invent their countries' "collective souls." After periods of crisis that produce a significant number of exiles, fascinating debates are generated between those who have stayed in the home country and those who have moved abroad over the components of national collective identity. Concurrently, new bonds have been forged with exiles from "sister-nations," reinforcing a dynamics of shared recognition and identification of shared problems and interests in the inter-American system. Exiles, hoping to return someday to their home country, often attempt to define the terms of collective identity in novel ways. In many instances, exile seems to have played an important role in Latin America in defining or redefining both national and pan-Latin American identity.

At the same time, though the exiles may claim that they are the true representatives of the people while abroad, they interact in a new environment, exposed to fellow exiles from other countries and confronting new models of social engineering that transform them whether they like it or not. This poses for exiles a major dilemma at the personal, psychological, familial, and collective level: how to relate to the host society and how to become part of it beyond the instrumental level of everyday life, how to develop hybrid identities and commitments. Moreover, if they settle in what they perceive as a more developed, organized, or cultured environment, they face this dilemma more poignantly. Their experience in exile challenges them to reconsider the ideals they came with and their notions of both the host country and the homeland

that they left behind. A profound process of redefinition of cultural and political assumptions thus takes place that is crucial for an understanding of later transformations in these countries.

The readings in this issue suggest that political exile is both the result of political processes and a constitutive factor of political systems. Resulting from political persecution that stops short of annihilation of the opposition, exile speaks of an authoritarian pattern of politics built upon exclusion and a winner-takes-all competition. While resulting from such forms of political competition, its recurrent use has contributed to reinforcing the exclusionary rules of the political game in Latin America. The study of exile requires a nuanced reading of context and history. Political exile is dynamic, hinging on political action and evolving parallel to processes of political institutionalization and deinstitutionalization and to the reformulation of political ground rules.

There is not one exile but many, and yet there are trends and patterns that the contributions that follow analyze from various disciplinary vantage points. Adopting a macrohistorical approach that combines institutional and network perspectives, Sznajder and Roniger attempt a reconstruction of the emergence of the modern political exile out of colonial forms of translocation, mostly for administrative and social purposes. Political analysis guides Wright and Oñate's comprehensive study of the Chilean diaspora during the last dictatorship and its role in the reconstruction of the Chilean political map with democratization. Franco and Yankelevich analyze the meeting point of social and political networks in tracing the experience and dilemmas of Argentine exiles in France and Mexico, respectively. Finally, Rollemberg examines the reconstruction of the identities of Brazilian exiles during the 21-year-long military dictatorship in that country.

The contributors touch upon some of the most central aspects of the topic: the relations between exiles, refugees, and diasporas; loss and change of identity; exile, social class, and status; the dynamics of communities of exiles; aliens, alienation, and adaptation; women in exile; political activism abroad; reception policies and processes of integration; support networks and personal motivations; the second generation; and redemocratization and return. Their work involves bridging the study of politics with the analysis of personal and collective identities, immigration and transstate phenomena, multiculturalism, international networks, and diplomatic relations. They do not claim to have provided an exhaustive reading of political exile in its many forms in Latin America, but they offer some innovative glimpses of this fascinating phenomenon. It is our hope that by bringing together these contributions in a special issue we can suggest the importance of systemic analyses of the role and impact of elite and mass translocation on the political openings, democratization, and incorporation of new ideas and projects that accompany the transformation of Latin American societies and politics.

REFERENCES

- Bernetti, Jorge Luis and Mempo Giardinelli
 2003 *México: El exilio que hemos vivido*. Quilmes: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Quilmes.

- Cavalcanti, Pedro Celso Uchôa and Jovelino Ramos
1976 *Memórias do exílio: Brasil 1964/19??*. São Paulo: Editora Livraria Livramento.
- Costa, Albertina de Oliveira, et al.
1980 *Memórias das mulheres do exílio: Obra coletiva*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Da Cunha-Giabbai, Gloria de
1992 *El exilio: Realidad y ficción*. Montevideo: Arca.
- Guelar, Diana, Vera Jarach, and Beatriz Ruiz
2002 *Los chicos del exilio: Argentina (1975–1984)*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones el País de Nomeolvides.
- Gómez, Albino
1999 *Exilios (Por qué volvieron)*. Rosario: Homo Sapiens Ediciones.
- González, Mike
2000 "Exile," pp. 539–540 in Daniel Balderston, Mike González, and Ana M. López (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Latin American and Caribbean Cultures*, vol. 2. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kaminsky, Amy K.
1999 *After Exile: Writing the Latin American Diaspora*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lagos-Pope, María-Inés
1999 "Testimonies from exile: works by Hernán Valdés, Eduardo Galeano, and David Viñas," in María-Inés Lagos-Pope (ed.), *Exile in Literature*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Naficy, Hamid (ed.)
1999 *Home, Exile, Homeland*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Queiroz, Maria José de
1998 *Os males da ausência ou a literatura do exílio*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks.
- Roca, Pilar
2005 *Ismael Viñas: Ideografía de un mestizo*. Buenos Aires: Dunken.
- Rolleberg, Denise
1999 *Exílio: Entre raízes e radares*. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- Rowe, William and Teresa Whitfield
1997 "Thresholds of identity: literature and exile in Latin America." *Third World Quarterly* 9: 232–255.
- Trigo, Abril
2003 *Memorias migrantes: Testimonios y ensayos sobre la diáspora uruguaya*. Buenos Aires and Montevideo: Beatriz Viterbo Editora and Ediciones Trilce.
- Ulanovsky, Carlos
2001 *Seamos felices mientras estamos aquí*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana.
- Vázquez, Ana and Angela Xavier de Brito
1993 "La situation de l'exilé: essai de généralisation fondé sur l'exemple de réfugiés latino-américains." *Intercultures* 21: 51–66.