

Chileans in Canada: Contexts of Departure and Arrival

Prepared by Wei Wei Da for the Latin American Research Group

2002

I. Context of Departure

a. Numbers of incoming population, time period or waves 2

The First Wave: 1973 – 1978 2

The Second Wave: 1979- 1982 2

The Third Wave: 1987-199 2

Characteristics 3

b. State policy that Contribute to Displacement 4

Political instability 5

Fraction within Political Parties 5

Economic Factors 5

Neoliberal Adjustment Policy 6

Monetary Devaluation 6

External Debt. 6

II. Context of Arrival 7

a. Canadian State Policies 7

Major federal policy shifts related to Chileans in Canada 7

Media 8

b. Civil Society Reception 8

Existing Institutional Resources and Services 8

Ethnic-specific organizations 10

References 11

Tables

Table 1. Refugee Claimants from Chile by sex, 1989-2002.	3
Table 2. Refugee Claimants from Chile by age group, 1989-2002	4
Table 3. Refugee Claimants from Chile by marital status, 1989-2002.	4
Table 4. Destination of Chilean immigrants, 1973-92.	8
Table 5. Distribution of Chileans by province, 1981, 1986, 1991.	9
Table 6. Chileans by community council areas and citizenship in GTA, 1996 census	9

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I. Context of Departure

a. Numbers of incoming population, time period or waves

Before 1973, there was a small number of Chileans who had left the country for the US, Australia and European countries as well as Canada. According to Landolt (1993: 34), a total of 894 came to Canada.

Large flows of Chileans to Canada started in 1973 when Chileans were classified as one of migrant groups to Canada. Chileans migration to Canada is generally recognized to have taken place in three waves.

The First Wave: 1973 – 1978

The first wave of Chileans to Canada took place from the late 1973 to 1978, during which a total of 8,302 Chileans fled from their country and come to Canada for refuge according to Statistics Canada, specifically, there were 493 in 1973, 1,593 in 1974, 2,297 in 1975, 2,082 in 1976 and 1,546 in 1977. Among them, more than two thousands were “legal” refugees according to the definition set by the Canadian government. According to Landolt (1993: 30), for example, Canada had accepted 3400 refugees directly from Chile by the mid of 1975. Another source, Magocsi (1999: 3555), estimates that more than 10,000 Chileans became permanent residents during the period of 1974 and 1978, that is, 2,104 in 1974, 3,127 in 1975, 2,776 in 1976, 2,249 in 1977 and 2,023 in 1978. There were also a considerable number of Chileans who were admitted to Canada under special programs because of repression and economic hardship by the new policies adopted by the military regime in Chile; there were also refugees who came from first refuge countries like Mexico, Argentina, Honduras and Panama because they could not find employment. For example, Canada processed 2500 applications in Argentina in 1975 (Duran, 1980; Landolt, 1993). In general there is lack of precise figures of Chileans’ arrival in Canada. Acceptance rate of Chilean refugee claimants was only 10% during the first wave, while the withdrawal rate was 15% (Landolt, 1993).

The Second Wave: 1979- 1982

The second wave took place during the period of 1979-1982. During the period, Chileans continued to come to Canada for settlement with an annual average number of migrants 1,170, which was substantially reduced when compared with the previous wave.

The Third Wave: 1987-1992.

The third wave appeared during the period of 1987 to 1992 based on the statistical figures. According to Magocsi (1999: 349-350), the arrival of Chileans to Canada continued from 1982-1986 with an annual average number of Chilean immigrants of only 663. But the number of Chilean arrivals during the period of 1987 to 1992 was doubled,

although it fluctuated, with an annual average of Chilean immigrants 1,298. Based on the data on the entry to Canada, the arrival of Chileans under the landed migrants, refugee claimants and refugee classes in the 1980s reached its zenith.

In general precise figures of Chileans to Canada are not available, as each source is different from another due to different terms and definitions used in data collection. For example, some of them used the term of “ethnic identity”, some used “country of origin”, or “country of the last permanent resident”.

In addition, the reduction of numbers of Chileans to Canada may not reflect the numbers of Chileans who wanted to come to Canada, rather they are depended on the Canadian immigration policy which tended to be more strict with refugee claimants on the whole (Magocsi, 1999).

Characteristics

There are some characteristics among Chileans who came during different period of time. Generally, a significant portion of migrants who arrived for political refuge characterized the first wave. They either came from Chile directly, or came through a third country. There is little information about their gender, ages and race distribution.

The second and third waves were demographically quite different from the first. The numbers of people fleeing Chile to Canada were relatively small, and most of them were youth or chronically unemployed young people. Networks with relatives or friends who fled in the 1970s provided better communication and transportation and made the process of fleeing and settlement not as harsh as for those who fled in the first wave. There were also many Chileans who left their country for Canada during 1980s due to economic reasons (Magocsi, 1999; Landolt, 1993).

Table 1. Refugee Claimants from Chile by sex, 1989-2002.

Year	Male	Female
1989	77	56
1990	116	75
1991	127	113
1992	107	82
1993	56	44
1994	55	33
1995	941	696
1996	1513	1112
1997	33	20
1998	26	19
1999	41	32
2000	43	35
2001	51	57
2002	35	30

Source: Figures are provided by Sambia Elmagraby, Section on Refugees, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa.

Table 2. Refugee Claimants from Chile by age group, 1989-2002

Year	0-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-65
1989	0	8	9	3	10	21	32	17	16	6	5
1990	4	13	5	5	14	25	50	22	18	11	11
1991	2	11	11	15	25	35	45	32	23	13	17
1992	9	7	10	9	23	32	25	31	11	11	4
1993	5	5	4	10	14	15	13	9	10	3	3
1994	5	4	2	8	18	8	17	8	7	4	2
1995	258	138	90	139	263	274	206	127	64	34	15
1996	480	180	116	295	454	459	330	162	92	26	15
1997	7	2	3	8	6	5	3	4	4	1	4
1998	7	4	2	6	5	8	6	2	3	2	0
1999	15	8	3	2	8	19	8	2	0	2	4
2000	12	5	6	8	11	9	10	10	2	1	2
2001	18	6	8	11	16	22	11	11	2	1	1
2002	10	7	6	5	4	12	9	7	1	3	1

Source: Figures are provided by Sambia Elmagraby, Statistics on Refugees, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa

Table 3. Refugee Claimants from Chile by marital status, 1989-2002.

Year	Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced	Separated	
1989		47	78	1	2	3
1990		70	97	4	1	10
1991		82	135	5	6	9
1992		68	102	4	4	11
1993		42	48	2	2	5
1994		38	43	1	2	3
1995		805	707	15	19	45
1996		1248	1196	15	22	64
1997		25	16	4	0	3
1998		21	15	0	1	1
1999		31	25	1	1	2
2000		35	23	2	1	6
2001		52	39	1	3	11
2002		35	22	0	2	6

Source: Figures are provided by Sambia Elmagraby, Statistics on Refugees, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa

b. State policy that Contribute to Displacement

Historically, democratic governments had mostly dominated Chile, since its independence from Spanish colonial in 1818 and the establishment of the Republic of Chile, and it had been peaceful compared with other Caribbean countries till 1973, except

two wars with Peru and Bolivia during the 19th century, and a brief civil war in 1891. Chileans have no tradition of immigration to foreign countries in its previous history. Even by the end of 1960s, there were little reasons for a large scale of emigration from Chile to other countries. Instead, Chile had attracted many immigrants from European, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries apart from other Latin American countries.

Social context that triggered the large flows of Chileans is considered several.

Political instability.

One of the critical factors is marked by the 1973 military coup headed by Pinochet. The military coup overthrew a three-year-old Marxist government, and it took the major responsibility for the first wave of Chileans to exile from their country. Several key institutions frame the policies and actions of the Pinochet regime. The establishment of the DINA (1974 – 1978), a professional and technical intelligence unit directly accountable to the junta detained, tortured and kidnapped the regime's opposition. The junta was responsible for ceaseless political assassination, kidnappings, detention, torture and brutal killings of thousands of civilians after the military coup. The Pinochet regime's human rights violations have been condemned nationally and internationally.

The decade leading up to the coup is marked by rapid and complex social and political changes. The Christian Democratic Party (PDC), under the leadership and presidency of Eduardo Frei (1964-1970) proposed a reform called "Revolution in Liberty", which prompted changes and internal fissures within the PDC. On March 4, 1970, socialist Salvador Allende was elected to office under a coalition government, the Unidad Popular (UP). Chile became the first country in the world to have a Marxist-Leninist government based on free selection. Two factors contributed to the political dynamics: mobilization of previously unorganized popular sectors in the countryside; and the closely related erosion of Chile's centrist political parties. Allende implemented a series of economic reforms, involving income redistribution, expansion of government programmes and services, state control of key industries, and extension of land reform. Many Chileans considered this reform as the first step towards communism.

Fraction within Political Parties

The fraction within the Christian Democratic Party (one of the three major parties based on the constitution), and social polarization were also critical to the crisis by the military coup.

International influences are also contributing factor to the military coup. The US launched a major campaign against Chile's then-government. They forced the World Bank and many other banks to reduce the aids and credit for Chile, and suspended diplomatic relations, cutting military aid and the like. The Canadian government also provided financial aid to Pinochet's government after the coup.

Economic Factors

After the coup, Pinochet's military regime adopted a new economic structure based on the neo-conservative principles of free market, privatization and private property; they

also lifted the state subsidies and the protective tariffs. As a consequence of all these changes in economic system, poverty and unemployment rates rose dramatically. The result was an economic recession from 1975 to 1982.

During Pinochet's military dictatorship, human rights violations soared to their highest level during the 1980s. Political assassination, killings, kidnapping and disappearance were faced by everyone or constantly present. Public demonstration from 1983 to 1984, and the resulting declaration of a state of siege by Pinochet on November 6, 1984 led to more than 200,000 arrested, 500 cases of internal exile, 800 persons injured and 550 killed. This period of widesweeping repression also forced hundreds of Chileans to seek refuge in foreign countries.

Neoliberal Adjustment Policy

After Pinochet was out of office, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin was elected and his coalition government took office in 1990. Yet, since a number of senators had been appointed by the outgoing military regime, Aylwin's effort to reform the constitution failed. The Pinochet regime's influence on government policy continued. In 1993, Eduardo Frei won the election, and promise to establish civilian control over the government apparatus, but he did not enjoy the votes in the congress. In October 1997, Frei selected the army chief recommended by Pinochet. Frei's government hardly was unable to get rid of Pinochet's influences to implement constitutional reforms. In 2000, socialist Ricardo Lagos won the election, but his government was still hampered by the opposition of a group of senators who were left over from the Pinochet period.

Chileans are now still experiencing a relatively high rate of unemployment (0.1% in 2001), inflation (3.5% in 2001), and government corruption. About 22% of the total population lived under poverty line in 2001. The constitutional reform has a long way to go. For example, a figure provided by Statistics Canada showed that the numbers of refugee claimants from Chile in Canada had increased significantly, from 100 in 1993 and 88 in 1994, it had jumped to 1,637 in 1995 and 2,625 in 1996. The increase is association with the general socio-political and economic situation in Chile.

Monetary Devaluation

Monetary devaluation has been apparently increasing each year form US\$1 – CLP419.30 in 1997 to US\$1 – CLP651.90 in 2002.

External Debt.

Chile also has a higher *external debt* with \$39.6 billion in 2001.

Environmental problems have been concerned with widespread deforestation and mining which threaten natural resources; air pollution from industrial and vehicle emissions, as well as water pollution from raw sewage all undermine social environment and public health.

In 1996, there were about 2,824 refugee claimants from Chile in Canada, which led Chile to be one of the leading source countries for refugee claimants in Canada.

II. Context of Arrival

a. Canadian State Policies

Major federal policy shifts related to Chileans in Canada

Canada shifted its policy towards Chileans a few months after the military coup. A program 1973-Operation-Chile was launched which granted Chileans the right to emigrate to Canada under relaxed criteria.

The acceptance rate was only 10% by March 1974, while 11,000 applications were received in total, and 15% were withdrawn (Landolt, 1993).

Canada did not recognise Chileans legitimate claims to asylum immediately following the coup. It took three months of lobbying and pressure for the policy change. The reasons are in two fold: ideological differences leading to hostility towards Allende's socialist regime, and Canada's allegiance to the US. In the same month of the coup, Canada approved \$5 million in credit to Chile. The Canadian government changed its position on Chile and its political crisis largely as a result of pressures for various non-government movements at that time.

Many NGO organizations staged to support for Allende's government and for the refugees after the coup, such as,

- The Association of Universities and colleges announced C-government to aid Chilean students;
- Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) urged the government to withhold credit and aid to Chile
- Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) presented a report of its Mission of Enquiry, which revealed the brutality of Pinochet's dictation; CCC played an important role at this aspect. CCC was one of the first NGO to establish contact with Chile.
- OXFAM-Canada financed projects in Chile.

Acceptance Rate.

According to Statistics Canada, the acceptance rate of refugee claimants from Chile was 18% in 1999, 24% in 2000, 35% in 2001 and 28% in 2002.

3. Programs in refugee camps.

See the section in part I.

4. Number of visa office and staff in country/regions

There is only one Canadian visa office located in Santiago, the capital of the country. The Visa Section provided services for immigrants, visitors, workers, and students and was

responsible for applications from Chile. Information about staffing in the Visa sections is not available from public resource.

Media

Ethnic media

A total of six kinds of newspapers are found to serve for Spanish-speaking migrants in Toronto in general. No newspapers are found targeting specific migrant groups by country of origin. See the detailed information about these newspapers in section ?).

Chile Canada Solidarity Newsletter began publication in Toronto in 1973 and ceased in 1974. Ottawa: National Library of Canada

b. Civil Society Reception

Existing Institutional Resources and Services

Toronto Hispanic Council in Toronto

1. Ethno-specific Resources

a. Residential concentration.

Majority of Chileans resettled in Quebec, Ontario and Alberta (see Table 1 & 2, Magocsi, 1999, p. 350).

Table 4. Destination of Chilean immigrants, 1973-92.

	Number	%
Quebec	7,910	32.7
Ontario	8,895	36.7
Manitoba	1,357	5.6
Saskatchewan	745	3.1
Alberta	3,650	15.1
British Columbia	1,538	6.3
Other parts of Canada	113	0.5
Total	24,208	100.0

Table 5. Distribution of Chileans by province, 1981, 1986, 1991.

	1981		1986		1991	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Quebec	1,735	30.4	3,185	39.5	4,640	36.3
Ontario	1,070	18.7	1,555	19.3	3,640	28.4
Manitoba	780	13.6	420	5.2	695	5.4
Saskatchewan	175	3.2	445	5.5	595	4.6
Alberta	1,415	24.8	1,900	23.5	2,125	16.7
British Columbia	505	8.8	495	6.1	1,060	8.3
Other parts of Canada	20	0.5	70	0.9	40	0.3
Total	5,710	100.0	8,070	100.0	12,795	100.0

Sources: Statistic Canada, 1981 Census, Ethnic Origins; Population and Dwelling Characteristics (1989); 1991 Census, Ethnic Origin

Note: The total number of Chileans living in each province is not available because it is based on ethnic origin.

Table 6. Chileans by community council areas and citizenship in GTA, 1996 census

By Community Council Areas	Population
Scarborough	495
Toronto	1,240
East York	90
North York	1,505
York	610
Etobicoke	1,350
Total	5,290

Source: Social Development and Management Services Division. 1998. Toronto, Census 1996 – Summary report #3. Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services Department.

b. Business “enclave” – as employers and as suppliers of ethnic goods
Information has not been found yet.

c. Co-national presence and co-linguistic or other constructions of co-ethnic.
Information is not found yet.

d. Ethnic-specific education

- Toronto Chilean Association existed, which created special programs oriented to maintaining Chilean history and literature. The Toronto school existed from the late 1970 to early 1980s.
- A small school was established in Regina

e. Religious institutions

In Toronto, Scarborough Christian Community mainly consisted of Chileans was established in 1976 and ended in 1980 because of its members moving out of the area. It offered a place for meditation and social action for Christian children.

f. Other indicators of institutional completeness

Ethnic-specific organizations

Chilean Canadians created a variety of organizations along political, religious, artistic, sport, and gender lines. Most of them were Canadian branches of Chilean left-wing political parties. Their main activities are to mobilize individuals to against military regime in Chile. For example,

- Asociaion de profesionales, tecnicos y artistas chilenos del Quebec (PROTACH), which was set up in 1990 and has brought together a large number of Chilean professionals, technicians and artists in Quebec.
- Chileans also help OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants) establish several organizations such as, Working Skills Centre; New Experiences for Migrant Women; Kitchener YWCA Multicultural Centre
- Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan
- Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies in which they serve as directors

Political institutions (Magocsi, 1999, p. 354)

- Toronto Chilean Association
- Association de Chileans de Montreal, 1973-1980
- Chile Committee and the Chilean Association in Regina
- Council Chilien de Quebec, 1990-93

Housing Coops in Toronto, more information required on co-operatives

Arauco housing cooperative

http://www.coophousing.com/app/coop_homepage.asp?coop_id=399

Arcadia housing coop? Uncertain background

http://www.coophousing.com/app/coop_homepage.asp?coop_id=400

Atahualpa Cooperative Homes

http://www.coophousing.com/app/coop_homepage.asp?coop_id=368

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