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Review/Reseña

James N. Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010.

Towards a History of Opposition to U.S. Foreign Policy in Latin America

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James Green has provided readers with an invaluable history of opposition to military dictatorship in Brazil beginning in the 1960s. His account remains timely as somewhat parallel events are occurring in the Middle East where civil-military regimes attempt to maintain their long history of control over democratic impulses and protests are staged in the U.S. Green is an historian at Brown University where he served as director of the Latin American Studies Program. He also served as one of the first presidents of the Brazilian Studies Association. These activities slowed the appearance of

this long-awaited volume but allowed Green opportunities to refine his narration through conferences and seminars that drew participants in the drama that the book presents, including former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Brazilian activist Marcos Arruda, and other witnesses to history.

The consequence of years of interviewing and collection of data in the United States and Brazil is a volume that is well written, generous in spirit, and clear. Green was drawn into the movement in the United States to oppose Brazilian military rule as a recent college graduate living in a commune of eight young radical Quakers in Philadelphia. They formed a study group on Latin America and only gradually became aware of the increasing military shroud that would envelop most of the elected governments of Latin America The book is a record of growing consciousness that something most harmful to democracy and its advocates was occurring in Latin America in the latter third of the twentieth century. More, it is a testament to individuals and to activism for human rights that was transnational and courageous in many attempts to foster justice solutions in varying and ingenious forms.

Green's account recalls how difficult it was for Americans—and Latin Americans, for that matter—to know what was taking place in chaotic political conditions. Awareness of threats to democracy in Latin America was obscured by the complexity of the foreign and domestic situation in the U.S. at that time. Involvement by large numbers of conscripts in highly costly and losing wars in Southeast Asia distracted the American public from paying attention to other parts of the world. Further, the great struggles of the civil rights movement were also on center stage. As for the rest of the world, a wide consensus existed that communism and its allies must be defeated. While the American public, by and large accepted that as a given, the formation and implementation of foreign policy was largely hidden from public view by civilian and military leaders determined to protect American national interests. They were determined to attack at whatever cost perceived threats. In Latin America, Guatemalan rightist governments had to be saved by U.S. intervention in 1954 and propped up by military training, equipment, and intelligence, resulting in the loss of life by thousands and a very late near-apology by President Clinton. In the change in Cuba in the 1960s to a Marxist

regime, Fidel Castro did away with the existing army, convincing the militaries of Latin America and the United States that both democracy and the standing militaries would be abolished. Along with ideological threats, professional militaries saw that they would be disbanded and their livelihoods destroyed. They would fight like tigers to maintain their own interests.

Green describes well the situation in Brazil but fails to describe adequately the larger context. The region was beset by contentious politics, some guerrilla movements and authoritarian civil-military regimes. The militaries of Latin America had created in secret a doctrine of national security. Wary of what was perceived as widespread Marxism among some politicians and among many students and workers, the Brazilian military reached the tipping point toward military intervention in society in 1964. The nation suffered from inept and chaotic government leadership, soaring inflation, and generalized unrest. At the same time, Cuba was being monitored by many in the region. In the second year of the Fidel Castro's regime, he declared that the Cuban revolution was Marxist-Leninist. Was this the first of several countries to go in that direction? Cuba was intent on fostering a similar revolution throughout Latin America. Castro also dismantled the standing Cuban military and replaced it with Cubans loyal to him. To professionalize these recruits, Russian and East Europeans acted as trainers,

Military leaders in other countries reacted strongly but mostly covertly by preparing a counter strategy to the perceived spread of communism. They created their own military think tanks, as in Brazil, Peru and Chile. Military planners concluded that national security was the highest goal of a country and that a posture of perpetual readiness for warfare against communism was needed. This doctrine was communicated to officer and lower ranks through military training schools. Secret military agents kept records of what was seen as subversive activity in society, often erroneous in their characterizations. Latin America's military was then much more cloistered from mainline society with no ROTC or other civilian leavening that might have moderated its absolutist, authoritarian ways of viewing society and politics. Open political debate and critical thought were not encouraged. When Brazil, along with Bolivia (unmentioned by Green), became the first militaries to take over elected governments in the southern part of Latin America, secrecy and

fragmentation of society were the order of the day. The United States at this time provided large amounts of military assistance and development aid to Brazil.

Green's long account is thus, in part, a history of discovery of the truth of what was taking place, who and what organizations were prominent in that effort, and what reactions occurred on the part of the U.S. and Brazilian governments. He describes the opposition effort as a cluster of academics, clerics, Brazilian exiles, and political activists. Their aims, he writes, were to educate the American public and to mobilize opposition to the dictatorship. This was not a focused and very effective opposition. That would not occur after the Chilean military takeover in 1973. The target of opposition then was American foreign policy, as key senators immediately sprung into action to challenge foreign policy that encouraged military dictatorships and that turned a blind eye to systematic torture. Green describes activism against Brazil's military as an effort that made human rights violations in Brazil the basis for all similar future work related to Latin America that was carried out in the United States. This reviewer does not agree with that statement. The organizing at that time against Brazil's military did precede similar organizing at a later date but did not precede the organizing that was simultaneous against Bolivia's repressive military. (A full account is yet to be written about opposition to the Bolivian military dictatorship. Such a historical account, for example, would recount the important role of print and TV media in Washington and New York in ways that the Brazilian case at that time did not include.) Further, organizing in the U.S. about human rights violations after the overthrow of elected president Allende in Chile was, by most accounts, the real beginning of the human rights movement.

In large part, the movement in the U.S. after Allende had a more focused and effective goal than diffusing information to potential readers. Its target was that of challenging U.S. foreign policy. The movement aimed especially at the U.S. Congress where effective restraints on presidential policies were passed through the agency of Donald Fraser, Tom Harkin, et al. As Green states, the Brazilian protests were "relatively successful five years later." That success was not only because of the jolt that Chile provided but also because the anti-Pinochet opponents in the U.S. understood that the

target of organizing had to be governments (U.S. and Chile) and intergovernmental organizations (Organization of American States and similar groups). Furnishing information about Brazil was useful as a goal but insufficient. No wonder, as Green notes, persons he interviewed in the human rights movement after Allende's fall in Chile barely remembered anything about efforts to organize against Brazil's military dictatorship. As one organizer in the District of Columbia told this reviewer, "Better to have one senator on your side than 10,000 unread pamphlets" (referring to one of the major information campaigns of the Brazilian protests in Washington).

Substantial and well-written books like that of James Green can be utilized for class and seminar discussions. One may note that the Brazilian case was a most useful prologue to further human rights organizing. It had positive and negative lessons for movement analysis. First, many academics and clerics joined forces for the first time (they tended to live in parallel universes) and continued to cooperate in the 1970s and 80s as one crisis after another occurred in Latin America. After Chile, martyrdom came to the Maryknoll Sisters, Archbishop Oscar Romero, and the Jesuit Martyrs of El Salvador—to name the more prominent of thousands killed. Then came the Central American movement (with many Protestant and Catholic participants) and their successful campaign to impede Ronald Reagan's threatened invasion of Nicaragua and a host of other issues in which the U.S. was entangled. Second, foreign policy changes and not just public opinion became goals of activists. Lobbying—getting information into the right congressional hands and finding the legal bases for congressional policy measures—became the new priority for human rights activists. Third, a host of new lobbying efforts grew up in Washington and New York, including the establishment of the Washington Office on Latin America and the Lawyers Committee on Human Rights. While supported by a number of religious and other groups, the Washington Office on Latin America had a strong measure of independence and greater agility in responding to crises than churches and groups that needed to muster consensus before acting. In a word, human rights lobbying was anchored in semi-permanent organizations rather than individual initiatives and lifespans.

A question should be raised about why the Green volume is part of a

series that calls itself radical history when very little of the Green book appears to offer a radical point of view, so mainstream have the views presented become. Perhaps a greater consensus about human rights protection has grown up. One wonders why was it so difficult to defend human rights during the time period Green describes. He offers very little history of the evolutionary advances made in human rights consciousness in the U.S. Neither the United States with its racism nor major allies of the U.S., France and Great Britain with their colonial empires, were very keen on fostering human rights in the 1940s when human rights declarations were being drafted and debated.

These considerations lead to a major question about the framing of this historical study. It reads like it was written in the 1980s when journalists and historians were dealing with secretive governments and their sometimes bogus arguments of national security for virtually every secret operation. In recent years Cold War history has become part of Latin American history, as written in the U.S., Great Britain, and Latin America. With books like Gilbert Joseph and Daniela Spenser's edited volume *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (2007) and John Dinges's *The Condor Years: How Pinochet and His Allies Brought Terrorism to Three Continents* (2004), prominent sessions on the topic at American Historical Association national meetings, and many recent course offerings on Latin America during the Cold War at American and British universities, discourse has changed but appears not to be reflected in Green's work. He writes (p. 237) about the precipitous slide toward militarism in Latin America but does not state that the policy of the United States was to support and encourage militarism in Latin America. It was also the U.S. policy to support cooperation among various Latin American militaries that joined hands in suppressing dissidents—often by means outside the rule of law—in the name of warding off communism. In a global context, Latin America was central to the Cold War, as Gilbert Joseph and others have shown.

Green also wonders about the relation between the U.S. military and torture by Latin American military and police. As mentioned, supporting repressive military regimes was the policy of the U.S.—during the Cold War—and our military supported whatever it took (including an array of torture

tactics) to control citizens and establish order (without law). At least those conclusions were made by Cold War historians and might well have been incorporated in a volume dealing with opposition to military dictatorship. (As Green noted Brazilian military dictatorship was distinct in type from the older dictatorships of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and the Somozas in Nicaragua.)

One of the strongest achievements of the Green volume is the delineation of the role of academics. They and their universities, especially on both coasts of the U.S., were key actors in obtaining information from colleagues and other informants in the affected areas of Latin America, in disseminating that information to citizens and lawmakers, and in becoming part of a movement that had as its target U.S. foreign policy. (Despite being a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the U.S. had a long way to go before human rights would be thought of as integral to its foreign policy.) Green draws a portrait of many of the more prominent intellectuals, as Brady Tyson, Ralph della Cava, and Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz at Yale, a portrait that would serve an informal hall of fame for professors, especially Stepan and Linz, who took principled positions and supplied analysis of authoritarian regimes that remain relevant.

James N. Green provides a volume that in itself is an exemplar of historical presentation in that he provides multiple perspectives. He also created innovative narrative strategies that carry the reader along with pleasure through a long and richly detailed history.