

Freire, Frei and Literacy Texts in Chile, 1964 ©1970

{ç Viviana Ramfrez made helpful comments on this first draft; a fuller version appears as Chapter 4 in Austin, R. A Critical History of Literacy Programs in Chile, 1964 © 1993 [forthcoming doctoral dissertation, University of Newcastle, 1995]}

Synopsis

As with the period of the UNESCO-backed literacy campaign in Cuba before it, the period 1964-1970 in Chile is arguably one of the few great watersheds in 20th century history of education. Responding to popular literacy debates reaching back to the latter decades of the 19th century, the Frei Montalva administration sponsored a literacy campaign which transformed the relationship between subject, text and society. The links between the ideological subtext of the literacy campaign and popular rejection of "democratic" capitalism in Chile were not insignificant. Indeed, there remain influences in global educational discourse today of the Freire/Frei period.

This paper analyses the social and cultural context of the period, and locates literacy within that context. Inter alia, it argues that the centrality accorded the early work of Freire in the Chilean literacy process has tended to marginalise the significant contribution of co-workers [for instance, no English edition of Cultural Action for Freedom carries reference to its Chilean editor Marcela Gajardo]; and that there remain unresolved contradictions between the stage of Freirian theoretical development applicable, and the textual representations of that theory.

I. Introductory Remarks: the historical context

Prevailing accounts of Paulo Freire's work in Chile from 1965 © 1969 privilege Freire's undoubted contribution to education North and South, derivative of his work in that period. This paper approaches the era and its sequels with an antithetical lens: the arguably under-recognised contribution made by Chilean society to the development of Freirian philosophy of education.

It may be unreasonable to characterise the post 1970 writings of Paulo Freire as a series of elaborate footnotes to the complex theoretical and

methodological

legacy of his Chilean experience. Certainly a recent engagement with postmodernism

{2 see Paulo Freire en los 90': Diálogo con Francisco V°o Grossi, en Chile Video y TV Canelo, San Bernardo, Chile 1991; and Weiler, K. 'Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference' in Harvard Educational Review Vol.61 No.4, November 1991}

and earlier abandonment of conscientisation

{3 Freire, P. in Gajardo, M. La Concientización en América Latina: Una Revisión Crítica CREFAL, Michoacán, 1991; p.15}

delineate

apparently fresh stages of Freire's intellectual development.

Sandwiched

however between embryonic work in Goulart's Brazil from 1959 © 1964 and his

later Guinea-Bissau and occidental experiences, the turbulent Chile of the

ultimately conservative Christian Democrat Frei Montalva government endures

as the engine room of Freirian intellectual history.

Mainstream analyses of the history of literacy in Chile distinguish three moments relative to the fluctuations in the official rate of illiteracy since 1865:

The first moment comprises the period 1865-1920 and is characterised by a slow but permanent decrease in the rate of illiteracy from 83 per cent to 49.7 per cent, with a mean annual rate of decrease of a little over 0.5 per cent.

The second moment ... extends from 1920 to 1930 ... and it is the period in which there occurs the most important cultural leap in the transformation of [Chile's] population from an illiterate to a literate one. The percentage of illiterates in Chile's population dropped abruptly from 49.7 per cent in 1920 to 25.6 per cent in 1930.

The third moment is of relative stagnation. The rate of illiteracy climbed in 1940 to 27.3 per cent ... only to drop to 19.8 per cent in 1952.

{4 Silvert, K. et al Education, Class and Nation: the experiences of Chile and Venezuela Elsevier, New York 1976,

p.134}

Disregarding the analysis of statistics for the moment, here we add a fourth moment from 1964 to 1970, when the rate of illiteracy again declined but was overshadowed by the significance of transformational social structures supported during the National Literacy Campaign of the Frei Montalva administration, Paulo Freire's work being germane to that work.

Formal education in Chile had traditionally been an enclave for the central valley economic elites, congruent with the organisation of broader society. The great educational reforms of the instigated by teacher organisations during the 1939 © 1942 Popular Front government of Pedro Aguirre Cerda

{5 Martner, C. Contribuciones y Carencias del Discurso Educacional de la Izquierda Chilena, 1938 © 1952 ECO, Santiago de Chile 1986, p.51}

© including an attack on illiteracy via compulsory secular primary schooling © were anaesthetised during subsequent regimes, notably those of Ibañez del Campo [1946©52] and Alessandri [1956©64]. It was not until the advent of the

Frei Montalva regime in 1964 that serious attention was given to implementing the Compulsory Basic Schooling act of 1920.

The situation of the indentured labour [inquilinos] and peasants [campesinos] upon which the vast agricultural estates were constructed, and depended, had ossified since decolonisation: an observer's description of 1820s Chile remained eerily appropriate one and a half centuries later:

The peasant's station in society had not been materially changed by the subversion of the Spanish authority; while that of his landlord was essentially altered in almost every point ... while the peasant remains nearly as before, his superior has gained many advantages. He has obtained political independence, he is free, and secure in his person and property; for the first time in his life, he has a share in the government of his country; he may aspire to the highest offices of profit or

distinction; the value of his property is enhanced by the market which has been opened to carry off its produce; and he feels no reserve in displaying his wealth, or in expressing his opinions; in short, he is in possession of civil liberty.

{6 cited in Lynch, J. The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826 Norton, New York 1973; p.153}

The Christian Democrat agrarian reform program responded in part to modernisation pressures from several sources but particularly international capital, and in part to increasingly focussed agitation among the permanently dispossessed peasant class amid establishment fears that it would unite with the industrial working class. This it would presently do through the political organisations MAPU [Movement for Unified Popular Action] and MIR [Left Revolutionary Movement], the former soon to join the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende and the latter to retain influence within popular sectors of rural society.

{7 See for instance Garretón, M. The Chilean Political Process Unwin Hyman, Boston, 1989; p.32}

The state as embodiment of the interests of dominant elites had since the previous century fostered a dual system of formal education, primary [básica] being the common aspiration with secondary [media] and beyond the preserve of the chosen few. State formation was interdependent along three axes in education: the maintenance of the binary unevenness in the formal sector mentioned above [with an added layer of rural disadvantage], dependency on Herbartian and similar outmoded occidental theories as the standard pedagogy of classroom activity, and an entrenched gender and racial division of educational production. To a significant extent these mirrored the

class divisions of the broader society, notwithstanding the postwar emergence of a substantial petit bourgeoisie or middle class to which Frei had broad political appeal and was in turn to devote considerable economic and political energy.

Official illiteracy rates for the Frei Montalva era hovered around the 12-15% locus,

{8 Informaciones Estadísticas de la Educación y Análisis Cuantitativo No. 25 UNESCO, Santiago de Chile, 1982}

based on the UNESCO definition of literacy: the ability to write, read and comprehend a simple sentence on the subject's everyday life. If in contrast we take Letelier's critique of contemporary formal statistics and apply it retrospectively, the official UNESCO estimations appear markedly understated. The Letelier model of years of schooling yields an average rate of illiteracy for the period of around 50%, unevenly distributed on gender lines and worse in rural areas.

{9 Letelier, M.E. 'Contribución de la Alfabetización en la Construcción de una Identidad Cultural: Taller de Acción Cultural de Chile' in Picón, C. Alfabetizar para la Democracia CEAAL/Año Internacional de la Alfabetización, Santiago de Chile, 1990; p.27}

It was this chronic rural rate which first attracted the attention of Freire's team in the Ministry of Agriculture, and which when coupled with traditional nuances led to the program's being embedded in campaign mode, an almost mystical tendency in a country long the focus of campaigns: from the liberation campaign by O'Higgins and San Martín, the Atacama Desert campaign against Peru and Bolivia [1879-83],

{10 This was the so-called 'War of the Pacific' fought ostensibly over a minuscule mining tax but, in reality, ultimately ceding the massive Peruvian nitrate deposits to Chile and severing crucial Bolivian access to the Pacific. See Loveman, B. op.cit. pp.167-172}

the postwar cholera elimination campaign and numerous volatile, well-funded electoral campaigns. The campaign tradition has a sense of illusion around it, a veil masking unaddressed core realities and incomplete analyses.

The campaign ethos is here viewed as a deficit, constructing as it does the sense of finality once a campaign finishes [as it duly did under Frei],

leaving
nevertheless much unaddressed terrain. The metaphor of a virus being,
as
Freire and Bhola have separately noted, "eradicated", is not entirely
out of place.

{11 see Bhola, H.S. Campaigning for Literacy: Eight
national experiences of the twentieth century, with a
memorandum to decision makers UNESCO, Geneva 1982, p.29; and
Freire, P. Cultural Action for Freedom Penguin, Middlesex
1972; p.238}

The naive construction of illiteracy confronts it as if it were
an 'absolute in itself', or a 'dangerous
plant' needing to be 'eradicated': hence the current expression
'eradication of illiteracy'. This
deformed conception of illiteracy as illness we ironically call the
'bacteriological conception' of
illiteracy, wherein illiteracy appears as a wound or leprosy
requiring a cure.

{12 Freire, P. [ed. Gajardo, M] Sobre la Acci#n Cultural
ICIRA, Santiago de Chile 1972; p.28 [my translation]}

Nevertheless, to claim for Freire the alerting of Chilean educators to
the perils
of the prevailing school and social systems is to marginalise the
centrality of
education to the social question for much of the preceding part of the
century.
Indeed the notion that literacy implies development, and that both are
desirable, have been constants on the Chilean political landscape
virtually from birth of the republic in 1810.

{13 Whilst critical, as opposed to functional literacy is
held to be indispensable to social development, the question
of a suitable development model is here answered by recourse
to the broad set of propositions which constitute the
theses of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, minus the theological element.

Various 1907 editions of the daily El Mercurio
in Valparaiso carried columns of letters debating the
importance of literacy to workers in the port economy;

{14 Archives of the Biblioteca Hermeteca, Valparaiso}

in 1917 a public forum on literacy in the
capital featured prominent intellectuals, among them Pedro Aguirre

Cerda, later president of the republic.

{15 See *Analfabetismo y Educaci#n Popular en Chile: Conferencias organizadas por "El Mercurio" en Julio de 1917* Imprenta Universitaria, Santiago de Chile, 1917}

The Popular Front government led by Cerda [mentioned above] instigated a National Literacy Campaign at the insistence of the Communist Party [PC], a member of the governing coalition.

{16 Martner, C. op.cit. p.67}

The detailed proposal of the PC included a Department of Literacy and Popular Culture in the Education ministry, a national literacy crusade, and the establishment of literacy schools and popular libraries throughout Chile. There would be a vast coverage of cultural activity by the ministry: mobile artistic, cultural and health expositions;

publication of literary works; amateur theatre; the creation of evening and night schools and universities; formation of choral and instrumental groups; creation of fixed and mobile libraries; art exhibitions; and educational cinema, interalia.

{17 *ibid.* p.735}

In 1941, by way of further example, the Chilean Teachers Union proposed a new educational system which would translate in a "cultural action which is truly civilising and democratic ... requiring other means of reaching the whole population, other institutions of the country which are connected with cultural diffusion."

{18 *ibid.* p.51; my emphasis}

Concern among Chilean intellectuals and state school teachers over cultural autonomy in the postwar period was eloquently expressed in the policies of both major teacher unions, the General Association of Teachers and the Chilean Teachers Union.

{19 *ibid.* pp.26@639}

Both proposed major state intervention to democratise and universalise primary and secondary education, with

programs

to eradicate the 27.3% official illiteracy rate of 1952, the year in which Ibañez del Campo won the presidency with a support group of teachers campaigning on his behalf on the understanding that a significant popular education reform would eventuate. They were to be disappointed.

Christian Democrat [PDC] support in the 1964 election was strongest in the sectors having least to gain by social reform: the Liberal and Conservative parties who avidly feared Salvador Allende's Popular Action Front [FRAP],

{20 the coalition of socialist and communist parties which became the electorally successful Unidad Popular in the 1970 presidential elections}

capitalists who favoured a state-capital alliance to modernise key industries, and significant elements of the national bourgeoisie.

{21 Stallings, B. Class Conflict and Economic Development in Chile, 1958-1973 Stanford University Press, Stanford 1978; p.98}

PDC policy was presented as a moderate version of the FRAP platform, 'chilenisation' of industry supplanting FRAP's nationalisation, and a 'revolution in liberty' replacing a socialist revolution [the latter nevertheless through the electoral rather than classical Leninist road]. The massive US funding of the PDC campaign promoted Frei's as a showcase Alliance for Progress state,

whilst

preparing the way for the generous terms subsequently granted to US companies 'chilenised' during the PDC government.

{22 Cerro, Anaconda and Kennecott received double the book value of their copper mines, tax breaks and remained in administrative ascendancy; *ibid.* p.107}

Given occidental domination of Chilean educational discourse until well into the present century, set against the emerging momentum of revolutionary and nationalist struggle in the first postwar decade, the receptiveness of Chile to a Latin American voice of liberation follows an intelligible logic. The

two largest
teacher organisations had since the thirties decried occidentalism and
drawn
heavily on the reforms of Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas,
responsible for a
major adult education program and literacy campaign.

Frei Montalva successfully promoted the 'neutral state' thesis for the
first two
years of his presidency. The claim to neutrality meant in practice that
the more
radical sectors of the PDC were in the ascendancy for a time; after a
mid-term
re-alignment, however, the right led by Frei re-asserted its dominance
and
began an offensive [including military attacks] on organised labour and
left
political opposition.

II. Problems with Freirian pedagogy of the sixties

Freire and colleagues began developing the praxis of conscientisation
in literacy
campaigns of the Brazilian states of Pernambuco and Sao Paulo in the
early
sixties, constructing a theoretical and methodological framework
shortly to be
that of president Goulart's National Literacy Campaign. Goulart's
nationalist,
developmentalist, modernising but dependent capitalist government was
viewed
by the educator as a benign laboratory for inserting radical pedagogy
into an adult education system given Freire's concern to elaborate a
pedagogy
consistent with broadening the demands of a docile, silent and
dispossessed
population for a revised role in control and division of national
wealth and power.

Curiously, the US government appeared untroubled by Freire's work until
several months before the 1964 military coup d'état, only then
withdrawing
financial support provided through USAid. Whatever else this may
reflect, it
tends to indicate the generally unremarkable, if not 'soft' character
of Freirian
methodology unto that point, capable of being pedagogically absorbed by

areforming capitalist regime and mainstreamed in the name of

intensification of that process amongst the rural population.

{23 The intensity of Alliance for Progress and USAid activity throughout Latin America at the time is well documented; see for instance Marchetti, V. and Marks, J. *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* Jonathan Cape, London, 1974; and Dunkerley, J. *Power in the Isthmus* Verso, London, 1988}

The situation prevailing in Chile from 1964 resonated closely with that of Brazil until the same year, with unresolved social tensions.

On the one hand, since 1940 the US Import@Export bank and subsequently the World Bank and International Monetary Fund had set down binding conditions under which modernisation would be effected in Chile, unfavourable to radical structural change. The latter bodies had been established post 1945 specifically to regulate the conditions under which economic development took place in the developing world and their dependent capitalist economies, on behalf of the industrialised nations and in particular the United States.

{24 Chilcote, R. *Theories of Development and Underdevelopment* Westview, Boulder, 1984; p.64}

On the other hand, the Charter of Punta del Este committed all Latin American countries except Cuba to eradicate illiteracy by 1970 as part of an agrarian reform proposal central to Alliance for Progress discourse,

{25 Cuba was ironically the only country to achieve the stated goal, and that some years in advance of 1970. See for instance Report on the Method and Means Utilised in Cuba to Eliminate Illiteracy UNESCO/Instituto Cubano del Libro, La Habana, 1971; and MacDonald, T. *Making a New People: Education in Revolutionary Cuba* New Star, Vancouver, 1985, chapter 6}

hence the embryonic Freire program could be seen officially as an essential ingredient to fulfilment of moderate government@endorsed plans for economic modernisation within the prevailing mode of production. These reforms were not the product of new demands; Brazilian political reformer A.P. Figueiredo had articulated their logic as early as 1847.

{26 A.P. Figueiredo 'The Need for Agrarian Reform in Brazil [1847]' in Smith, T.L. *Agrarian Reform in Latin America*

Knopf, New York, 1966; p.67}

The state was seen by all sectors as having overriding responsibility for primary, secondary and adult education, despite a history of contest between state and church. For much of the twentieth century the state and civil society

{27 both terms are herein used in the Gramscian sense}

had coexisted uneasily, civil society coming to expect of the state a significant degree of intervention in matters of national well-being. In this context the ready insertion of the left-catholic Freire by a supposedly left-catholic government into a state-run Agriculture Ministry literacy campaign seems unremarkable.

Here we simultaneously call into question the left credentials of the Christian Democrat [PDC] regime of Frei Montalva on several criteria: the well-known United States funding of his 1964 electoral campaign,

{28 Stallings, B. op.cit. p.124}

Vatican intervention on behalf of the PDC,

{29 Loveman, B. op.cit. pp.277-9}

Frei's earlier flirtation with Mussolini,

{30 Stallings, B. op.cit. p.94}

repressive labour regulation, and the highly favourable arrangements extended to foreign multinationals for the 'Chilenisation' of the country's copper resources, inter alia.

{31 Sigmund, P. The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile, 1964-1976 University of Pittsburgh, 1977; p.33}

Against this background, Freire entered the ministries of Agriculture and Education in a conjoint strategy intended to reduce adult illiteracy by two-thirds by the next presidential election, a time frame hinting at an electoral subtext as much as social motives. According at least to Waldemar Cortés,

Freirian methodology only came to be known as 'psycho-social' once fieldwork got underway and called forth literacy monitor preparation courses.

{32 Author interview with Valdemaar Cortés, Frei Montalva's director of Adult Education, 1965-69; Santiago de Chile, 8 & 14/1/93}

Prior literacy programs had used infant and infantile pedagogy, reinforcing the mirror negative of developmentalist ideology in the subject's construction of self: a necessarily inferior identity, child-like, a metaphor for underdevelopment and dependency.

Freirian psycho-social methodology was introduced into the national literacy campaign from the time of Freire's team being established at INDAP, part of the Agriculture ministry, in 1965. As Gajardo notes, however, the popular education and popular culture movements had already moved beyond an earlier accommodation with the state to outright antagonism to the hegemony of

the dominant classes, regarding education as an instrument of class struggle to be deployed in the creation of a hegemony favouring the popular classes.

{33 Gajardo, M. op.cit. p.21}

Populist accounts of the vanguardist nature of Freire's work are seen from this perspective to be somewhat overstated.

{34 Author interview with Valdemaar Cortés, Frei Montalva's director of Adult Education, 1965-69; Santiago de Chile, 8 & 14/1/93}

The overriding difficulty with the conscientization element as a methodology in adult education has been that in its foundational statements from the sixties it is vague, 'naive' as Freire himself has since conceded. This has left open the door for any number of regimes of authoritarian persuasion to declare their adult education programs as premised on the psycho-social method, Pinochet's Chile being the quintessential example.

{35 see for instance the dictatorship's Manual del Método PsicoSocial para la Enseñanza de Adultos Adaptación preparada por la Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer, Santiago de Chile, 1976}

The tension between conservative Vatican doctrine and the nascent liberation theology movement in the Latin American church further sharpened differences within the Frei regime, the Christian Left led by Jacques Chonchol viewing advocacy of Freirian methodology as mandatory, especially in the wake of the Medellin General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in 1968.

III. Theoretical and methodological comments

Though later state-produced literacy manuals of the Frei Montalva era substitute "coordinator" for "literacy teacher" and "participant" for "illiterate",

{36 Manual de Alfabetización para Adultos Editorial Santillana, Santiago de Chile, 1966; p.2}

Freire's 1965 text *Educación como Práctica de la Libertad* continuously uses the traditional term "illiterate" whilst lamenting the effects of traditional literacy primers which "cast the illiterate in the role of the object rather than the Subject of his learning".

{37 published in English as "Education as the Practice of Freedom" in Freire, P. *Education for Critical Consciousness* Sheed & Ward, London 1990; p.49}

The mechanics of conscientisation as elaborated initially by Freire in 1965 cover five phases: vocabulary research among participants, generative word

selection, codification [visual representation] of research, elaboration of agendas, and preparing cards with phonemic breakdown of generative words.

{38 *ibid.* pp.49-52}

Care is taken with preparation of monitors to guard against the tendency to reproduce domesticating rather than liberatory pedagogy. Given the powerful traditions of socialist influence and political struggle in the state teaching

service in Chile

[noted earlier], Freire's perception of potentially non-dialogical 'banking' tendencies among his literacy teams is either profound or misplaced.

At the occidental level, the literature as to its validity is formidable; work dating from A.S. Neill, John & Evelyn Dewey, and more recently Ira Shor, Michael Apple and Linda Christian Smith document the verticalist, bureaucratic and anti-creative culture of Western schooling.

{39 See inter alia Neill's Summerhill, the Deweys' Schools of Tomorrow, Shor's Culture Wars, and Apple and Christian-Smith's The Politics of the Textbook.}

However, a palpable tension has existed in Chile for most of the twentieth century between the formal education process as a state reproductive apparatus and the unwillingness of radicalised teacher organisations to be uncritically complicit in those arrangements.

{40 see for instance Gysling, J. Profesores: Un análisis de su identidad social CIDE, Santiago de Chile, 1992. The fierce repression of teachers and their political representatives by the military dictatorship 1973-1989 is indicative of their historically progressive tendencies and ambivalent relationship to the state.}

The two great social actors of the post-colonial Latin American republics - the state and civil society - receive differential and inconclusive treatment in Freire's Chilean writings. Freirian pedagogy elaborated in Chile says little about state power, making vague reference to "human rights", social, political and economic forces [Sobre la Acción Cultural] or "revolutionary spirit", oppression, reaction and "closed society" [Education as the Practice of Freedom]. For a detailed analysis of Freire's construction of the state we must look to later writings, such as Pedagogy of the Oppressed [1970] or more convincingly The Politics of Education [1985] and Learning to Question [with Fañdez, 1989].

Complexities around the state and state power were shifting steadily throughout the sixties. Popular education had been a metaphor for state primary and secondary education for much of the preceding part of the twentieth century, a demand increasingly satisfied by the state albeit that

oligarchic agendas tended to influence the operation of schooling ©
once won © inways generally unfavourable to the popular classes.

As the oligarchy sought ways to mitigate the economic costs of
modernisation,
schooling as a huge budget item became vulnerable to attack. Coupled
with
elevated awareness of the political character of state schooling among
the
marginalised sectors of Chilean society, the emerging [or re@emerging]
neoliberal view of state functions was matched by a renaissance of
popular
culture and re@constructed notion of popular education as that which
served thepopular interest, devoid of state influence.

Responding with characteristic generosity and incisiveness to these and
related
criticisms recently, Freire remarked that the theory of concientization
hadindeed been a weak point, particularly for its neglect of the
"political character of education" and of "the problem of social
classes and their struggle".

{41 Freire, P. *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power
and Liberation* Bergin & Garvey, New York 1985, p.152}

To these concerns Marcela Gajardo © unacknowledged Chilean editor of
several of Freire's major English works

{42 In an interview with the author [Santiago de Chile,
19/4/94] Marcela Gajardo discounts this observation.
Nevertheless, in view of concerns over the gender division of
labour consistent with the philosophical premises of Freire's
work in Chile, the issue seems to me important. Moreover, it
is reflective of a historical macho disposition inconsistent
with liberation theology or pedagogy, which neither psycho™
socialmethodology nor the subsequent socialist Unidad Popular
administration considered implicit in their programs. On the
latter see Rosetti, J. "La Mujer y el Feminismo" in Jaquette,
J. *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the
Transition to Democracy* Unwin Hyman, Sydney 1989, p.181}

adds a comprehensive list questioning the
type of practices which the methodology proposed to contribute to the
liberationof the popular sectors:

Among these, what was the relation between concientizing
education and the different political and
ideological projects of the social classes struggling for power; what

was the relation between [Freirian] practices and those in which the popular movement and its base organisations were involved; what was the contribution of conscientization to the constitution of class consciousness and the creation of a popular historical project; what was the relation between conscientization and the political organisation of the popular sectors; and what was the function of the political parties, fronts and vanguards in this process of critical apprehension and transformation of reality.

{43 Gajardo, M. op.cit. p.45}

Freire's departure for the United States in 1969 left only partial responses to

these issues, which were nevertheless more directly addressed in the literacy program of the Allende administration from 1971. With that government's brutal demise at the hands of the military in September, 1973 a new phase of popular organisation and popular education partially linked to resolutions of such questions was begun.

The concept of 'banking education', the accuracy of assertions as to its international preponderance then and now, and Freire's exposition of its theory and practice are well enough known. Most commonly associated with the English translation of *La Pedagogía del Oprimido* [Pedagogy of the Oppressed], an earlier formulation of the concept from sixties Chile appeared in *Sobre la Acción Cultural*.

The educator's role in adult education requires "rigorous training ... permanent evaluation of the teacher's work, and constant [professional] guidance of the teacher, through which they feel secure in the realisation of their work."

{44 Freire, P. *Sobre la Acción Cultural* ICIRA, Santiago de Chile, 1970; p.48}

Educators "should not lose any opportunity to stimulate students to expound their observations, doubts and criticisms ... asking students to

develop their observations first on the blackboard and then on paper."

{45 ibid.}

The antithesis of banking education is of course liberatory education, a set of dialectical practices which imply certain procedures to be adopted by the educator consistent with the stages of conscientization detailed earlier for literacy programs, varied but similar for post-literacy work. Their objective is to lubricate the transformational process begun with the phases of conscientization described earlier. The teacher is central to this process.

Curiously then, in contrast to these observations from the mid-sixties, Freire adopts a near counter-culture position on the teacher's role by the time of his final year in Chile:

Nobody educates anybody, nobody educates themselves. Men educate themselves among themselves mediated by the world.

{46 Freire, P. quoted in Gajardo, M. op.cit. p.57}

Later, the primacy of the student over the teacher is reasserted [1981], and subsequently the educator is reinstated to primacy with the assertion that

"when an educator says he/she is equal to his/her student, either we have a demagogue or an incompetent. If they were both equal, neither would recognise the other."

{47 ibid. my emphasis}

IV. Comments on Christian Democrat [PDC] texts

In the 1966 PDC primer *Manual del Método Psicosocial para la Enseñanza de Adultos* two aims are advanced by Waldemar Cortés, Freire's Director of Adult Education, in the name of the method, namely:

1. to have illiterates rapidly learn to read and write and
2. to facilitate their shedding their low self-esteem in favour of full recognition of their value as human beings.

{48 Cortés, W. et al [eds] Manual del método psico-social
para la enseñanza de adultos Santillana, Santiago de Chile, 1966; p.3}

Broad reference is made to the [constitutional] democracy of the
republic, with
interplay between the introduction and text around generative words
limiting
the objectives of conscientisation to discussion of ways one might
better exercise
ones rights within the confines of that system.

The manual explains that cultural and social transformation arise
through
Freirian conscientización, describing it [accurately enough]
as a process of
engagement with reality via literacy intended to replace the student's
magical
consciousness with critical consciousness, the former contingent upon
pseudo™knowledge and the latter upon critical engagement with it.

In a parallel text Manual de Alfabetización para Adultos
"coordinator" replaces
all reference to "literacy teacher", while "participant" replaces all
reference to the illiterate person.

{49 Manual de Alfabetización para Adultos Editorial
Santillana, Santiago de Chile, 1966; p.2}

This was consistent with the emerging egalitarian
ethos of Freirian pedagogy, however opaque gender and race may have
been to its perception at the time.

Cortés argues that women were included in the literacy program
through
courses at Mothers' Centres and Neighbourhood Centres, and in the
workplace; but concedes the gender bias of teaching materials.

{50 See interview between author and Valdemar Cortés,
Colegio de Profesores, Santiago de Chile, 14/1/93 in Austin,
R. A Critical History of Literacy Programs in Chile, 1964 ©
1993 [Appendix] forthcoming doctoral dissertation,
University of Newcastle}

Community programs were coordinated through CEDECO [Centre of Community
Education]. He
portrays the programs as non-marxist and pluralist in nature, and not
determined by the Christian Democrat government.

{51 *ibid.*}

In view of the orthodox content of literacy texts issued by various of the Freire°
Montalva ministries, however, this claim is somewhat difficult to sustain. Any
divergence in a more radical direction appears to have come in the
practices
employed by Freire's teams of literacy monitors, rather than from
centralised administrations.

Amongst other incongruencies,

"What is not addressed is the possibility of simultaneously
contradictory
positions of oppression and dominance: the man oppressed by his boss
could at
the same time oppress his wife, for example, or the White woman
oppressed by
sexism could exploit the Black woman. By framing his discussion in such
abstract terms, Freire slides over the contradictions and tensions
within social settings in which overlapping forms of oppression
exist."

{52 Weiler, K. *op.cit.* p.453}

Alverto Silva draws attention to the absence of some key concepts from
the
official texts © struggle, class, party, power © such as to dilute or
subvert the
revolutionary potential of the method, transforming it into an
integrationist or
at best reformist strategy. He argues further that the net result of
the
campaign was to dissociate literacy from other social activities, and
to separate
technical and social preparation along with detachment of
conscientization from action.

{53 Gajardo, M. *op.cit.* p.82}

Given the militancy of political organisation in rural Chile, in both
the agricultural south and mining north [see section I, above], it is
curious that an
officially faithful rendering of the Freirian method appears not to
have
produced generative words or themes going to the rapidly intensifying
class consciousness of those areas as the PDC experiment with
Chilenisation
faltered. Silva's concerns are self-evident on that level.

Moreover, the discursive and practical activities generally recommended in literacy manuals were somewhat sterile, orthodox and barely resonant with Freire's evolving writings, which by that time were distancing Freire increasingly from the liberal-democratic roots of Education as the Practice of Freedom. For instance, the generative word

"[trade] union" in the Manual del Método Psico-social para la Enseñanza de Adultos corrals discussion around the legalities of labour organisation and the implicit pull for workers to work within those legalities, however much the political objective may have to do with oligarchic hegemony.

By 1966 militant labour action against inflation, wage suppression and police attacks had seen a steadily rising number of factory occupations and sporadic clashes with the armed forces. Deaths of workers had resulted, the most notorious incident being the assassination of nine squatters by police at Puerto Montt in 1969.

{54 Stallings, B. op.cit. p.114}

Terra Nullius had operated since the sixteenth century to progressively dispossesses the sixteen major indigenous nations within the boundaries of the postcolonial republic. Despite Freire's emphasis on autochthonous cultural movements, one searches in vain for appropriate material in the literacy primers. No serious effort appears to have arisen to conduct bilingual programs.

In the final months of the Fre^o Montalva government and after consistent pressure from popular sectors, a constitutional amendment was carried enfranchising illiterate adults. Its implementation was deferred until the next administration took office, amid conservative fears that combined with the simultaneously-granted lowering of the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen a significant pro-Allende block would thus be created; it would take effect in the 1976 presidential elections.

{55 Sigmund, P. The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics
of Chile, 1964-1976 University of Pittsburgh, 1977, p.88}

In view of the 1973 military coup, initially
supported by Frei Montalva and the PDC, analphabetos were to
wait another 19 years to realise their paper gain.

V. Material gains, interim conclusions

Despite inconsistencies noted, and an increasing division within the
Frei
regime over the direction and pace of the entire Agricultural Reform
program,
formidable advances were made which were significantly driven by
Freire's
energetic team, and would require state terrorism later to undo. In
1968 alone,
2000 Centres of Basic and Community Education [for adults] were
established.
In the period 1965 - 1968 10,000 teachers were trained in the use of
the
Freirian psycho-social method, adopted as Frei Montalva's official

adult education methodology.

{56 ibid. p.80}

Nevertheless, that the incomplete project
was sustainable until 1969 is of itself
a tribute to the political dexterity and social commitment of the adult
education
teams at both the Education and Agriculture ministries. Indeed it seems
to me
that the durability and pragmatic responsiveness of Freire's
Christian-Marxism
was essential to the maintenance of a generally progressive direction
in what
was an increasingly complex national project.

Contrary to the rather Freire-centric histories on this period, it is
clear that as Freire himself acknowledges

{57 See for instance his Education as the Practice of
Freedom ICIRA, Santiago de Chile, 1971}

a number of educators shared major
responsibility for the design and implementation of the literacy
program

{58 Torres, C. "From the Pedagogy of the Oppressed to A Luta Continua: The Political Pedagogy of Paulo Freire" in McLaren, P. and Leonard, P. Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter Routledge, London, 1993, p.123}

Marcela Gajardo who edited substantial Freirian works; Rafl Navarro with Professor OrmeSo and others who organised short@notice campaign mode intensive training courses for adult educators at the Instituto Pedag@gico of University of Chile; national program director Valdemaar CortÇs;

{59 see for instance his Educaci#n de Adultos CAVE, Santiago de Chile, 1974}

andliterally thousands of enthusiastic literacy monitors operated in a pluralist political context increasingly destabilised by organised local reaction and those foreign forces with a growing sense of losing control in their own "backyard". As noted, the initial structural and policy support of the Frei Montalva government dissipated as class tensions sharpened and gave way to a regime increasingly subordinating its "revolution in liberty" to oligarchic re™ascendency.

This said, we conclude with an interim acknowledgment that also ends an instructive piece by another eminent Latin American educator, namely CarlosAlberto Torres:

"in pedagogy today, we can stay with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire."

{60 Torres, C.A. op. cit. p.140}

Robert Austin

November, 1994