

The Army of the Andes: Chilean and Rioplatense Politics in an Age of Military Organisation, 1814–1817

JUAN LUIS OSSA SANTA CRUZ*

Abstract. This article analyses the organisation of the Army of the Andes, created in Mendoza between 1814 and 1817 with the aim of reconquering Chile from the royalists. The first section studies the role of José de San Martín as an informal arbiter in Bernardo O'Higgins' dispute with José Miguel Carrera. The aim is to explain why San Martín decided to support O'Higgins, and the immediate consequences of this alliance. The second section addresses the main characteristics of the Army of the Andes and the process of militarisation experienced by the local inhabitants. Everyday life in Mendoza became inseparable from the needs of the revolutionary army. The paper then considers the so-called *guerra de zapa* and the participation of irregular agents. The involvement of spies and guerrilla officers in the revolution increased as warfare intensified. The final section analyses the crossing of the *cordillera* by the insurgents and the revolutionary triumph of 12 February 1817 at Chacabuco.

Keywords: Chile, O'Higgins, San Martín, Mendoza, Chacabuco, military organisation, revolution, spies

This article studies Chilean and River Plate (Rioplatense) politics in an age of military organisation. Its aim is to understand why and how the Army of the Andes was created in the years between 1814 and 1817, examining both the support given by the Buenos Aires government to José de San Martín's plan to reconquer Chile from the royalists and the role that Chileans played in this military enterprise.

There are two main approaches to studying the organisation of San Martín's army. The first stresses the 'patriotic' fervour that allegedly allowed not only the creation of the Army of the Andes but also the revolutionary triumph at the Battle of Chacabuco (1817). The most recognised advocates of this current, such as nineteenth-century historians Diego Barros Arana,

Juan Luis Ossa is executive director of the Centro de Estudios de Historia Política, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Santiago. Email: juan.ossa@uai.cl.

* The author would like to acknowledge the very useful comments of Alan Knight, Iván Jaksic, Anthony McFarlane, Eduardo Posada-Carbó and Andrés Estefane, as well as the insightful suggestions made by the four anonymous reviewers of this article.

Bartolomé Mitre and Gerónimo Espejo, emphasise the 'glorious' efforts of a few brave men whose commitment to the South American revolution is presented as a vehicle of nationality.¹ In the words of Mitre, San Martín was 'the new Liberator Alexander', as well as one of the indispensable men who brought about Chilean independence.²

The second current, of which Patricia Pasquali and John Lynch are the best exponents, has provided a much more sophisticated overview of why San Martín became supreme master of the Army of the Andes.³ Their works help us understand the political relationship between Chile and the River Plate during the revolutionary years; San Martín's decision to use the reconquest of Chile as a springboard for other campaigns; and the significance of the organisation of the Army of the Andes for understanding the Spanish American revolutions. However, this paper departs from their interpretations in four respects. First, while Pasquali and Lynch deal above all with Rioplatense politics, this article pays equal attention to River Plate and Chilean politics. Second, it highlights more explicitly the problems experienced by San Martín when requesting the help of Buenos Aires to undertake the attack on Chile. Third, it dedicates more attention to the cultural and religious effects provoked by military training in the camp of El Plumerillo in Mendoza, and finally, it challenges the Manichean division between Americans and Spaniards that is implicitly stated in Lynch's most important books and which can also be found in Barros Arana's and Mitre's accounts. The revolutionary wars were not so much a conflict of national liberation as a civil war in which people born mainly in the American continent confronted one another.

The creation of the Army of the Andes was the logical response to the counter-revolutionary programme developed by the viceroy of Peru, José Fernando de Abascal, after 1810. Abascal's objective was to retake control of the country, which had been lost to the Chilean radicals after the fall of the Spanish monarchy precipitated the beginning of a war between 'royalists' (followers of the Spanish king and the Peruvian viceroy) and 'revolutionaries' (defenders of local autonomy and eventually of full independence from Spain). While success at the Battle of Rancagua in October 1814 enabled the royalists

¹ Diego Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, vol. 10 (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria and DIBAM, 2002 [1894–1902]); Bartolomé Mitre, *Historia de San Martín y de la emancipación sudamericana* (Buenos Aires: Ateneo, 2010 [1887–8]); Gerónimo Espejo, *El paso de los Andes: crónica histórica de las operaciones del Ejército de los Andes, para la Restauración de Chile en 1817* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta y Librería de Mayo, 1882).

² Mitre, *Historia de San Martín*, p. 200. All translations from Spanish into English are mine.

³ Patricia Pasquali, *San Martín: la fuerza de la misión y la soledad de la gloria* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2004); John Lynch, *San Martín: Argentine Soldier, American Hero* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

to regain possession of the Chilean central valley, it forced the revolutionary army headed by Bernardo O'Higgins to escape to the province of Cuyo, which included the cities of Mendoza, San Luis and San Juan, and was under the political control of Buenos Aires.

The first two sections of this article study the economic, political, social and military changes experienced by Cuyo after the emigration, analysing the effects of the relocation of hundreds of Chileans and the consequences of San Martín's decision to appeal for Buenos Aires' help to reconquer Chile. In order to explain why San Martín, who was appointed governor of Cuyo in 1814, and the Buenos Aires government allied with O'Higgins, both sections discuss Chilean and Rioplatense politics with the intention of explaining how and why the other significant Chilean revolutionary leader, José Miguel Carrera, was excluded from San Martín's plans.

The sections that follow reappraise the role of Chileans in the Army of the Andes and the crossing of the *cordillera* by approximately 4,000 men in the summer of 1817. Challenging the idea that Chileans had prominence in the Army of the Andes itself, the paper shows the key role they played as spies or guerrilla officers in the *guerra de zapa* that preceded the attack on Chile. Finally, it is argued that Buenos Aires' decision to appoint O'Higgins supreme director of Chile after the Battle of Chacabuco (February 1817) was the quintessence of an alliance sealed not between two national states but between two specific political factions.

Chilean Émigrés in a Foreign Territory

The revolutionary flight to Mendoza began almost immediately after the defeat at Rancagua, as did the recriminations between O'Higgins and Carrera. Opinion among the Chilean émigrés was polarised between those resentful that Carrera had not helped O'Higgins with men and resources at Rancagua and those who believed that his decision was sensible. The first group accused Carrera of treason and cowardice, and also of taking the treasury of the revolutionary government to use for his own benefit. Even San Martín became involved in this tricky dispute: on 15 October 1814 the governor of Mendoza ordered his men to search Carrera's baggage, which the Chilean general refused to allow. However, two days later, when Carrera was about to enter Mendoza, the local authorities did succeed in inspecting the belongings of both him and his brothers. Although they found no money, some argued that the treasury was indeed taken out of the capital after Rancagua before being seized by the royalists a couple of days later.⁴

⁴ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, pp. 103, 109.

San Martín's involvement in this affair leads one to conclude that he chose to support O'Higgins as early as October 1814.⁵ In a recent book on José Miguel Carrera, Beatriz Bragoni has stated that O'Higgins' links with the Rioplatenses who had controlled the *porteño* government since 1812 and were involved in the Logia Lautaro, a secret Masonic lodge led by San Martín and Juan Martín de Pueyrredón whose 'ultimate objective was to overthrow the royalists from the Peruvian Viceroyalty', explained in part why the Mendocino general associated himself with O'Higgins.⁶ Even though it is difficult to claim that O'Higgins had 'close links' with the Buenos Aires government in 1814, it is clear that San Martín's alliance with O'Higgins was both political and personal.⁷ Above all, San Martín objected to Carrera's pretensions to be 'governor of Chile' in Mendoza. In his opinion, all inhabitants of the city were under the authority of the governor of Cuyo; accepting Carrera's authority in Mendoza would be tantamount to recognising that San Martín's political faction was no longer supreme master of the region. Other military officers and politicians in Mendoza shared this view, especially those who did not see José Miguel Carrera as the sole legitimate authority of the 'Chilean state'.⁸ O'Higgins' followers insisted that Carrera had stolen the Chilean treasury and was responsible for the defeat of the revolutionaries in Rancagua. This view was reinforced by the River Plate delegate to Santiago, Juan José Paso, who referred to the Carrera brothers as 'indecent', 'famous criminals' and 'inept'. Paso believed the Carreras should leave Mendoza, an opinion that San Martín seconded on 19 October, when he asked them to do so ('asked', because he was careful not to demand that they depart).⁹

That same day, however, supporters of the Carreras claimed that they would never be politically subordinated to the 'head of this small village [*pueblecito*], but only to the government of Buenos Aires'.¹⁰ This was the first time that the unruly émigrés had accepted the interference of Buenos Aires in Chilean politics, although on condition that San Martín would not have command over them. On 30 October San Martín responded by writing to Carrera, now

⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 102; and Jaime Eyzaguirre, *O'Higgins* (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1946), p. 152. See also Pasquali, *San Martín*, pp. 210–14.

⁶ Felipe Santiago Del Solar, 'La francmasonería en Chile: de sus orígenes hasta su institucionalización', *Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña*, 2: 1 (2010), pp. 6–7. Del Solar has said that 'while Pueyrredón had the mission to administrate the Logia inside the United Provinces, San Martín was in charge of its expansive project': see 'Masones y sociedades secretas: redes militares durante las guerras de independencia en América del Sur', *Amérique Latine: Histoire et Mémoire. Les Cahiers ALHIM*, 19 (2010).

⁷ Beatriz Bragoni, *José Miguel Carrera: un revolucionario chileno en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2012), p. 122.

⁸ See Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 104.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁰ Juan de la Cruz Vargas to San Martín, 19 Oct. 1814, Archivo Histórico de la Provincia de Mendoza, Argentina (hereafter AHM), box 235, doc. 38.

in peremptory terms, that since 'all the Chilean émigrés are subject to the protection of the supreme government of the United Provinces', he must immediately put his troops at the disposal of Marcos Balcarce. Realising that San Martín's forces were much stronger than his own (San Martín led around 1,000 men, compared to the 400 who remained loyal to Carrera), Carrera laid down his arms and left Mendoza with his relatives on 3 November.¹¹

Once Carrera was expelled, the émigrés began to rebuild their lives. According to a document written by Carrera, 708 Chilean military had crossed the cordillera, a number more or less in accordance with a list in Argentina's national archive which speaks of 162 officers and 595 men.¹² However, only a few émigrés, mainly officers, were allowed to live in Mendoza, as San Martín sent most Chilean soldiers away from the province (either to Buenos Aires or to Upper Peru, where Manuel Belgrano's army was fighting the royalists).¹³ San Martín and his subordinates did not see the Chileans as good military men. In January 1815, for example, Balcarce complained that they had only 63 muskets, some 30 machetes and 'a few pistols'.¹⁴ Furthermore, according to Juan Gregorio de Las Heras, his soldiers were obliged to gather the weapons ('most of them useless') that the émigrés had abandoned in the cordillera. This would have not been so reprehensible, Las Heras argued, if the Chileans had not intended to enter Mendoza carrying the weapons simply as a way to be admired by the local inhabitants.¹⁵

The émigrés who stayed were compelled to live in the city. Those who tried to escape to royalist Chile were usually prosecuted as traitors. For example, politicians in Buenos Aires accused Miguel Zañartu, after he aimed to return to Chile in January 1815, of 'contributing actively to the division of the Chilean army'. In an unsigned and 'reserved' letter to San Martín, someone closely related to the supreme director of the River Plate referred to Zañartu as 'an undercover enemy of the American cause', an accusation designed to prevent Mendoza's governor from allowing Zañartu to return.¹⁶ Bartola Morales Reyes experienced a similar situation. On 10 March San Martín prevented her from going back to Santiago, arguing that as the sister of the secretary of Chile's royalist governor, Mariano Osorio, she would inform the

¹¹ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, pp. 113–17.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 116 n. 33; the list is at the Archivo General de la Nación, Argentina (hereafter AGN), room 10, 4-2-5, pp. 2–4.

¹³ See San Martín to Nicolás Herrera, 19 Nov. 1814, cited in AGN, *Paso de los Andes y Campaña Libertadora de Chile*, tome 1149, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires, 1917), pp. 229–30.

¹⁴ Balcarce to San Martín, 19 Jan. 1815, AGN, room 10, 4-2-5, p. 63.

¹⁵ Las Heras to San Martín, 21 June 1815, AGN, room 10, 4-2-5, p. 212. The letter makes reference to an event that occurred on 8 November 1814.

¹⁶ Anonymous to San Martín, 27 Jan. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, p. 99.

royalists of the military preparations in the River Plate.¹⁷ Twenty days later, the supreme director, who in January had given Morales a passport to travel, accepted San Martín's resolution.¹⁸

Desertions of this kind continued throughout 1815. In San Martín's view, going back to Chile was an act of treason that only untrustworthy citizens could commit. A *bando* (proclamation) of 22 August stated:

The insolent impudence, and scandalous reiteration with which many inhabitants of these provinces and many Chilean émigrés ... go over to the Enemy is already an insult to the generosity of the Government and it would have degenerated into criminal weakness if kept in disguise for much longer, affecting the honour of the Good Citizens, the trust of the people and the safety of the *Patria*. Therefore, [the government] ... declares for the last time that whoever is apprehended in the direction of Chile, ... or whatever individual justifies this conduct or whoever keeps the slightest communication in words or writing with Chile, will irrevocably be executed 24 hours after the process has begun.¹⁹

While San Martín thought that the émigrés wished to return because they were selfish individuals unable to appreciate the 'generosity' of the River Plate government, the émigrés had more pragmatic reasons to think that life in Mendoza was intolerable. Doubtless, the most complicated problem they faced was finding suitable places to live. Eighty-four of the 391 exiles identified by Cristián Guerrero Lira requested housing from the authorities, and the majority of these (69 per cent) were military men. Indeed, although only 61 of his list of exiles 'exercised military functions in Chile or were part of the militias', as many as 58 of them requested a house.²⁰ There was no system to pay the wages of the soldiers, especially during the first year, when San Martín had not yet organised the Army of the Andes. The large number of military men seeking housing is also confirmed by other documents. In one, out of 15 people seeking housing, ten were military officers (the remaining applications were signed by three housewives, a barber and a court clerk).²¹

The arguments that the applicants employed to secure accommodation usually followed the same pattern: starting with a brief description of why the applicant emigrated to the River Plate, they stressed the importance of being assisted by the authorities. Diego Eduardo's application, however, is worth quoting. Eduardo started by declaring that he joined the revolutionary army immediately after Juan Martínez de Rozas organised a military company in Cauquenes. In 1813, 'we had the misfortune that the enemy invaded the City

¹⁷ San Martín to supreme director of the United Provinces, 10 March 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, p. 240.

¹⁸ Supreme director to San Martín, 31 March 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, p. 239.

¹⁹ 22 Aug. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-6, p. 186.

²⁰ Cristián Guerrero Lira, *La contrarrevolución de la Independencia en Chile* (Santiago: DIBAM, 2002), p. 99.

²¹ AHM, box 497, doc. 9.

of Concepción and that the militias of that province opted for the unjust cause of the King ... My own detachment and the infantry took flight in speed to Talca to join the Army of the Patria.' After losing his 'few possessions', Eduardo declared, he 'had no reward other than fulfilling his duties in the military service'. The outcome of Rancagua prompted Eduardo to emigrate to Mendoza: 'Today, I find no means and, weighed down by the burden of keeping two other fellow countrymen who suffer a worse fate than me, I find myself living in the street with them, not having the money to pay for the room where we live and which belongs to Major José Clemente Venegas, to whom I owe nearly two months of rent.'²² After analysing his application, the authorities gave Eduardo accommodation at Estanislao Pelliza's house, a type of benefit that 13 other applicants on this list also enjoyed.²³ In March 1816, the *cabildo* of Mendoza reported that 76 émigrés, of whom 47 were military men, were living in the houses of 60 Mendocinos.²⁴

Obtaining a house did not guarantee a livelihood, however. Only after the Army of the Andes was properly organised were wages paid systematically, meaning that in 1815 the Chilean officers lived in an almost complete state of destitution. Even senior officers like Lieutenant-Colonel Venancio Escanilla suffered the prevalent local poverty. In his application, Escanilla reported that after emigrating he had moved to the countryside to work as a farmer. After 16 months he and his family returned to the city and requested assistance from the authorities.²⁵ In another case, Lieutenant Ezequiel Noya reported that for more than a year he and his father had survived with a small remuneration of 10 pesos that the latter received from the *cabildo* for working as its secretary. That was insufficient, Noya explained, to 'pay for food, room and the services of a washerwoman'.²⁶ A clerk, José María González, was so desperate that he promised to compensate the help that the state could give him with the assurance that his 14-month-old son would become a soldier of the patria when he grew up.²⁷

It was in this context of economic distress that the first plans to confront the Chilean royalists were developed. O'Higgins, who spent 1815 in Buenos Aires defending the interests of his political cause, presented Supreme Director Ignacio Álvarez Thomas with a detailed military programme to reconquer Chile. His aim was to assemble 6,000 men and then divide them into four

²² Eduardo to governor of Mendoza, undated, AHM, box 497, doc. 9.

²³ The decisions of the authorities appear in the top-left margin of every application.

²⁴ Camilo Alarcón, 'Soldados sin ejército: la vida de la emigración militar patriota en las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata (1814–1817)', *Cuadernos de Historia Militar* (Santiago), 5 (2009), pp. 46–7.

²⁵ Escanilla to governor of Mendoza, undated, AHM, box 497, doc. 9.

²⁶ Noya to governor of Mendoza, 7 Feb. 1816, AHM, box 497, doc. 9.

²⁷ González to governor of Mendoza, undated, AHM, box 497, doc. 9.

divisions, each with the mission to cross into Chile from a specific region (the first three would go via Antuco, Río Claro and Coquimbo, the last through the port of Arauco).²⁸ Carrera also prepared a plan to 'restore the Chilean state'. He believed that the revolutionaries should attack the royalists in the winter, despite the complications entailed by the closure of the cordillera. In Carrera's words, 'This invasion can be made across Coquimbo ... with only 500 Chilean soldiers and 1,000 muskets. It is known that Coquimbo's garrison is no more than 100 men and that they are willing to receive the assistance of the liberators.'²⁹ In practical terms, Carrera's plan was the more unrealistic of the two, and when Álvarez Thomas asked the opinion of San Martín, the governor answered that, in order to reconquer Chile, the army required '3,500 to 4,000 strong and disciplined men'.³⁰ However, at that stage O'Higgins' plan was not practicable either. Álvarez Thomas needed empirical proof that the efforts of Buenos Aires would not be in vain, and San Martín thus had to convince him that Chile was where the royalists should be attacked first.

The Army of the Andes and the Militarisation of Civil Society

Throughout his time as governor of Cuyo, San Martín's main task was to keep the province in a state of alertness in case the royalists invaded the River Plate. There were three sources of danger: the Atlantic ports, Chile and Upper Peru. Of these, the first was the most dangerous for the revolutionaries, although only an expedition as powerful as that organised in Spain and led by Pablo Morillo would dare to disembark near Buenos Aires. When the Buenos Aires authorities learned that Morillo had finally gone to Venezuela, the idea of going on the offensive began to win supporters. San Martín favoured attacking Chile, but general opinion in 1815 favoured sending Manuel Belgrano to fight in Upper Peru. However, San Martín never abandoned the idea of invading Chile, and the plan to confront the army of Francisco Marcó del Pont, Osorio's successor as governor of royalist Chile, can be traced back to at least the second half of 1815.³¹

Buenos Aires' politicians accepted San Martín's proposal of creating a local army in Cuyo, although they did not immediately commit themselves to financing it during its first year of life (from mid-1815 until mid-1816). The army lacked three elements: regular soldiers, resources and discipline.

²⁸ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 144; Eyzaguirre, *O'Higgins*, pp. 160–1. A copy of O'Higgins' plan can be found in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, pp. 248–51.

²⁹ Quoted in Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 143. A copy of Carrera's plan can be found in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, pp. 245–6.

³⁰ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 144. San Martín's answer can be found in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, pp. 246–7. ³¹ Vicuña Mackenna, *Vida del capitán*, p. 221 n. 124.

The cabildo of Mendoza addressed the first of these in April 1815, when its members opposed sending a contingent to Buenos Aires, arguing that the winter closure of the cordillera would not offer an obstacle to the Chilean royalists if they attempted to attack Mendoza. Just as the *chusma desvalida de la emigración* had done six months earlier, the 'enemy of the west' could cross the cordillera with 2,000 *peones* and destroy the city's weak defences. The cabildo thus recommended keeping Mendoza's contingents in Cuyo.³²

In order to reinforce these troops, San Martín published a new recruitment bando in August 1815. The governor began by explaining that enrolment should be voluntary, and that it would last as long as the enemy was 'in possession of the kingdom of Chile'. Yet, anticipating the difficulty of finding volunteers, San Martín went on to order the recruitment of soldiers through a lottery which would include every unmarried man between the ages of 16 and 50. Exceptions could be requested if recruits were only children and their mothers were widows; if they had orphan sisters; if they had a disease; or if they had recently worked as 'mayors, councillors or judges [*alcaldes, regidores o jueces de partido*]'. Those deemed to have useful jobs, such as farmers and merchants, could also be exempted from military service.³³

The publication of this bando was the starting point of a progressive militarisation experienced by Cuyo society.³⁴ In September 1815 the first contingents arrived at the camp of El Plumerillo, where they went through strict professional military training.³⁵ The army was also improved in more practical terms: a gunpowder factory was built; an English physician, Diego (James) Paroissien, was appointed surgeon-major; and an engineer was hired to build a water-powered wool mill (*batán*) to produce uniforms.³⁶ At the same time, Bernardo de Vera y Pintado was elected auditor of war.³⁷ On 20 November, Buenos Aires determined that 'every commander-in-chief [of the army of the United Provinces] who considers himself to be facing the enemy is authorised to execute his orders' without discussing them directly with the porteños, a decision that empowered military chiefs, like San Martín, who operated far from the capital.³⁸

San Martín's reforms allowed him to mobilise 5,887 men by the end of December 1815, of whom only 1,543 were regular soldiers (the rest were militiamen).³⁹ In April 1816 the infantry and the artillery numbered 1,300,

³² *Cabildantes* of Mendoza to supreme director, 2 April 1815, AGN, room X, 5-5-5, pp. 282-3.

³³ 14 Aug. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-6, pp. 115-16.

³⁴ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 73.

³⁵ Espejo, *El paso de los Andes*, p. 365.

³⁶ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, pp. 242-3; San Martín to secretary of war, 29 Dec. 1815, AGN, room X, 5-5-6, pp. 370-1v.

³⁷ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 244.

³⁸ Supreme director to governor of Mendoza, 20 Nov. 1815, AGN, room X, 4-2-5, pp. 442, 442v.

³⁹ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 240.

the cavalry 473.⁴⁰ In the following two months, only 36 fresh recruits were enrolled, but on 1 August the army reached a total of 2,166 men (182 artillerymen, 1,412 infantry and 569 cavalry).⁴¹ The inclusion of slaves explains in part the increased number of troops.⁴² San Martín's relationship with slavery was somewhat contradictory: while he seemed willing to free black men in exchange for their military service, it is difficult to assert that they were actually emancipated. Moreover, the slaves were usually 'rated' and 'bought' from their owners, suggesting that they did not lose their status once recruited for the army.⁴³ In Peter Blanchard's words, the use of slaves 'as soldiers in the Río de la Plata did not alter fundamental realities. The failure to honor the promise to free the combatants certainly demonstrated that the views of slaves had not changed: they continued to be property, not citizens.'⁴⁴ Black men, therefore, may have enjoyed a better life in the army, but to argue that they were subject to the same treatment as white men or that the army acted as a social ladder for slaves is a hypothesis that still needs to be tested.⁴⁵

But perhaps it is more important to highlight the political effects of recruiting slaves. We will see later that from 1815 San Martín tried to introduce a fictional division between 'Spaniards' and 'Americans', the former supposedly being defenders of the royalist cause, the latter of the revolution. Here it suffices to say that slave recruitment was usually accompanied by an anti-Spanish discourse, without questioning whether Spaniards living in Cuyo were royalists or revolutionaries. Thus, for example, in January 1815 San Martín ordered the 'European Spaniards to hand over their slaves to the army or pay a fine of 500 pesos per slave'.⁴⁶ If the authorities suspected that Spaniards living in the province had not delivered their slaves, those individuals were obliged to display numbers, documents and witnesses to explain why they had kept them.⁴⁷ Nine days after this bando was published,

⁴⁰ April 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-6, p. 162.

⁴¹ 1 June 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-6, p. 283; 1 Aug. 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-6, p. 344. Detailed reports of the development of the army between December 1814 and February 1816 can be found in AHM, box 485.

⁴² For a summary of the history of slavery in the River Plate, see Irene Diggs, 'The Negro in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata', *Journal of Negro History*, 36: 3 (1951), pp. 281-301.

⁴³ See *Colección documental de la Independencia del Perú*, tomo 6, vol. 2, p. 145 (20 Sep. 1820); and Nuria Sales de Bohigas, 'Esclavos y reclutas en Sudamérica, 1816-1826', *Revista de Historia de América*, 70 (1970), pp. 289-93.

⁴⁴ Peter Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), p. 15.

⁴⁵ George Reid Andrews, 'The Afro-Argentine Officers of Buenos Aires Province, 1800-1860', *Journal of Negro History*, 64: 2 (1979), pp. 85-100. ⁴⁶ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 76.

⁴⁷ An interesting example can be found in AHM, box 368, doc. 5 (dated between late January and early February 1815). The name of the person investigated was Francisco Segura.

the authorities collected 23 'useful' slaves (old and sick slaves were categorised as 'not useful') from 24 Europeans.⁴⁸ Their value was assessed at 4,432 pesos.⁴⁹

However, the inclusion of black men in the army explains only in part why the military forces of the province grew at the rate they did in the second half of 1816. There were political factors which led San Martín to create a formidable army in Cuyo, and these involved Buenos Aires and Upper Peru. San Martín found one of his most loyal allies, Tomás Guido, in the capital. As minister of war, Guido stressed the importance of using the reconquest of Chile as a springboard to other territorial conquests: 'The occupation of Chile should be the government's principal aim. First, because it is the flank in which the enemy is weaker; second, because it is the shortest, easiest and safest way to free Upper Peru; and third, because the restoration of freedom in that country can consolidate the emancipation of America.'⁵⁰ The situation in Upper Peru also played its part. Indeed, it was only after Belgrano was defeated by the Peruvian army led by Joaquín de la Pezuela and forced to undertake a defensive strategy in the region (May 1816) that San Martín was able to obtain the attention not only of Guido but also of other River Plate politicians.

The Rioplatenses changed their view about an invasion of Chile during the Congreso de Tucumán, which was installed in March 1816. Two months later the congress appointed a widely respected military officer, Juan Martín de Pueyrredón, as supreme director of the River Plate. Astutely, San Martín sent an emissary to convince him of the importance of invading Chile, and a couple of weeks later the general personally discussed his plan with Pueyrredón. It is unclear what they talked about, but more or less at the same time as the Congreso de Tucumán was proclaiming the independence of the United Provinces (9 July 1816), San Martín persuaded the supreme director both to attack royalist Chile and to expand the contingents of the army undergoing training in Cuyo.⁵¹ As San Martín told his friend, Tomás Godoy Cruz: 'In two days, with their respective nights, we reached an agreement. There is nothing else we can do but act.'⁵²

Once back in Mendoza, San Martín resumed command of the organisation of the Army of the Andes. Together with Bernardo O'Higgins, who arrived from Buenos Aires at the beginning of 1816, the governor put his plan to reconquer Chile into practice. Recruitment of veterans intensified in the second half of 1816. At the same time, new contingents of slaves were incorporated in the army, above all as infantrymen: 'The best infantry soldiers

⁴⁸ 4 Feb. 1815, AHM, box 368, doc. 7.

⁴⁹ 4 Feb. 1815, AHM, box 368, doc. 8.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 263. A copy of Guido's report can be found in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, pp. 263–8.

⁵¹ San Martín was appointed general-in-chief of the Army of the Andes on 1 August 1816: see Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 86.

⁵² Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 267.

we have', San Martín claimed in May 1816, 'are the blacks and mulattos'.⁵³ According to O'Higgins, in September 1816 there were about 600 slaves enrolled in the army.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, as John Lynch argues, 'San Martín led the way not only in the more obvious work of recruiting and training troops ... but also in the unpopular tasks of raising money.'⁵⁵

In January 1815 San Martín had claimed to Buenos Aires that Mendoza would require over 14,000 pesos a month to survive, and that the city could manage to raise only half that amount.⁵⁶ In his opinion, the capital should cover the other half. Despite the governor's insistence, Buenos Aires politicians refused this request.⁵⁷ As a result, San Martín began to consider other means of financing. In line with the tone of the bando of 26 January regarding slaves, the governor ordered European Spaniards to surrender their cash to the state. On 15 February he received 6,800 pesos from 40 Spaniards, a significant amount considering that the city needed 14,000 pesos to pay for its services.⁵⁸ Soon afterwards, San Martín was aided by non-European *hacendados* who voluntarily donated money and goods to clothe and feed the army. In a document of 10 March 1815 we find a list of people giving money, shirts, vests, jackets, shoes, wheat, flour, barley, nuts, maize, potatoes, wine, horses, cattle and so on.⁵⁹

Yet the authorities took months actually to achieve adequate funding. The help they enjoyed from local inhabitants was invaluable, but never enough. Reports written in September and October 1815 by the newly appointed *comisario de víveres* (quartermaster) of the army, Domingo Pérez, give an idea of their needs: cattle, salt, chilli pepper, biscuits, wine, chickpeas, alfalfa, brandy (*aguardiente*), candles, sugar, tobacco, paper, pots, funnels, balances, blankets, ponchos, reins, saddle girths, stirrups, spikes, axes and so on.⁶⁰ The lack of clothing in 'the middle of the winter', San Martín wrote on 2 May 1816, was especially worrisome, because 'it exposes the soldier to sicknesses that are currently appearing, and incites him to desert from the army in order to find the shelter he does not find in military service'.⁶¹

On 23 August 1816, when the decision to invade Chile had already been taken, the governor claimed that it would be impossible to 'act on Chile'

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 86–7.

⁵⁴ O'Higgins to secretary of war, 14 Sep. 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-7, p. 57.

⁵⁵ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 75.

⁵⁶ San Martín to supreme director, 16 Jan. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, pp. 72, 72v.

⁵⁷ Supreme director to San Martín, 9 Feb. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, pp. 71, 71v.

⁵⁸ San Martín to supreme director, 15 Feb. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, pp. 155–6.

⁵⁹ 10 March 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, p. 237. For a list of donations given by merchants, shoemakers and *dueños de carretas*, see 10 March 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, Sep.–Oct. 1815, AHM, box 500, doc. 1.

⁶¹ San Martín to secretary of war, 2 May 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-6.

if Buenos Aires did not send assistance to Cuyo.⁶² On this occasion, the capital responded by promising to send 8,000 pesos every month, an amount that nevertheless did not satisfy all the needs of the army.⁶³ In October, for instance, the governor asked the secretary of war to dispatch as many mules as he could gather from Buenos Aires. Without these, San Martín argued, the army would not be able to cross the cordillera.⁶⁴ On 6 December the general called for the same authority to deliver 3,000 bags for the infantry, and a month later San Martín reported that the cavalry was short of 400 sabres.⁶⁵ Mendoza, San Juan and San Luis were bankrupt and could not keep financing an army which, the Mendocinos thought, was being organised not only to free Chile but also to combat royalists in other regions of South America, like Upper Peru.⁶⁶

One way or another, the demands that the creation of the army placed on Cuyo society provoked the resistance of local inhabitants, who believed that some were exaggerated and unfair. One interesting criticism came from three *jefes cívicos de infantería*, who were forced to close their shops and warehouses (*casas de abasto*) in order to attend military training. Their complaint was directed not so much against the idea of attending military drills as against royalist shopkeepers who were exempt from being enrolled in the army and so were not compelled to close. They therefore asked the governor to shut all the shops in the city, including those of the royalists, during the afternoons on which the army conducted its training:

The *cuervos cívicos* of the infantry, created by their determined patriotism to dedicate Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons to military discipline, have explained the damages which they suffer in their shops and warehouses as a result of having to close them in order to attend these exercises, while others who live off the same trades, and who are exempted from this military obligation – either because they are *Godos* [a derogatory way of referring to the Spaniards] or suspected of being against our system of freedom and independence – take advantage of sales that should have been ours ... In representation of the arms of service under us ... we ask you to order that on the said days in the afternoons all shops and warehouses should be closed during the time of compulsory exercises.⁶⁷

Although no reply to this letter was found, its existence highlights certain points. First, the use by the *jefes cívicos* of words like ‘*Godos*’, ‘*independencia*’

⁶² San Martín to supreme director, 23 Aug. 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-6, p. 402.

⁶³ Manuel Obligado to ‘General Ministers’, 31 Aug. 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-7, p. 26.

⁶⁴ San Martín to secretary of war, 21 Oct. 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-7, pp. 199, 199v.

⁶⁵ San Martín to secretary of war, 6 Dec. 1816, AGN, room 10, 4-2-7, p. 263; San Martín to secretary of war, 4 Jan. 1817, AGN, room 10, 4-2-8, p. 21.

⁶⁶ For summaries of the amount of money and resources spent by these three cities, see AHM, box 368, doc. 2, and AGN, room 10, 5-5-7, pp. 200–5.

⁶⁷ Nicolás Aranda, Pedro Molina and Manuel Corvalán to governor of Mendoza, 20 Aug. 1816, AHM, box 489, doc. 50.

and 'libertad' reflects the way in which the new political vocabulary of the revolution could be employed in both the public and private spheres. In fact, a public decision to close the shops during the afternoons of military drills caused the response of three individuals whose aim was to defend their private interests. Second, this document proves that the organisation of the army was difficult in terms of discipline. It is unlikely that San Martín considered the *jefes cívicos*' request a threat to his government, or to the administration of the Army of the Andes. However, it would be an error not to see these petitions in their entirety – that is, as manifestations of discontent that, in one way or another, affected military discipline in Cuyo.

During his period as governor, and later as general-in-chief of the Army of the Andes, San Martín faced frequent discontent, most of it manifested in the form of crime. As noted already, *émigrés* who tried to return to Chile were severely punished, as were deserters.⁶⁸ But other crimes were just as damaging to the discipline of the army. Public fights between soldiers were common. One such case was that of a street fight in May 1815 between a soldier of the second company of *pardos* and a lieutenant of Battalion 11. As sentinel at the *comedia* (theatre), Pedro López of Battalion 11 was charged with preventing 'people with ponchos' from entering the building. Ignoring this elitist provision, a *pardo*, Cristóbal Tobal, tried to force his way in, but he was seized and beaten by López and his men. In his defence, Tobal drew his knife and threatened the lieutenant; López, however, overpowered Tobal and took him to headquarters. The authorities ordered the accused to explain why he was carrying a knife, since soldiers were not allowed to carry arms when off duty. His explanation that he had spent the afternoon slaughtering (*carneando*) an animal did not satisfy San Martín, who sentenced Tobal to be drafted into the army for another five years.⁶⁹

Chileans living in Mendoza committed similar crimes. A short list of cases includes a Chilean officer imprisoned after attacking a person in a coffee shop; a soldier who was prosecuted for forcing the door of the women's jail; an *émigré* who was incarcerated for living with a married lady; and a Chilean soldier accused of stealing.⁷⁰ San Martín 'never gave up on discipline', John Lynch says. 'He still had time, in September 1816, to issue a lengthy order on military crime and punishment listing forty-one offences including blasphemy, sedition, desertion, malingering, troublemaking, the rape and robbery of women, all with drastic punishments intended to keep order in the ranks and an example before the eyes of the people.'⁷¹ However, as we shall see,

⁶⁸ A good example of a case against two Chilean deserters can be found in AHM, box 442, doc. 13, March–April 1815.

⁶⁹ AHM, box 442, doc. 42, 28 May 1815.

⁷⁰ Sep. 1815, AHM, box 442, doc. 36; Sep. 1815, AHM, box 442, doc. 40; Oct. 1815, AHM, box 233, doc. 87; Dec. 1815, AHM, box 443, doc. 11.

⁷¹ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 89.

these were hardly the only problems San Martín faced in Mendoza. Perhaps more complicated than political, economic and criminal difficulties was the process of gathering reliable information about the royalist army, as well as the best ways to get into Chilean territory. The next section of this essay studies the governor's strategy to weaken the loyalists outside the province of Cuyo, specifically through the employment of irregular agents.

Chileans in the Army of the Andes: Spies, Military Intelligence and the guerra de zapa

Although the presence of Chileans in Cuyo decreased significantly after San Martín sent them away from the province, a small number of émigrés were allowed to reorganise their lives in Cuyo, some of whom were asked to be part of a commission in April 1816 to organise 'the veteran forces of the Chilean army'. This commission was formed by José María Benavente, Venancio Escanilla, Antonio Hermida, Antonio Merino, Juan de Dios Vial and Pedro Antonio del Villar, and their mission was to elaborate a working programme to mobilise the émigrés in the three traditional arms of service: infantry, cavalry and artillery. Their efforts, in any case, were to be 'adapted' to a plan previously designed by San Martín.⁷²

According to San Martín, the Chilean infantry should be organised in eight battalions, each led by a captain, two lieutenants and one second lieutenant. The cavalry should consist of three squadrons, each composed of a captain, two lieutenants and one second lieutenant. The artillery battalion, for its part, 'will consist of three batteries, each with a captain, two lieutenants and one second lieutenant'. The commission had the power to appoint the officers in charge of these units. The selection of officers should take into consideration their 'good knowledge, valour, patriotism and integrity', as this was the only way that the army would 'attract the approval of the people [*la opinión de los pueblos*]'.⁷³ With these characteristics in mind, the commission named Juan de Dios Vial commander of the infantry battalion of Chile. Antonio Merino was appointed inspector of the cavalry militias, and Joaquín Prieto commander of the artillery. These corps began their military training in El Plumerillo in July 1816. In October 1816, meanwhile, a Legión Patriótica de Chile was created to organise émigrés who were not yet enrolled in the army.⁷⁴

The efforts of San Martín and the commission to make Chileans participate in the reconquest of their country did not succeed, however. As Gerónimo Espejo claimed, 'No detachment was created under the flag of Chile.'

⁷² Alarcón, 'Soldados sin ejército', p. 50.

⁷³ AGN, room X, 4-4-2; see also Alarcón, 'Soldados sin ejército', pp. 50-5.

⁷⁴ AGN, room X, 4-4-2; see also Alarcón, 'Soldados sin ejército', pp. 50-5.

Chilean historians who argued that the Army of the Andes should be called the United Army were completely wrong, since San Martín's forces were 'purely Argentine'.⁷⁵ Even though Espejo's view was somewhat exaggerated and clearly nationalistic, the short time that the émigrés spent in Cuyo in 1816 was insufficient to create military divisions formed only by Chileans; in fact, the few Chileans who participated in the reconquest of their country were mainly officers, not soldiers. There was one scenario, nevertheless, in which Chileans living in Cuyo did have an active participation between 1814 and 1817: the so-called *guerra de zapa*.⁷⁶ The *guerra de zapa*, or irregular warfare, 'went through three defined stages. In the first, the rebels sent spies or emissaries to scrutinize the territory. The second aimed to spread revolutionary propaganda in Chile ... In the third, by far the most difficult and risky, the rebels sought to disperse [the royalist] forces by employing small guerrilla bands.'⁷⁷ San Martín's work was heavily dependent on spies and rural guerrilla groups. He used spies from the beginning of his government in Cuyo. On 24 February 1815, two of them notified him that British ships were 'blockading and harassing' the Chilean ports. In the view of the anonymous author of this letter, the British attitude reflected opposition to Osorio, who had recently confiscated the cargo of three British ships. It seemed that the British had London's implicit permission to blockade neutral ports if they felt they were in danger.⁷⁸

In February 1815, San Martín also received news from his spies that Osorio was planning an invasion of the River Plate.⁷⁹ Considering that in early 1815 Buenos Aires politicians were mostly concentrating on confronting the royalist threat in Upper Peru, it is not surprising that San Martín's spies in Chile informed him of Osorio's moves to help Pezuela's army. On 3 May 1815 San Martín wrote to the supreme director that a report he had sent on 9 April should be discarded, for he had recently learned from his spies that Osorio had dispatched to Upper Peru not 300 men, as he had suggested, but 1,500.⁸⁰ This change of figures exemplifies the many difficulties faced by irregular agents when conducting their missions. Dates, numbers, locations and topics could vary from one report to another, sometimes because the spies had

⁷⁵ Espejo, *El paso de los Andes*, p. 420. See also pp. 477–8.

⁷⁶ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 79, defines the *guerra de zapa* as 'an underground war of espionage and sabotage, with a network of spies in the mountain provinces reporting on the movements of the enemy, directing black propaganda across the Andes, keeping the cause alive and the resistance movement active in readiness for the invasion, while San Martín himself organized hit-and-run attacks on the enemy'.

⁷⁷ Leopoldo Castedo, *Resumen de la Historia de Chile de Francisco Antonio Encina*, vol. 1 (Santiago: Zig-Zag, 1954), pp. 609–10.

⁷⁸ 24 Feb. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, pp. 142–3v.

⁷⁹ San Martín to supreme director, 8 Feb. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, pp. 159–60.

⁸⁰ San Martín to supreme director, 3 May 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-5, p. 304.

consciously lied in order to avoid capture, sometimes because the enemy had hidden the real information concerning the royalist army.

The most complicated aspect of a spy's work in Chile was winning the confidence of the royalist authorities, who were sceptical of any émigrés returning from Mendoza. Arriving in Mendoza from Chile in September 1815, Francisco Silva was interrogated by the auditor of war, Bernardo Vera y Pintado, about his role as a spy in Chile, where he had been sent by San Martín in January. Along with details about the number of Osorio's soldiers, Silva reported that the royalist governor treated him with respect because Silva managed to convince Osorio that he was an 'enemy of the American cause'.⁸¹ Other spies, however, did not have Silva's luck. Two days after Vera y Pintado wrote his report, San Martín told the supreme director that two of Buenos Aires' best spies, Domingo Guzmán and Ramón Picarte, had been 'imprisoned by the enemy while they were crossing the cordillera'. Although it is probable that, as Barros Arana said, Guzmán and Picarte contrived their incarceration in Santiago in order to collect information, this outcome obstructed their plans.⁸²

Despite these setbacks, at the end of 1815 San Martín's spies were able to give him a detailed account of Osorio's troops and their distribution.⁸³ San Martín was also able to discover details of who his enemies were and how they performed. On 27 November José Zapiola sent an intercepted letter in which an unknown correspondent referred to San Martín in harsh terms. Reminding his recipient (a certain 'Matías') not to forget that San Martín 'had been born a gentleman and had eaten the bread of the king', the author of this letter advised his friend to 'distrust that bloody San Martín, because he has a very dirty tail [*cola muy sucia*] and should never socialise with good men. The fear that this letter may be lost to the rebels prevents me from going deeper into this subject.'⁸⁴ We do not know whether Zapiola or San Martín found out who the author was, but it is more relevant to stress the number of people participating in this case (Zapiola, 'Matías', San Martín and, of course, a series of unknown intermediaries who helped Zapiola to obtain the letter): this suggests the pervasive effect that the revolution had on Spanish Americans in general.

The sophistication of the reports written by San Martín's spies grew as time went by, as did the money spent on 'espionage service'. In January 1816

⁸¹ 25 Sep. 1815, AGN, room 10, 4-2-5, pp. 321-2v. According to Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 236 n. 33, Silva was a 'double agent'.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 238. Buenos Aires' appointment of Guzmán and Picarte as spies can be found in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, pp. 299-300; and San Martín to supreme director, 27 Sep. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-6, p. 201.

⁸³ Nov. 1815, AGN, room 10, 4-2-5, p. 461.

⁸⁴ Zapiola to San Martín, 27 Nov. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-6, pp. 351-2.

San Martín received a document signed by a so-called ‘Español’, in which an unknown spy reported a series of events in Chile; the accounts were mixed up without any apparent logic, but were clear enough to be understood by well-informed readers like San Martín.⁸⁵ Providing details of the construction of the Santa Lucía fortress in Santiago, the royalists’ recruitment drive, the doubts that the revolutionary spies spread within Chilean society and the economic hardship suffered by San Martín’s emissaries, ‘Español’ contrived to supply useful data about Marcó del Pont’s administration in no more than six paragraphs. His report was accompanied with eight ounces of gold that the wife of a Chilean émigré, Gaspar Marín, had collected for him.⁸⁶ With regard to the second point, San Martín’s personal intervention in Buenos Aires in order to obtain higher wages for his spies elicited a significant increase in money used for ‘espionage service’ between February 1815 and February 1816. An account of expenditure written on 9 March 1816 summarised it as follows:⁸⁷

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| Year 1815: February..... | 68 pesos |
| April..... | 92 pesos |
| June..... | 175 pesos |
| August..... | 131 pesos |
| September..... | 368 pesos |
| October..... | 635 pesos |
| November..... | 764 pesos |
| December..... | 490 pesos |
| Year 1816: January..... | 1,712 pesos |
| February..... | 496 pesos |

TOTAL 4,931 pesos

‘This night 800 pesos are to be sent to Chile’ to pay the spies, continued the document, which San Martín signed.⁸⁸ Almost a month later, Buenos Aires’ supreme director ‘approved’ the expenditures that the governor of Cuyo had made and even encouraged him to dispatch new ‘well-briefed emissaries, thus disheartening the [royalist] troops, introducing division amongst them and inspiring confidence in the patriot side’.⁸⁹ Doubtless, the support granted by Buenos Aires had a profound impact on Chile, where the royalist authorities had neither the men nor mechanisms necessary to break down the military intelligence network established by the revolutionaries. Marcó del Pont

⁸⁵ According to Ricardo Latcham, ‘Español’ was one of the pseudonyms used by the spy, Manuel Rodríguez. See Ricardo Latcham, *Vida de Manuel Rodríguez: el guerrillero* (Santiago: Nascimento, 1932), p. 151.

⁸⁶ AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, p. 298.

⁸⁷ The title of the account was *Estado que manifiesta el dinero dado por esta Tesorería por Orden del Señor Gobernador Intendente para gastos secretos de Guerra en el año pasado y dos más de este*.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

himself recognised his inability to deal with San Martín's spies in communications with his subordinates. In August 1816 Marcó ordered the military commander of San Fernando to investigate why his men had not prevented San Martín's spies from entering Chilean territory. Marcó was particularly suspicious of the *cordillerano* guards and of the political and military chiefs stationed in Curicó, Maule and their surrounding areas.⁹⁰

During this period, San Martín's emissaries had already been able both to spread revolutionary propaganda and to form guerrilla groups to fight Marcó's regular soldiers. Since the mid-nineteenth century historians have been interested in analysing the role of irregular agents in subverting the royalist government, not only as spies but especially as guerrilla fighters (*guerrilleros*), the case of Manuel Rodríguez being especially worthy of mention. Rodríguez was a relatively respected lawyer who, despite his elevated social background, lived as an outlaw after 1814, made friends with low-class fugitives who eventually turned into guerrilleros, and became one of San Martín's closest allies in Chile without once being captured by Marcó.⁹¹

Rodríguez left Mendoza for Chile at the beginning of 1816. His mission was twofold: first, to make contact with José Miguel Neira, a rural bandit whose activities in the central valley intimidated the royalists as much as the prospect of facing San Martín's regular men, and second, to find out details of Marcó del Pont's military dispositions. Behind San Martín's decision to dispatch Rodríguez to Chile was his plan to exhaust the royalists with rapid and effective attacks commanded by Rodríguez, Neira and other guerrilleros in the major towns south of Santiago. This, San Martín believed, would enable him to understand the functioning of Marcó's defensive system, and thus prepare the ground for a future invasion. How effective was this strategy? If Ricardo Latcham was correct and 'Español' was one of Rodríguez's undercover names, he had already made contact with San Martín in January 1816 and, consequently, San Martín's idea of sending him to the other side of the cordillera was indeed useful.⁹² Still, it is also likely that the royalist authorities did not know of Rodríguez's guerrillas until August or September of that year, meaning that their assaults occurred in a very restricted area.

The earliest document found in which Marcó del Pont refers to Rodríguez is dated 12 September 1816. There, the royalist governor includes the 'son of Carlos Rodríguez' among the 'outlaws [*facinerosos*]' sheltered in the

⁹⁰ Marcó to Joaquín Magallar, 5 Aug. 1816, Archivo Nacional de Chile, Ministerio del Interior (hereafter ANC), vol. 26, pp. 251v, 252.

⁹¹ See Latcham, *Vida de Manuel Rodríguez*; Gabriel Salazar, *Construcción de estado en Chile (1800–1837): democracia de los 'pueblos'. Militarismo ciudadano. Golpismo oligárquico* (Santiago: Sudamericana, 2005), pp. 466–7; and Ernesto Guajardo, *Manuel Rodríguez: historia y leyenda* (Santiago: Ril, 2010).

⁹² Marcó to intendant of Concepción, 12 Sep. 1816, ANC, vol. 26, pp. 259v, 260.

cordilleras of Colchagua and Maule, where they carry out their incursions and attack innocent travellers'. Marcó feared that Rodríguez and his men could enter Concepción and, from there, make contact with an Indian called Venancio, who had historically supported the revolutionary army.⁹³ Two weeks later, the governor repeated this order to Antonio Quintanilla, emphasising that, until Rodríguez's 'gang of highwaymen [*salteadores*]' was captured, Quintanilla's troops must stay in the region. The decision to pursue the guerrilla bands and not to use those troops to reinforce Rancagua and other places in the central valley is explained by Marcó's approach of controlling specific threats rather than having a general military plan against the insurgents.⁹⁴ In fact, the disorganisation of the royalist army led Quintanilla's men to act as local policemen rather than as a professional military.

How did Rodríguez's small guerrilla groups manage to attack towns like Melipilla and then disappear without trace? Marcó himself answered this question in a letter to Abascal. For him, the insurgents had an advantage over the royalists, especially over the *Talaveras* and other Spanish-born officers: they knew the territory better. Marcó reported to Abascal that he had imprisoned 'three confidants of San Martín, all of them Chileans, who are in charge of fostering the revolution, and giving San Martín news about the state of discipline and weaponry of the [royalist] army. They have also been ordered to inform him of the regions effectively occupied by the army, so they can plan a victorious invasion of this kingdom.' On 4 January 1817, continued Marcó, 'a band of armed insurgents, captained by the Chilean-born lawyer, Carrera's secretary and San Martín's principal agent, Manuel Rodríguez, invaded Melipilla'. They were aided by 'a famous bandit called José Miguel Neira and other Chilean émigrés, who have committed many forms of harassment and violence in the haciendas', and also by local people who 'inform them about the impenetrable forest trails' of the central valley. Moreover, the guerrilla bands were 'protected by the hacendados, who give them horses, provisions and whatever they need, since all of them are their supporters'. And, in a phrase that summarises Marcó's desperation, the governor concluded that 'this way of harassing us is in accordance with San Martín's instructions. San Martín has ordered Rodríguez to assemble as many horses as possible and distribute them in small groups near the cordillera until he arrives' in Chile.⁹⁵

Marcó's letter to Abascal, written only two weeks before the battle of Chacabuco, shows the political and military weakness of Chile's royalist government, proving also that San Martín's system of military intelligence was

⁹³ *Ibid.* Marcó is referring to the Butalmapu of the *Llanos*.

⁹⁴ Marcó to Quintanilla, 28 Sep. 1816, ANC, vol. 26, p. 263v.

⁹⁵ Marcó to Abascal, 28 Jan. 1817, Archivo General de Indias, Diversos 5.

indeed successful. Despite the economic and administrative problems of the Army of the Andes, San Martín achieved a number of moral victories on the Chilean side of the cordillera in 1816. His emissaries tackled the three stages of the *guerra de zapa* with intelligence and expertise. His spies not only gathered useful information about the royalist army, but also spread revolutionary propaganda (usually orally). Guerrillas like Rodríguez's, meanwhile, launched a type of war which had not been very common in Chile until then. Revolutionary warfare in 1813–14 was radical, bloody and cruel. At that time confrontations generally involved regular soldiers and officers, whose military training, although rudimentary, followed that of other regular armies of the region. Irregular warfare, on the other hand, introduced new elements, further radicalising the conflict between royalists and insurgents.

At the end of January 1817 Marcó del Pont's administration was almost completely powerless. The publication of a series of *bandos* announcing severe punishments for rebel *montoneros* throughout that month is another proof of his vulnerability.⁹⁶ None of these *bandos*, however, had the expected result. San Martín's men had begun to cross the cordillera, and a new confrontation between both armies was inevitable.

Crossing the Cordillera

During its last months in Mendoza, the high command of the Army of the Andes continued conducting military drills and preparing the ground for an invasion. From the beginning of the negotiations with Buenos Aires, San Martín favoured an attack on the other side of the cordillera. However, he believed that Chile should not depend on the River Plate in matters of internal administration. In principle, the supreme directors in 1815–16 took the same view, although River Plate politicians ended up interfering in Chilean politics rather more than anticipated.

In September 1815 San Martín asked Supreme Director Ignacio Álvarez Thomas to advise him about the political conduct he should follow in Chile if his men seized Santiago. 'What sort of governmental system must be established? If this is to be formed by locals, which party ought to dominate: the *Larraínes* [that is, O'Higgins' group] or the Carrera brothers?', San Martín asked.⁹⁷ 'Given that one of the Chilean parties has to dominate', the supreme director answered, 'then I declare myself in favour of the *Larraínes*'. It is possible that O'Higgins' stay in Buenos Aires helped his faction to achieve the approval of Álvarez Thomas, but this was contingent upon

⁹⁶ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, pp. 349–50.

⁹⁷ San Martín to supreme director, 26 Sep. 1815, AGN, room 10, 5-5-6, pp. 197, 197v.

political factors rather than any personal support.⁹⁸ In April 1815 Álvarez Thomas was amongst those who precipitated the fall of Carlos María de Alvear, who had recently become one of Carrera's closest allies in the River Plate and, in turn, San Martín's most dangerous internal enemy. Thus Álvarez Thomas' decision to back the Larraínes was clearly influenced by his political differences with Alvear and his allies.⁹⁹

Nonetheless, Álvarez Thomas did not have the opportunity to make his preference known during his time in office. Juan Martín de Pueyrredón, who was supreme director of the River Plate when the expedition to Chile was launched, was arguably more impartial than Álvarez Thomas. In his instructions to San Martín, Pueyrredón ordered him always to bear in mind that the objective of the Army of the Andes was to help the Chileans to reconquer their territory, but to rule out any attempt to 'keep possession of the aided country'. In the second section of the instructions, the neutrality of Buenos Aires in relation to Chilean politics was stated: 'The division in two parties in which Chile found itself before the entrance of the King's troops being notorious ..., *we will aim to extinguish the seed of disorder with impartial proclamations*, without justifying either party and preventing the renewal of the causes of that fatal clash.'

But to show impartiality in internal politics should not preclude San Martín from convincing Chileans to be part of a general 'American government' and to 'constitute one single nation':

Although the general has been warned that he should not interfere either by action or through fear in the establishment of the supreme government of the country, he should aim to use his influence and persuasion to make Chile send deputies to the general congress of the United Provinces so that a general form of government might be created in America, united in purpose and identity and whose cause, interests and objective might constitute one single nation. But, above all, he shall secure the establishment of a government in accordance with the one our congress will create, and whatever form of government that country might adopt must include a constitutional alliance with our provinces.¹⁰⁰

Why was Buenos Aires insisting on the importance of constituting an 'American nation'? There are both political and military answers. If, between 1808 and 1814, the concept of 'patriotism' was used to refer to the king, America, small localities and even the Spanish empire indistinctly (for example, loyalists considered themselves to be 'patriots', just as the

⁹⁸ Alfredo Sepúlveda, *Bernardo: una biografía de Bernardo O'Higgins* (Santiago: Ediciones B, 2007), p. 301, says that during his time in Buenos Aires O'Higgins met Álvarez and was introduced to the Logia Lautaro.

⁹⁹ Supreme director to San Martín, 30 Oct. 1815, AGN, room X, 5-5-6, p. 199.

¹⁰⁰ The instructions, dated 21 December 1816, are in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, pp. 284-7. The emphasis is mine.

insurgents did), by 1816 the revolutionaries invoked its meaning almost exclusively to refer to America. However, because the royalist contingents were, like the revolutionaries, composed above all of people born in the New World, it is safe to say that 'patriotism' was used in political rather than geographic or demographic terms. Although, in the declaration of the War to the Death in 1813, Simón Bolívar had tried to 'found the identity of two belligerents, and establish them in different nations [America and Spain]', the war never lost its civil characteristics. According to Clément Thibaud, Bolívar created 'an ambiguous identity fiction, where the "Spanish" figure was the scapegoat of the war. Through this act of naming the "Spanish" enemy in the political sense of the term, the "American" party acquired sense and consistency in compensation.'¹⁰¹ In so doing, the insurgents sought to legitimise the use of violence and justify the idea that this was a 'just' cause against an 'unjust enemy': 'the aim was to *exterminate* an unjust enemy to obliterate three centuries of oppression and ignominy'.¹⁰² Pueyrredón and San Martín, for their part, introduced the same 'fictional' division between 'Spain' and 'America', as shown by their attitudes towards Spanish slaveholders in Mendoza.¹⁰³

But military reasons also explain why Buenos Aires called upon Chileans to 'Americanise' the revolution. Like San Martín, Pueyrredón was convinced that an attack on Lima would annihilate the royalists in South America, and that to undertake such an attack it was essential to organise an army in Chile formed of both Chileans and Rioplatenses. The Army of the Andes should be the basis of that force, though it was hoped that in the future Chileans would engage in the defence of the revolution. In the supreme director's view, the allegiance of Chileans to local defence was key to putting the military aspects of the American project into practice. However, he also believed that Chileans must understand that the struggle against the 'Spanish yoke' was extremely onerous, and that Buenos Aires would not always be willing to assist its fellow revolutionaries. So Pueyrredón decided that, after reconquering Chile, the Chilean government should 'repay the United Provinces two million pesos to cover the enormous expenses of the campaign'.¹⁰⁴

By the time Pueyrredón's instructions to San Martín were written (21 December 1816), the training of the Army of the Andes was at its height – yet San Martín spent his last days in Mendoza busy with symbolic

¹⁰¹ Clément Thibaud, *Repúblicas en armas: los ejércitos bolivarianos en la guerra de Independencia en Colombia y Venezuela* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2003), p. 130.

¹⁰² Clément Thibaud, 'La ley y la sangre: la "guerra de razas" y la constitución en la América Bolivariana', *Almanack: Revista Electrónica Semestral*, 1 (May 2011), pp. 5–23, available at www.almanack.unifesp.br/index.php/almanack/article/view/711.

¹⁰³ Another example of San Martín's anti-Spanishness is a proposal on 28 October 1815 to expel all Spaniards from Mendoza (San Martín to secretary of government, AGN, room 10, 5-5-6, pp. 254, 254v).

¹⁰⁴ AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, p. 287.

rather than military issues. He 'knew the importance of spectacle and liturgy', a fact that accounts for his decision to use religious means to encourage the loyalty of his men.¹⁰⁵ San Martín and the new governor of Cuyo, Toribio de Luzuriaga, were Catholic themselves; in their attitudes towards religion one can hardly find traces of atheism or even irreligion.¹⁰⁶ Following the example of Manuel Belgrano, who had named Our Lady of La Merced 'Generala del Ejército' in Upper Peru and insisted that 'the revolution exported by Buenos Aires was neither against religion nor were its followers savage invaders', San Martín consciously linked his cause with the teachings of the Church.¹⁰⁷ Phrases such as 'the churches of the capital had begun to implore the protection of the God of the Armies'; 'let us unite our vows at the Sacred Altar, so God can bless our weapons and grant a double spirit to the brave Legions that are prepared for the fight'; and 'it is a duty of every good patriot to participate in these acts of piety' were repeatedly used by Luzuriaga in his bandos between late December 1816 and early February 1817.¹⁰⁸

Without doubt, the festivity of 5 January 1817, in which Our Lady of Carmen was designated patroness of the army and the first Rioplatense flag was blessed, was the most popular of all religious ceremonies. According to Pablo Ortemberg, San Martín introduced the cult of Our Lady of Carmen because it was an 'invocation venerated on both sides of the cordillera'.¹⁰⁹ In the words of Luzuriaga, 'the fifth [of January] is marked by the august and sacred ceremony of the oath to the patroness of the army of Our Lady of Carmen and by the blessing of the flag under whose auspices the struggle against the victimisers of the Kingdom of Chile will be undertaken. Shall we mark with a mysterious *Thau* the place where the banner of our liberty will be hoisted?'¹¹⁰

Drums, fifes and other musical instruments had a special place on that historic day. 'On 5 January', Carmen Gutiérrez states, 'the bands of the infantry, cavalry and artillery' played military music, as they also did when the Army of the Andes began to cross the cordillera.¹¹¹ It is not surprising that, in

¹⁰⁵ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁶ Luzuriaga was appointed governor of Cuyo in October 1816 so that San Martín could devote himself exclusively to preparing the invasion of Chile: see Enrique Díaz Araujo, 'Historia institucional de Mendoza: notas para servir a su estudio', *Revista de la Junta de Estudios Históricos de Mendoza*, segunda época, 4, pp. 187–9.

¹⁰⁷ Pablo Ortemberg, 'Las Vírgenes Generales: acción guerrera y práctica religiosa en las campañas del Alto Perú y el Río de la Plata (1810–1818)', *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana "Dr. Emilio Ravignani"*, 35/36 (2012), p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ 31 Dec. 1816, AHM, box 4, doc. 50; 1 Feb. 1817, AHM, box 4, doc. 55.

¹⁰⁹ Ortemberg, 'Las Vírgenes Generales', p. 33. ¹¹⁰ 3 Jan. 1817, AHM, box 4, doc. 5.

¹¹¹ Carmen Gutiérrez, 'La música en el pensamiento estratégico del general San Martín', in *San Martín, gobernador y Libertador de América*, exhibition held at the Archivo General de la Provincia de Mendoza, August 2006.

a period marked by the influence of the *Marseillaise*, San Martín made his soldiers play and sing military music, nor that in 1818 Chileans sang their first anthem, which was written by the auditor of war of the Army of the Andes, Bernardo de Vera y Pintado, to the same rhythm and music as the anthem of the River Plate.¹¹² Lynch's comment that, in his odyssey across the cordillera, San Martín more than once ordered 'the band to play the Argentine national anthem, the music echoing high through the mountains', indicates that the musicians of the Army of the Andes brought the Rioplatense anthem into Chile and popularised it.¹¹³ San Martín himself sang the anthem in a reception held in Santiago to celebrate the revolutionary triumph at Chacabuco.¹¹⁴

After designating Our Lady of Carmen patroness of the army and blessing the flag, San Martín started to dispatch his forces. He was well aware that to cross the cordillera was a major task. As he told Tomás Guido in June 1816, his main preoccupation was not so much the 'opposition that the enemy may present, but to cross those immense mountains'.¹¹⁵ However, he overcame his fears and concluded that the bulk of his army should break into Chile from two central passes, Uspallata and Los Patos.

The Army of the Andes was, according to an *Estado general de su actual fuerza, armamento y municiones* dated 31 December 1816, formed of 195 officers, 14 commanders and 3,778 soldiers (total: 3,987 men). The artillery had 258 men, the infantry 2,928 and the cavalry 801.¹¹⁶ This total diminished, however, in the first weeks of January, after the loss of 400 men due to desertions, disease or death.¹¹⁷ Tactically, the army was organised in two major divisions: Juan Gregorio de Las Heras commanded the first, its objective being to advance through Uspallata to Santa Rosa de Los Andes. The second was led by Miguel Estanislao Soler, and its aim was to enter Chile through Los Patos and 'seize San Felipe de Aconcagua the same day that Las Heras took control of Santa Rosa de Los Andes'.¹¹⁸ Soler's division was, in turn, divided into three: Soler was in charge of the vanguard, Bernardo O'Higgins the centre, and San Martín the reserve. To them were added small columns, the first of which left Mendoza on 9 January.¹¹⁹ This column was led by Juan Manuel Cabot and was sent to Coquimbo. Five days later, another small column headed by Ramón Freire was dispatched to the southern regions

¹¹² The lyrics of this anthem can be found in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, p. 92.

¹¹³ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 93.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹¹⁵ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 377. This quotation comes from a letter sent by San Martín to Tomás Guido on 14 June 1816.

¹¹⁶ Espejo, *El paso de los Andes*, p. 525.

¹¹⁷ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 372 n. 5.

¹¹⁸ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 92; Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 382.

¹¹⁹ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 92.

of the central valley so that he could enter Chile from Curicó and Colchagua. Las Heras' division of 800 men started to cross the cordillera on 18 January. He was followed by Soler's vanguard, which left Mendoza between 19 and 20 January. O'Higgins' centre departed between 21 and 22 January, and San Martín and the army staff set off on 24 January.¹²⁰

By giving O'Higgins the responsibility for commanding a quarter of the army, Pueyrredón and San Martín empowered the man they deemed their most strategic ally in Chile. This was not the only mission the Rioplatenses assigned to O'Higgins. Only a day before Las Heras' division began its advance towards Chile, Pueyrredón agreed with San Martín that, if the Army of the Andes succeeded, O'Higgins should be appointed 'president or supreme director of the Chilean state'.¹²¹ This appointment, for them, ensured that Buenos Aires' continental strategy would be politically, militarily and economically supported by the Chilean government and treasury. Thus even though San Martín and Pueyrredón rejected the idea of naming one of the military chiefs of the River Plate governor of Chile, they actively participated in the decision that allowed O'Higgins to become supreme director of Chile in February 1817.

The divisions took about 20 days to cross the cordillera. Their day-to-day life can be followed in a book published by Hans Bertling in 1908, which shows that the crossing was exhausting, dangerous and unpredictable.¹²² Thus, for instance, on 25 January Las Heras notified San Martín that a minor confrontation had taken place between his men and 60 of the enemy.¹²³ Two days later, Las Heras asked San Martín to send the surgeon-major of the army with medicines to Uspallata, as he did not want to leave his sick soldiers behind.¹²⁴ These setbacks did not stop him, however, and on 2 February he was already in Juncalillo (located on the Chilean side of the cordillera). From there Las Heras wrote to San Martín that he had 'taken control of the heights of the cordillera', informing San Martín also that in order to monitor the 'movements of the enemy' he had sent a spy accompanied by a guerrilla band of 30 men to a place called La Guardia, where the royalists were allegedly assembled.¹²⁵

O'Higgins' troops also experienced setbacks throughout the crossing of the cordillera. On 1 February, the Chilean general told San Martín that the cold temperatures of the Andes were causing suffering amongst his men, and that 'a black soldier [*un negrito*]' had recently died due to the severity of the weather. O'Higgins was able to relieve the suffering of his men only by giving them

¹²⁰ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 384 and n. 14.

¹²¹ Pueyrredón to San Martín, 17 Jan. 1817, in AGN, *Paso de los Andes*, p. 287.

¹²² Hans Bertling, *Documentos históricos referentes al paso de los Andes efectuado en 1817 por el General San Martín* (Concepción: Litografía e Imprenta Concepción, 1908).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–9.

wine.¹²⁶ But like Las Heras' division, O'Higgins' and Soler's men kept marching. Once in Los Patos, the second division was ordered to 'open communications with Las Heras and then march directly to Chacabuco'. In Lynch's words, the royalists 'were alerted to the danger of a junction of the two divisions, which they could prevent by dominating one of the passes and so stop the Army of the Andes from occupying the plain'. San Martín, however, foresaw this threat and 'sent in a unit of twenty-five mounted grenadiers, whose epic charge on 4 February – the first of a series – put to flight the Spanish detachment, taking their stores and equipment'. On 10 February, Lynch continues, 'San Martín's men united on the Chilean side as planned, truly a miracle of timing. They took up position on the heights overlooking the hill of Chacabuco, which blocked the north end of the central valley of Chile and was the key to the advance on Santiago.'¹²⁷

The battle of Chacabuco started early in the morning of 12 February 1817, and only O'Higgins' and Soler's divisions were active on the battlefield.¹²⁸ O'Higgins had orders not to engage in a direct attack until the forces of Soler, who had been sent to confront the enemy's right, joined the rest of the army. San Martín had 'always planned a single massive attack on the Spanish forces', and so he could not afford to have his army destroyed because of a sally by a subordinate. However, impatient as he was, O'Higgins disobeyed and 'threw his men in alone against the Spaniards', who were led by Rafael Maroto.¹²⁹ O'Higgins' aim was to attack the enemy's left flank, to which end he led the infantry himself. But, as Barros Arana wrote, 'such a charge did not produce the expected results'.¹³⁰ Furthermore, 'this one impulsive act threatened the whole strategy of San Martín', who saw from the heights how his men had 'to retreat in disorder, leaving on the field "a heap of poor negroes"'.¹³¹ To remedy this risky situation, San Martín ordered Soler to 'hasten the march of his division' and help O'Higgins' troops to destroy the forces of the enemy. With two squadrons of grenadiers, San Martín 'charged the right of the enemy and routed them', thereby 'encouraging O'Higgins' infantry to renew their attack with a fierce bayonet charge'.¹³²

Soler's division arrived more or less at the same time that San Martín engaged personally in the combat. In a pincer strategy, the Rioplatense general appeared from the right, though he finally attacked the left flank of the enemy. The royalists were 'caught between O'Higgins' infantry and the main body of

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²⁷ Lynch, *San Martín*, pp. 93–4.

¹²⁸ For the battle of Chacabuco, see Miguel Luis and Gregorio Víctor Amunátegui, *La reconquista española* (Santiago: Imprenta Litografía y Encuadernación Barcelona, 1912), pp. 449–56; Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, pp. 425–31; Eyzaguirre, *O'Higgins*, pp. 168–72; and Lynch, *San Martín*, pp. 94–5.

¹²⁹ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 94.

¹³⁰ Barros Arana, *Historia general de Chile*, p. 427.

¹³¹ Lynch, *San Martín*, pp. 94–5.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Soler's division, which cut off their retreat'.¹³³ As a result, the insurgents lost 150 dead and wounded, while almost 600 royalists died and another 600 were captured (of these, 32 were officers). In addition, the insurgents captured the enemy's artillery and the flag of the *Regimiento de Chiloé*.¹³⁴

The Battle of Chacabuco put an end to a period known for the inability of both sides to build a solid administrative project, even though it did not end the military confrontations between royalists and insurgents in Chilean territory. This was because after the battle the insurgents reconquered only Santiago and its surroundings, while the royalists, now led by José Ordóñez, reassembled their forces in Talca and Concepción and deployed them throughout the south of the country. San Martín's statement of 22 February that in 24 days the Army of the Andes had 'defeated the tyrants and freed Chile' was, therefore, exaggerated. In the words of Lynch, Chacabuco was 'a victory squandered', not least because of the revolutionaries' decision not to chase the enemy.¹³⁵ The insurgents retook control of Santiago. They even imprisoned Marcó del Pont and his closest allies. But they did not consummate independence militarily. That remained far off.

Final Considerations

The Battle of Chacabuco of 12 February 1817 was the last event of a process initiated in October 1814, when the first contingents of Chilean émigrés began to arrive in Mendoza after the royalist triumph at Rancagua forced them to escape to the other side of the cordillera. This paper has analysed the process of militarisation experienced in Cuyo during these two and a half years. We have seen that San Martín engaged himself personally in the various stages of the creation of the army, especially from mid-1816, when the decision to help the Chilean revolutionaries to reconquer their country was finally made. The participation of Chilean officers in both the preparation of the army and the Battle of Chacabuco was marginal, since most émigrés were sent out of the province of Cuyo to combat the royalists in other parts of the River Plate. Yet a small group of Chileans did cross the cordillera with the rest of the army to fight the royalists. They were backed by a number of Chilean spies who either remained in the country or were sent by San Martín to collect information about Marcó del Pont's government and army.

The paper has also highlighted the relationship between the Buenos Aires politicians and San Martín, as well as the important support that Pueyrredón gave to the plan of invading Chile with a Rioplatense force. Pueyrredón agreed to spend money, resources and men to reconquer Chile because he believed

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹³⁴ Bertling, *Documentos históricos*, p. 135.

¹³⁵ Lynch, *San Martín*, p. 95.

that this would allow Buenos Aires to attempt an attack on Lima, the centre of the counter-revolution. This explains why Pueyrredón and San Martín aspired not to establish a Rioplatense government in Chile, but rather to secure O'Higgins' appointment as supreme director of the country. This was a political move that ensured that neither the Carrera brothers nor other Chilean revolutionary leaders, like Manuel Rodríguez, would interfere with the plans developed by the Logia Lautaro to conquer Lima. Thus Pueyrredón and San Martín sealed an alliance not with the Chilean state (this was not an international agreement based on international law), but rather with the political group that was most likely to support their revolutionary programme.

The military commitment of the River Plate politicians to the reconquest of Chile was accompanied by what is usually referred to as 'Americanism'. The development of an 'American' sentiment in opposition to Spain and Spaniards was a substantial element of San Martín's revolutionary discourse. This discourse was, as in Venezuela, based on a fictional and Manichean division between 'Americans' and 'Spaniards' that allegedly identified 'revolutionaries' and 'royalists' respectively. However, it is one thing to argue that, from 1816 onwards, the revolutionaries invoked 'patriotism' to refer exclusively to America, but quite another to state that *all* Americans defended the insurgency. After all, this was a civil war fought by two armies formed mainly of American-born people.

Differences between insurgents and loyalists in the River Plate and Chile were, therefore, political, not cultural or geographic. These differences became irreconcilable by 1817, when San Martín's army entered Santiago and compelled the royalists to seek refuge in the south of Chile. The Battle of Chacabuco did not secure independence (which arrived with victory at the Battle of Maipú in 1818), although the capital and the northern regions never again fell to the royalists. The Army of the Andes, with all its economic and administrative problems, finally managed to accomplish its original task and 'freed' the central valley from the 'Spanish yoke'. The next goal was to gain the support of the local elites, for which it was essential to present O'Higgins as the only legitimate authority of the country and to stress that, without Chilean resources and troops, an attack on Lima would not be possible. The departure of the Liberating Army from Valparaíso for Peru in August 1820 shows that, at least in political terms, San Martín's 1816 aim of using Chile as a springboard to invade Lima was indeed successful.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Este artículo analiza la organización del Ejército de los Andes, creado en Mendoza entre 1814 y 1817 con el fin de reconquistar Chile de los realistas. La primera sección estudia el papel del José de San Martín como mediador informal en la

disputa entre Bernardo O'Higgins y José Miguel Carrera. Se busca explicar por qué San Martín decidió apoyar a O'Higgins y las consecuencias inmediatas de esta alianza. La segunda sección trata sobre las características principales del Ejército de los Andes y el proceso de militarización que vivieron sus habitantes locales. La cotidianidad en Mendoza fue inseparable de las necesidades del ejército revolucionario. El artículo considera después la llamada *guerra de zapa* y la participación de agentes irregulares. El involucramiento de espías y de oficiales guerrilleros en la revolución se incrementó en la medida en que la guerra se intensificaba. La última sección analiza el cruce de la cordillera por los insurgentes y el triunfo revolucionario del 12 de febrero de 1817 en Chacabuco.

Spanish keywords: Chile, O'Higgins, San Martín, Mendoza, Chacabuco, organización militar, revolución, espías

Portuguese abstract. Este artigo analisa a organização do Exército dos Andes criado em Mendoza entre 1814 e 1817 com o objetivo de reconquistar o Chile, dominado pelos monarquistas. A primeira seção do artigo trata do papel desempenhado por José de San Martín como mediador da disputa entre Bernardo O'Higgins e José Miguel Carrera. O objetivo é explicar as razões pelas quais San Martín decidiu pelo apoio a O'Higgins e as consequências imediatas de tal aliança. A segunda seção trata das principais características do Exército dos Andes e do processo de militarização vivido pelos habitantes da região. A vida cotidiana em Mendoza tornou-se inseparável das necessidades do exército revolucionário. O artigo então considera a chamada *guerra de zapa* e a participação de agentes irregulares. O envolvimento de espões e guerrilheiros na revolução aumentou conforme as batalhas foram intensificadas. A seção final analisa a travessia da cordilheira por insurgentes e o triunfo revolucionário no dia doze de fevereiro de 1817 em Chacabuco.

Portuguese keywords: Chile, O'Higgins, San Martín, Mendoza, Chacabuco, organização militar, revolução, espões