Reagan Considered Asylum for Pinochet

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New documents show that former U. S. President Ronald Reagan considered asylum for Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, the journalist Loreto Daza revealed on Thursday.

The revelations came as Chile marked the anniversary of Pinochet's brutal coming to power, in a 1973 military coup that overthrew the elected government of socialist Salvador Allende.

But by the mid-1980s, with widespread street protests and guerrilla activity against the dictator, "One of the possibilities was to offer him asylum. It was offer to travel to the United States and leave power," Daza told Canal 13.

Reagan hoped for, "an honorable departure for President [Pinochet], who would be received as a guest of our government."

Former U.S. President Richard Nixon and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger openly pushed for the 1973 military coup but by the mid-1980s, Pinochet had aroused such strong internal opposition that US officials were afraid that his continuation in power might help the Chilean left regain public support, said Peter Kornbluh, author of The Pinochet File.

"An asset like Pinochet becomes a liability when he is no longer seen as capable of stopping the forces of the left and creating a stable economic climate," said Kornbluh. "Reagan admired Pinochet and wanted to go to Chile to personally thank him for 'saving Chile' and tell him that 'it was time to go'," Kornbluh said, citing declassified White House records. "But George Shultz

[then secretary of state] said absolutely not. Pinochet had too much blood on his hands."

Chile has been marking the anniversary of the overthrow of Chilean president Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973. On Thursday, President Michelle Bachelet told a ceremony in the presidential palace that Chile "has not forgotten its persecuted, executed and missing arrested children," nor has it "forgotten the wounds that continue causing pain,". The president's own father, a military officer opposed to the coup, was tortured to death by the Pinochet regime.